2023

Leadership Strategies That Support the Reduction of Student Discipline Problems

Aaron J. Rose, Sr.
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Aaron J. Rose

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Robert Voelkel, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Philip Adu, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Steven Wells, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2023

Abstract

Leadership Strategies That Support the Reduction of Student Discipline Problems

by

Aaron J. Rose

MA, Wilmington University, 2002

BS, Lock Haven University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February, 2023

Abstract

The problem addressed in this study is that, in a rural Title 1 public school in the Northeastern United States, administrators have struggled to implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. The purpose of the study was to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies that are intended to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. The conceptual framework was developed from DeMatthews's leadership theory and Wachtel's restorative justice theory, which describe systems intended to build and restore relationships in schools and thereby reduce conflicts. The research question explored how administrators implement leadership strategies that are intended to reduce the number of student discipline issues in the classroom. This basic qualitative study used data from interviews with eight administrators and seven classroom teachers from a rural K-8 public school district in the Northeast who have been in the district for 3 or more years and are directly involved with classroom discipline. The data analysis consisted of value coding and axial coding to find similar themes. The results indicated that when teachers and administrators worked together and developed meaningful relationships, a climate of trust was created, which helped teachers embrace change as they were part of the process. This collaboration produced viable solutions such as restorative practices to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. This study promotes positive social change by informing leadership procedures to increase school attendance and achievement, decrease intentional defiant behaviors and misconduct, and reduce in dropout rates. Additionally, school leaders could gain a deeper understanding of discipline approaches aimed to reduce discipline issues in the classroom.

Leadership Strategies That Support the Reduction of Student Discipline Problems

by

Aaron J. Rose

MA, Wilmington University, 2002

BS, Lock Haven University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2023

Dedication

The journey of completing my doctorate degree was one of the hardest goals I ever accomplished during my educational career. This study is dedicated to my family members and friends who have provided love, support, and encouragement. I would like to thank my wife, Mary Ellen Rose, for her unconditional love, support, sacrifices, and understanding during the pursuit of my doctorate degree. A special thank you to my son, Aaron J. Rose, Jr. and stepson, Ward Schetter, for their love, encouragement, and support. To my parents, Burns Allen IV and Laverne Elizabeth Rose, I can thank them enough for always being there physically, emotionally, and spiritually. To my siblings, Burns Allen Rose III, Atiba Rose Sr., and Ayana Paskins, along with their families, I appreciate the love and support. In addition, I must thank my two girls (dogs), Daisy and Dora, for their company, especially during many late nights and for their unconditional love.

This research is dedicated to the memory of my nephew, Atiba Rose Jr., who is in our hearts and missed by so many. The study is also dedicated to the memory of our dogs, Cooper, Snickers, Tucker, Bernie, and Reeses, who provided so much joy and happiness. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank God for his strength and guidance throughout this doctoral process.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

iv

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Schools leaders are increasingly undertaking a range of reforms, including shifting their codes of conduct to include more opportunities for social emotional learning, implementing positive behavioral intervention supports, educating staff about the effects of trauma on development, raising critical consciousness about the racism and implicit bias, and increasing mental health resources and supports (Fenning & Jenkins, 2019). Since the mid-1990s there has been a shift in schools from the traditional punitive way of dealing with challenging behavior to something quite different called restorative practice (O'Reilly, 2017). To increase safety and address the rise in violent behavior, "zero tolerance" policies were implemented through the federal Gun-Free School Act of 1994, which required that any student in possession of a weapon on school grounds be expelled from school for no lesson than one year. The development of this punitive policy was to assist leaders with better approaches for policing students' conducts by employing tough disciplinary action and subsequently providing a safer learning environment (Alnaim, 2018). However, reactionary events led to unplanned implications that proved to be harmful to many learners. Gomez at el. (2020) shared that recent research implied that students of color and students in poverty are disproportionately disciplined using exclusionary measures.

Lustick (2017) argued that the same misunderstandings that exist with traditional forms of discipline carry over through new interventions making antiracist and cross-cultural tools more relevant to address racial disproportionality. Exclusionary discipline strategies such as suspensions put students at higher risk of poor attendance, low grades,

and failure to graduate (Anderson et al., 2019). Research shows that suspension is in fact negatively related to academic achievement (Anderson et al., 2019).

Discipline in U.S. public schools has been mirroring patterns observed in the U.S. criminal justice system (Welch, 2017). The school-to-prison pipeline refers to a system of institutional forces that disproportionately target some groups of students for removal from school through detention, suspension, or expulsion. Current literature on the school-to-prison pipeline does not acknowledge the deep cultural impact zero-tolerance policies have had, or, in turn, the deep work administrators must do to shift that culture (Lustick et al., 2020). Hall et al. (2021) shared that the school-to-prison pipeline describes how youth from disadvantaged backgrounds became incarcerated at an increasing rate due to strict punitive discipline.

The structure of the public school system has been inherently punitive and dehumanizing for decades, which makes the push for a restorative policy challenging— but necessary (Hall et al., 2021). Guhungu's (2018, as cited in Lustick et al., 2020) analysis of the 2011–2012 Crime and Safety Survey data revealed that, as administrators strive to reduce suspension rates, teachers feel underprepared to address conflict in their classrooms.

Garnett et al. (2020) shared that exclusionary discipline procedures continue to negatively affect educational outcomes for students from specific, racial, income, and ability classifications. Restorative practices is an approach to alleviate and ease the inequalities shown with exclusionary discipline by focusing on improving the school climate and culture (Garnett et al., 2020). Winn (2018) argued that a systemic and

philosophical paradigm shift in schools is required, to address inequity and build

relationships through restorative education. Over the past 5 years from 2016 to 2021, a

growing number of schools across the United States have begun embracing restorative

education approaches to respond to and prevent school-based conflict, bullying, and

violence. Increasingly, restorative practices are being adopted as the official policy of

school districts, with notable examples in Denver, Oakland, and New York City schools

(New York City Department of Education, 2019). Aligning school systems towards a

more restorative response requires strong leadership, vision, and empowerment among

administrators, faculty, staff, students, and the community. School leaders who wish to

implement restorative justice practices need to understand the importance of correlating it

with relevant leadership strategies.

This study provides school administrators' insight on effective leadership

strategies to support restorative practices which may prove to better support the needs of

students of color, students with disabilities, and students in poverty. The study outcome

may promote social change by identifying areas in which school leaders can build

professional capacity, knowledge, and skills to use more effectively identified leadership

behaviors and positively affect how discipline issues are handled.

As a result of the increase in the number of unique incidents, which include

violence, weapons, vandalism, substances, harassment, intimidation, and bullying, the

rural northeast school district decided to implement restorative circles during the 2019–

2020 school year. The problem was that administrators struggle to implement leadership

strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues

in the classroom. The purpose of the qualitative study was to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. The study was based on the conceptual framework of shared leadership theory and restorative justice theory. For this qualitative study, I conducted semistructured interviews with school district administrators and teachers from the K-8 school district.

In the rest of Chapter 1, I explain the background, research problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, the scope of the study, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

Zero-tolerance policies were initially implemented to assure the public that schools were addressing violent behaviors; however, critics believed that the "one-size-fits-all" approach, created an unfair disciplinary model because it did not consider the student's intent or the circumstances surrounding the behavior. It is the responsibility of learning institutions to maintain the integrity and safety of the environment to allow for better learning experiences (Alnaim, 2018). This phenomenon of using punitive and more frequent discipline in predominantly minority schools reinforces prevailing perceptions of young minority males as delinquents and criminals and further validates the racial and ethnic disparities evident at all levels of criminal justice. In return, perceptions about the racial and ethnic composition of criminality also appear to influence social policy relative to public schools and education, intensifying student discipline in what appears to be a never-ending cycle (Welch, 2018).

Several studies have highlighted the insufficiencies of zero-tolerance policies and their failures as the standard system for effective discipline in schools (Alnaim, 2018). Although the significance of the students' and faculty members' safety while in school is most highlighted, administrators and educators also have the responsibility of handling the cases on an individual basis and not imposing a consistent disciplinary action, the circumstances notwithstanding. The zero-tolerance policy focuses on removing disruptive students from the school. However, the cause of disagreement arises regarding whether suspension and expulsion as disciplinary actions benefit the punished student or it only creates a safer and better learning environment for the remaining students (Alnaim, 2018). Zero-tolerance policies were meant for weapon control; however, many states have included an ever-growing list of behaviors that still do not guarantee the safety of school faculty and students. Policies created to handle violent behavior are being used to address minor infractions such as disrespect, profanity, tardiness, school absences, and noncompliance.

The effects of overusing the zero-tolerance policies to discipline the students are profoundly negative. Given that exclusionary disciplinary practices remove students from the classroom, potentially breaking bonds between students and teachers, it seems likely that the increased use of suspensions will result in negative perceptions of school climate (Huang & Anyon, 2020). A recent study showed that students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions or in-school suspensions generally had poorer perceptions of school climate and more negative attitudes toward schooling than their nondisciplined peers (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Findings indicated that students who have been

suspended (in-school or out-of-school) reported worse perception of disciplinary structure and school bonding than those students who were not disciplined (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Students with out-of-school suspensions reported greater disengagement than their peers who were not suspended (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Punitive discipline, particular suspension, and expulsion had serious negative consequences for students concerning education as well as later life outcomes (Welch, 2018). School districts should, therefore, not only start handling discipline on a case-by-case basis but also develop more sensible and flexible policies that encompass all the confounding factors that should be put into consideration when dealing with students with disabilities (Alnaim, 2018).

Recent news and climate change in our schools underscore the importance of building positive relationships in our classrooms and working to resolve conflict (Silverman & Mee, 2018) more constructively. To address disproportionalities in suspensions for students of color, many districts have prohibited schools from suspending students for willful defiance of school authorities and implemented restorative justice programs (RJPs) that address student misconduct using alternative conflict resolution practices (Hashim et at., 2018). The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP, 2017) suggested that an alternate to zero-tolerance policies is to focus on building relationships and establishing a community by being proactive instead of reactive. One of the advantages of restorative practices over punitive discipline is the ability to create specialized solutions for each situation, which is the opposite of what zero-tolerance policies attempt to accomplish (Welch, 2018).

The restorative approach to discipline is a promising way to thwart punitive discipline and its troubling consequences for students, particularly minorities. Research indicates there are many positive outcomes of restorative justice in both criminal justice and educational institutions. If implemented more broadly within schools, restorative justice may appreciably reduce student offending, increase perceptions of safety, enhance learning, promote positive interactions, and reduce school inequalities and disadvantages for minority students. And, if minority students are no longer disproportionately disciplined, the presence of many minority students will no longer signify a risk that needs managing (Welch, 2018). According to Gregory et al. (2020), school leaders need to create a welcoming space where all students feel like they are a part of the class and that they belong. School leaders can address their own biases and racial positionality, including White privilege, to increase diverse students' school connectedness (La Salle et al., 2020). Schools must integrate restorative principles, processes, and practices into the school infrastructure to support a whole school restorative approach (Kidde, 2017). Restorative justice as an ethos honors young people not just as students but as complex individuals with many different needs and desires (Bruhn, 2020). Doing something wrong is not seen as grounds for exclusion but rather an opportunity to build and repair relationships (Bruhn, 2020). Restorative justice provides school community members with a framework for the prevention and intervention of school violence (Katic et al., 2020).

As the school leader, the climate of the school is dependent on the principal, and it is a key factor in student behavior and student achievement (Boudreaux & Davis,

2019). First-hand experience in restorative practice (RP) and modeling from leadership was seen as fundamental to leading change in the schools (Gregory et al., 2020). A key to success is when administrators model RP using restorative language throughout the school, advocate for equity through data monitoring, participating in RP training and circles, and building relationships with staff, students, and families (Gregory et al., 2020). Leaders need to be direct and intentional, even if it makes people uncomfortable (Gregory et al., 2020). Support from administrators include a personal commitment to restorative beliefs along with concrete actions align school policies and procedures with a restorative philosophy (Gregory et al., 2020). Administrative support can manifest actions such as designating space in the building for restorative conferences, allocating time in the schedule for community-building circles among staff and students, and assigning personnel to advance the initiative (Gregory et al., 2020). Sebastian et al. (2017) found that school leaders who focus on teacher development through effective leadership help teachers increase their capacity. Crimmins-Crocker (2018) shared that differentiating between teachers' and principals' view of effective leadership is essential within a school setting as effective leadership does not have a unified definition. As a result, administrators are challenged with finding leadership strategies to support the implementation of restorative education to reduce student discipline in the classroom.

Problem Statement

In a rural Northeast Title 1 public school, there has been an increase in discipline referrals, specifically reported unique incidents, over the 3 years leading up to the 2019–2020 school year. Incidents include violence, weapons, vandalism, substances,

harassment, intimidation, and bullying. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reported in 2019, there were 19,795 unique incidents in 2016–2017, 24, 938 unique incidents in 2017–2018, and 28,121 unique incidents in 2018–2019. During each of the subsequent years, the reported unique incident numbers continued to rise. Due to this increase, the NJDOE supported districts with resources and training to promote a positive and safe school climate during the 2018–2019 school year. The problem to be addressed in this study is that, in a rural Northeast Title 1 public school, administrators struggle to implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

Research shows that suspension is negatively related to academic achievement (Anderson et al., 2019). Given that exclusionary disciplinary practices remove students from the classroom, potentially breaking bonds between students and teachers, it seems likely that the increased use of suspensions will result in negative perceptions of school climate (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Exclusionary discipline strategies such as suspensions put students at higher risk of poor attendance, low grades, and failure to graduate (Anderson et al., 2019). Current studies noted that there has been an increase in punitive discipline in early childhood education (Jacobsen et al., 2019). Punitive school discipline is often exclusionary and is theoretically rooted in a zero-tolerance policy (Hall et al., 2021). Exclusionary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, have particularly negative consequences for students and are being used with increasing frequency (Welch, 2018).

Gomez at el. (2020) shared that recent research has implied that students of color and students in poverty are disproportionately disciplined using exclusionary measures. Lustick (2017) argued that the same misunderstandings that exist with traditional forms of discipline carry over through new interventions making antiracist and cross-cultural tools more relevant to address racial disproportionality. Exclusionary discipline has harmful effects on students, families, and the school community and disproportionately affects students of color, students with disabilities, students struggling academically, and students in poverty (Gregory et al., 2021; Nese et al., 2021; Welch, 2018). Persistent disparities in exclusionary discipline procedures continue to cause adverse educational outcomes for students from specific, racial, income, and ability categories (Garnett et al., 2020). Exclusionary discipline removes students from the learning environment and has been practiced in schools regardless of its effectiveness to improve student behavior (Nese et al., 2021). Students with out-of-school suspensions reported greater disengagement than their peers who were not suspended (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Breedlove et al. (2020) shared that many schools still utilize exclusionary practices, which can further disengage and disconnect students from the learning environment. According to the most recent Civil Right Data Collection from 2015–2016, there were approximately 2.6 million suspensions and 120,800 expulsions in the United States (Office of Civil Rights, 2018). Furthermore, African American students are suspended at a rate of 8%, which is twice as much as White or Hispanic students who amount to a much more significant proportion of the population (Harper et al., 2019).

The consequences of new exclusionary discipline within educational institutions not only discipline students internally but also refer students to law enforcement for violating school policies because of government mandates, such as zero-tolerance policies that require police intervention (Welch, 2018). Hall et al. (2021) shared that the school-to-prison pipeline describes how youth from disadvantaged backgrounds became incarcerated at an increasing rate due to strict punitive discipline. Winn (2018) has argued that a systemic and philosophical paradigm shift in schools is required, to address inequity and build relationships through restorative education. Recent studies found that dialogue between administrators and teachers is key to agreeing on expectations, systems, and practices (Lustick, 2020). Many challenges come with achieving widespread buy-in, but it starts from those in key decision-making roles to prioritize the policy (Hall et al., 2021). Educational leaders across the country must be aware of the barriers to implementation and establish strategic, intentional plans about how to overcome them (Hall et al., 2021). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. The challenge is that the zero-tolerance mentality is still ingrained in a lot of our staff members' brains because of their training and school experience (Hall et al., 2021). Administrators need to consider healthy development experiences for their students as they spend many hours at school regularly (Breedlove et al., 2020).

There exists a need to establish social emotional learning pedagogies like restorative practices at the elementary school level to inform and sustain long-term

positive change within school communities (Dyson et al., 2021). A restorative approach to education emphasizes that educators play a critical role in building relationships amongst school stakeholders (Webb, 2021). The importance of principals' leadership does not reduce the importance of sharing leadership with those responsible for the daily implementation of initiatives (Judkins et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, the principal plays a critical role in the implementation process but rarely is one person able to implement a complex school-wide change initiative without considerable assistance from many other stakeholders (Judkins et al., 2019). The structure of RP programs is more conducive to processes that have been shown to reduce implicit bias in social interactions (Ispa-Landa, 2018) and to building authentic, caring relationships between teachers and students (Brown, 2017). Qualitative evidence from Sandwick et al. (2019) suggests that time spent building teacher-student relationships during RP implementation increases teachers' abilities to read students' social and emotional cues to proactively address their needs and prevent misbehavior.

A growing body of literature documents how restorative justice approaches have successfully lowered rates of exclusionary punishment, reduced disproportionality, and improved student outcomes such as graduation rates and attendance (Anyon et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 2012; Payne & Welch, 2018). Evidence points to the role of restorative justice in helping students feel heard and cared for in their school communities (Brown, 2017; Cavanagh et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). School leaders who want to work within a restorative approach must grapple with the fact that removing punitive discipline policies can be unsettling and difficult for teachers, who may feel insecure about

fostering the relationships that are foundational to restorative work (Bruhn, 2020).

Educational professionals across the country must be aware of the barriers to

implementation and establish strategic, intentional plans about how to overcome them

(Hall et al., 2021). A critical challenge of implementing restorative practices is the

resistance to change (Hall et al., 2021). Many challenges come with achieving

widespread buy-in, but it starts from those in key decision-making roles to prioritize the

policy (Hall et al., 2021).

Suspension bans and RJP have quickly gained prominence among policymakers

and practitioners over the past 5 years (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017; Sumner et al., 2010),

yet there is little evidence on the efficacy of these policies (Hashim et at., 2018). Current

literature on the school-to-prison pipeline does not acknowledge the deep cultural impact

zero-tolerance policies have had, or, in turn, the deep work administrators must do to

shift that culture (Lustick et al., 2020). The school stakeholders in this study identified

concrete needs to ensure that restorative practice implementation was sustainable and

effective including time, training, resources and professional development, administrative

support, and integration with existing school-based initiatives (Garnett et al., 2020).

Research from several disciplines shows that the successful implementation of any

school-wide initiative relies heavily on school leaders to create the conditions for success

(e.g., Judkins, 2014; Sebastian et al., 2017). School stakeholders identified time, training,

resources and professional development, administrative support, and integration with

existing school-based initiatives as critical during the early implementation of RP

(Garnett et al., 2019). Administrative support can manifest actions such as designating

space in the building for restorative conferences, allocating time in the schedule for community-building circles among staff and students, and assigning personnel to advance the initiative (Gregory et al., 2020). Single workshops were not seen as sufficient, consistent with existing research (Shernoff et al., 2017). Strategies for fostering schoolwide buy-in include having regular opportunities to participate in the RP process, celebrating small steps in improving school climate or interactions, and sharing personal and cultural values (Gregory et al., 2020).

Doing something wrong is not seen as grounds for exclusion but rather an opportunity to build and repair relationships (Bruhn, 2020). The CDC states that school violence prevention programs are most effective when they are evidence-based and rigorously evaluated, strengthened by community-wide prevention activities that are strategically planned and implemented, and evaluated through schools, community leaders, organizations, and families (CDC, 2018). A lack of support from administrative leaders and entities was reported to be problematic in effectively implementing restorative practices on the school level (Hall et al., 2021). The radical nature of the culture change and shift in philosophy from punitive discipline to restorative practices, and the length of time and effort it takes to integrate through all levels of the educational structure is presented as a challenge throughout the literature (Morrison et al., 2005; Payne & Welch, 2015; Schiff, 2018). To reap the benefits of restorative practices and see the transformational growth, commitment to the long-term goal requires patience on behalf of education policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents (Hall et al., 2021). A system that has continuously dehumanized certain groups of students must be

met with a movement based on human connection and dignity (Hall et al., 2021). An integral part of the discipline reform of restorative practices encourages educators to handle discipline "in-house" or in-class before relying on administration or sending students out of class (Gregory et al., 2021). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. Hulvershorn et al. (2018) found that an understanding of the effects of zero-tolerance policies in schools has resulted in the rethinking of approaches to prevent conflict and create a healthy school climate. Kervick et al. (2020) stressed the importance of creating a culture of collaborating with the staff as well as the families and community to better serve the students. A current study noted that it is crucial to have a shared leadership approach to create buy-in when implementing restorative practices (Kervick et al., 2020). Horner et al. (2020) found that staff buy-in and leadership, along with ongoing support, were key to successful implementation of restorative practices. The problem is that administrators struggle to implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies in a rural NE school district that are intended to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. As restorative practice approaches become more popular alternatives to traditional punitive school discipline strategies, more rigorous research is required to investigate the effectiveness of such programs and to

understand the mechanisms by which they may influence student outcomes (Gomez et al., 2020). Due to the nascent nature of restorative practices framework, research is far behind practice in schools, and knowledge about barriers to implementation is limited (Hall et al., 2021). Emerging research has begun to examine the implementation and efficacy of restorative practices as an alternative to punitive discipline approaches (Kervick et al., 2020). Relatively little is known about restorative practices policy or the reasons why some schools have not had effective implementation (Hall et al., 2021). Research findings indicate shortcomings of current research in informing practice and the likelihood of a sustained practice-to-research gap (Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). I interviewed eight elementary and/or middle school district administrators and seven school district classroom teachers to gain an understanding of how administrators implement leadership strategies to support the challenges associated with the paradigm shift from exclusionary practices to restorative circles.

Research Question

How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was developed from DeMatthews's (2014) shared leadership theory and Wachtel's (2013) restorative justice theory. DeMatthews (2014) shared that when facilitating a shared approach, principals must adopt a transparent process to show how decisions are made at their school. All staff members have to feel included in the shared decision-making process and must realize

that some decisions cannot be made through a democratic or shared process (DeMatthews, 2014). Principals should be aware of the scope of shared decision-making, the advantages and drawbacks of engaging in the shared decision-making process, and strategies for engaging in shared decision-making (DeMatthews, 2014). Leadership theorists found four potential benefits to the shared decision-making process (DeMatthews, 2014). At the school level, involving the teachers and staff members in the decision-making is most likely to increase the quality of the decision, the degree to which the decision is accepted by the school, overall teacher and staff satisfaction with school leadership, and teacher leadership (DeMatthews, 2014).

Quality decisions are more likely when principals include teachers and staff members in decisions if the participants are knowledgeable and informed (DeMatthews, 2014). Principals who think strategically and are aware of their own weaknesses can capitalize on the expertise of their teachers and staff members (DeMatthews, 2014). Additionally, a shared process can enhance the knowledge and development of other participants engaged in the process (DeMatthews, 2014).

In origin, RP is derived from "restorative justice" within the criminal justice system, where the focus shifts from retribution and punishment of an offense to repairing harm- to both people and relationships- caused by this offense (Zehr, 2002). The change from a judicial to a school setting followed in the 1990s in Australia (Wachtel, 2013), after which the term *restorative justice* is replaced by *restorative practice* and refers to a process of mediation or reconciliation between victims and offenders, and by extension other members of the school community (Hopkins, 2004). RP is considered an approach

which provides a philosophy and a framework of proactive and reactive methods toward building and restoring relationships in schools and thereby reducing conflicts (Gregory et al., 2015; Wachtel, 2013; Hendry, 2009). The term "restorative practices" refers to school-based practices that are rooted in restorative theory as opposed to traditional, punitive models of discipline (Johnstone, 2011; Kehoe et al., 2018).

Restorative justice theory and practice continue to call for educational and justice systems that move away from responses to harm based primarily on individual behavior and toward more holistic strategies focused on movement building and inclusive social relationships (Schiff, 2018). Restorative education creates just and equitable learning environments where all students and adults are acknowledged and accepted for who they are, irrespective of race, gender, identity, or other cultural identity; nurture healthy relationships and, repair harm and resolve conflict (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Wachtel (2016) shared that restorative practices find ways to decrease discipline, improve student behavior, provide effective leadership, and restore relationships.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative research study design was informed by Patton (2015) and Smith et al. (2009). A qualitative research best practice is to explore and examine the meaning and/or essence of shared lived experiences through the participants' perception of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). I used a basic qualitative design for this research study to focus on the essence of lived experiences of public-school administrators and teachers through their perceptions of leadership strategies to help support the reduction of school discipline in the classroom. The reason for selecting a qualitative research design was to

investigate the meaning of the lived experience of the participants through their perception of a phenomenon and through the use of in-depth semistructured interviews (Smith et al., 2009). A quantitative research design would not have been appropriate for my study because of the need to investigate the participants' perceptions about their lived experiences with the phenomenon. Patton (2015) shared that a quantitative approach should contain generating numerical data, a statistical analysis of specific variables, and generalizations of data outcomes to a broader population, which would not allow for exploration and analysis of how the participants make meaning of their lived experiences.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach is used to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Taylor (1985) shared that people are "self-interpreting beings," which can be defined as actively engaged in interpreting the events, objects, and people in their lives. Smith and Osborn (2008) discovered that IPA is often a dual interpretation process as the participants make meaning of the world first and then the researcher tries to decode that meaning and understand what it is like from the participant's perspective. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) stated that eliciting rich, detailed, and first-person accounts of experiences and phenomena under investigation is the primary interest of IPA researchers. Semistructured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews are the most popular method to collect the data because it allows the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real-time (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA was the best approach for investigating the lived experiences of the participants about how they make sense from

their perceptions of a specific phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

Accordingly, seven school district classroom teachers and eight school district administrators shared their viewpoints about their experiences regarding their perceptions of leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom. I conducted in-depth interviews to gain critical insight from school district teachers' and school district administrators' perceptions about leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom. IPA techniques were utilized to explore and examine the data retrieved to identify themes and patterns from the participants' interviews (Alase, 2017). The data were collected through semistructured interviews that align with my research questions. The use of semistructured interviews provided flexibility and an adaptive method of data collection that encapsulated the context, complexity, and detail of the participants' experiences and perceptions about leadership strategies that support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

I explored how the participants' experiences and perceptions are interpreted, understood, experienced, and created through an inductive analysis of the interview data (Mason, 2002). The key advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research show that gathering unique, personalized data is always important. O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014) shared that qualitative researchers seek to gain insight and discover a deeper meaning of the phenomenon. I selected the qualitative research method because it is the best method to understand how certain people, and even certain groups, think on a deeper level. The

study's purpose was to explore and interpret perceptions about the problem, so a basic qualitative design is appropriate.

Possible Types and Sources of Information or Data

The data collected within this study were obtained through one-on-one interviews in my school's conference room, any other agreed-upon location within the school district that could provide the privacy and resources needed, or virtually. Due to the data collection methods selected, I developed an interview protocol. The interview protocol contained instructions for the process of the interview, the interview questions, and a space where I could record responses to the questions. Information gathered from the interviews was classified, coded, and reviewed to uncover themes and patterns that emerged from the data collection process (Creswell, 2012).

Definitions

The following terms will be referred to throughout this study and will impact the overall understanding:

Zero-tolerance: Zero-tolerance refers to policies that treat minor infractions of school rules as criminal due to mandated predetermined consequences that are typically severe, punitive and exclusionary in response to student misbehavior (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2021). The use of zero-tolerance policies negatively affects students of color through biased application of discipline and suspension trends (ACLU, 2021).

Restorative justice: Restorative justice, within the criminal justice system, is where the focus shifts from retribution and punishment of an offense to repairing harm—to both people and relationships—caused by this offense (Zehr, 2002).

Restorative practices: The IIRP found that restorative practices strengthen relationships between individual students and the school community by reducing crime, violence, and bullying while improving student behavior and connectedness (Watchel, 2016). Restorative practices also focuse on repairing harm and restoring relationships through effective leadership (Watchel, 2016).

Restorative circles: A restorative circle is practice used to develop relationships and build community by providing each student an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in a safe space (IIRP, 2017). The restorative circle allows each individual the opportunity to share their feelings and perspectives in a safe atmosphere of respect and equality (IIRP, 2017). The restorative circle serves many purposes, including conflict resolution, repairing relationships, support, decision-making, information exchange, and relationship development instead of win-lose positioning (IIRP, 2017, Roca, Inc., n.d.).

Shared leadership: Shared leadership allows teachers and staff members opportunities to share their perspectives and building meaningful relationships (DeMatthews, 2014). When teachers and staff members have influence over decisions, they are more likely to accept decisions and work diligently to implement those decisions (DeMatthews, 2014). A shared approach to decision-making provides teachers and staff members with opportunities to better understand decisions, how they will be affected, and a forum to share their fears, worries, and concerns (DeMatthews, 2014).

School-to-prison pipeline: The school-to-prison pipeline is a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (ACLU, 2021). Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services (ACLU, 2021). Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out (ACLU, 2021).

Assumptions

My assumptions for this study included that the participants selected understand the importance of adhering to the requirements for participation. I assumed that the participants would be open, honest, and reflective of their experiences, knowledge, and emotions related to the research. However, school administrators were located using state websites through the New Jersey Report Card portal. Teachers were located on individual school websites as well as the school district website. Finally, I assumed that all participants would answer the interview questions in a true and unbiased manner.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study included teachers and administrators in a rural Northeast public school district and the analysis of viewpoints about perceived leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. This study focused specifically on how administrators implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. This focus was selected because there is a need for more assistance from leadership to be able to develop an environment that can sustain restorative practices (Hall et al., 2021). In addition, little is known about

restorative practices policy, or the reasons why some schools have not had effective implementation (Hall et al., 2021). I explored the perceptions of school district administrators and teachers because these are the professionals who are uniquely positioned to provide insight to answer the study's research questions. To ensure transferability, I have provided a thorough description of the pertinent research context and the assumptions that are central to the research so that comparisons to other contexts can be made.

The study was delimited to the perspectives of school administrators and classroom teachers only and did not include nonclassroom teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, child study team members, or support staff members. A second delimitation was that each study participant represented their own view and did not represent all teachers and administrators in the rural northeast K-8 school district. Two additional delimitations include that the results are specific to this cohort of school district teachers' and administrators' perspectives who are current employees in a rural K-8 school district in this region and that my study is primarily focused on NJDOE guidance. In turn, the knowledge of contextual factors that influence the rotation of school discipline in the classroom and the use of restorative practices if restricted to the teachers' and administrators' perspectives included in this research. The participants answered the interview questions related to administrative leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom; therefore, no report on any other issues that might affect student discipline issues in the classroom were included. The study was not intended to point out concerns or negative effects related to administrative leadership

strategies. Also, the purpose was not to determine the effectiveness of individual school leadership nor classify school administrators as ineffective for the purpose of evaluation.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was how frequently educational discipline policy changes. A second limitation was that the small sample size may affect saturation. Additionally, some participants may not have had and/or observed the problem investigated and may be worried about their anonymity and less likely to share their viewpoints. Another limitation of the research was that the trustworthiness of the interview data collected remains dependent on the knowledge of the participants and the school leadership strategies practiced in their respective schools in the district. Two more limitations included the transferability of the findings by future researchers to other settings or cases because of the limited scope of the study and that the perspectives from this participant sample may not be the broader perspective of all district teachers and administrators in other states. Dependability and transferability were enhanced through alignment between data collection plans and the research questions and the use of thick descriptions. The use of member checks enhanced credibility. Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of restorative programs and understand the mechanisms by which they may influence student discipline outcomes. In my current position as an elementary school principal, my personal biases include my leadership style and approaches in addition to current district practices.

Significance

In this study, I explored how rural, northeast school administrators struggle to implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. The study was significant to understanding how or whether school administrators have identified specific leadership strategies or barriers when implementing restorative practices to decrease student suspensions and behavior referrals and potentially improve students and teacher relationships (Weber & Vereenooghe, 2020). Kervick et al. (2020) shared the schools across the United States are implementing restorative practices to reduce exclusionary discipline and improve the school climate. When leaders invest in a restorative philosophy through dialogue, they continue to reframe the culture and change it toward one where students and educators are flourishing (Webb, 2021). Every interaction an individual has in school in some capacity impacts future decisions by that student regarding interacting with others and how they trust, care, learn, and lead with others (Webb, 2021). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators.

Culturally relevant strategies must be utilized to ensure restorative practices have their desired effect not only on behavior but on shifting the culture of schools and the paradigm of disciplinary power that restorative methods make possible (Lustick, 2017). Qualitative evidence from Sandwick et al. (2019) suggests that time spent building teacher–student relationships during RP implementation increases teachers' abilities to

read students' social and emotional cues to proactively address their needs and prevent misbehavior. Restorative practice leaders indicated that shared leadership is the key to successful schoolwide implementation (Gregory et al., 2020). Restorative circles can serve to increase a sense of belonging and inclusion (Gregory et al., 2020). A growing body of literature documents how restorative justice approaches have successfully lowered rates of exclusionary punishment, reduced disproportionality, and improved student outcomes such as graduation rates and attendance (Anyon et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 2012; Payne & Welch, 2018). Evidence points to the role of restorative justice in helping students feel heard and cared for in their school communities (Brown, 2017; Cavanagh et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). To address disproportionalities in suspensions for students of color, many districts have prohibited schools from suspending students for willful defiance of school authorities and implemented RJPs that address student misconduct using alternative conflict resolution practices (Hashim et at., 2018). Leaders must ensure that students and staff are known, and dialogue is the medium in which knowing takes place. Through this knowing, relationships are established, empathy is created, and an effective community of learning is created and strengthened daily through restorative dialogic processes (Webb, 2021).

School stakeholders identified time, training, resources and professional development, administrative support, and integration with existing school-based initiatives as critical during early implementation of RP (Garnett et al., 2019). When implemented comprehensively, restorative practices have many benefits including improved climate and safety, increased school connectedness, the development of

conflict resolution skills, improved academic performance and social emotional learning (González et al., 2018). These benefits have led schools to utilize restorative practices to improve student–teacher relationships and increase mutual understanding which can work together to reduce disparate discipline outcomes (Gregory et al., 2016; Lewis, 2009; Welsh & Little, 2018). A key to success is when administrators model RP using restorative language throughout the school, advocate for equity through data monitoring, participating in RP training and circles, and building relationships with staff, students, and families (Gregory et al., 2020). Restorative practices have the potential to strengthen students' interpersonal relationships with peers and adults (Breedlove et al., 2020). There is a need for more assistance from leadership to be able to develop an environment that can sustain restorative practices (Hall et al., 2021). A lack of support from administrative leaders and entities was reported to be problematic in effectively implementing restorative practices on the school level (Hall et al., 2021). It is likely that if administrative leaders encourage ongoing learning opportunities, promote the collective sharing of successful strategies, identify a time in the school day and in staff meetings for restorative practices, and conduct their own work restoratively then teachers will also feel empowered to prioritize restorative practices in the classroom (Hall et al., 2021).

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to introduce the study, to provide background information from the research literature, present the problem and purpose statements, describe the nature of the study, and highlight the research questions. In addition, I described the conceptual framework, provided definitions for meaningful words and

terms included in the study, and to identify and explain the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. In Chapter 2, I will introduce current existing research about leadership strategies in schools, the impact of leadership strategies, and factors to support the reduction of student discipline, which identified a gap in practice in literature. This gap will be addressed within this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. In Chapter 2, a scholarly review of the current literature relevant to the research study is presented and discussed. The literature review is organized into three overarching topics: (a) leadership strategies in schools, (b) the impact of leadership strategies, and (c) factors to support the reduction of student discipline. As articulated in Chapter 1, a gap exists in literature studying how administrators implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. In addition, I examined DeMatthews's (2014) shared leadership theory and Wachtel's (2013, 2016) restorative justice theory. Among their many responsibilities, principals are expected to engage with the community, create systems that promote teacher leadership, and ensure that decisions are transparent and collaborative. Leadership models that combine democratic, shared, social justice, and distributed leadership principles have the potential to increase the quality of decisions and create a more ethical school (DeMatthews, 2014). Although school leaders have been charged with overseeing state and federal mandates as they relate to school discipline, in this study, I investigated the leadership strategies that have been successful. Most of the existing studies have been qualitative in method, set in urban or international locations, and some assessed small samples sizes. Limited research has intentionally addressed restorative justice as an alternative to punitive discipline, where most studies came from international locations and impoverished areas. The literature review shares how

leadership strategies impact the school setting, discusses the impact of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom, and highlights factors that may affect school discipline reform efforts. Detailed studies were reviewed, analyzed, and provided insight into the existing literature associated with the purpose of the study.

Literature Search Strategy

The libraries I used to access the databases for this study included Walden and EBSCOhost. The research databases I searched included Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education: a SAGE Full-Text Collection, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, Scholar Works, Google Scholar, Soc-INDEX with Full-Text, and Academic Search Complete. I used these resources in conjunction with the online journal databases of publishers Taylor and Francis, Wiley, and Emerald. Advanced database searches of peer-reviewed journals and traditional printed books were used to ensure saturation of the literature. Advanced database searches were completed using two to three of the descriptive terms together (e.g., leadership strategies, restorative justice, school leader, implementation, school discipline, challenges, barriers, supports, and leadership.) The search produced over 17,000 articles analyzing various leadership strategies and aspects of student discipline. In narrowing the scope aligned to the problem statement, an analysis of the following articles proved relevant to this study. Every effort was made to ascertain the most current scholarly research on the subject; however, some earlier sources were consulted to establish an in-depth understanding of key concepts.

I performed multiple Boolean searches using the keywords. The searches yielded seminal and current articles pertaining to discussions of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. In addition, I selected articles pertaining to discussions about how leadership strategies impact the school setting, the impact of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom, and factors that may affect school discipline reform efforts. The inclusion of older articles helped provide background information and relevant information as this field of study has progressed. The older articles provided discussions of various theories associated with the study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was developed from shared leadership theory (DeMatthews, 2014) and restorative justice theory (Wachtel, 2013; 2016). Principals' many duties include engaging with the community, creating systems that promote teacher leadership, and ensuring that decisions are transparent and collaborative. Leadership models that combine democratic, shared, social justice, and distributed leadership principles have the potential to increase the quality of decisions and create a more ethical school (DeMatthews, 2014). In order to facilitate a shared approach, principals must use transparency to demonstrate how decision making occurs in their school (DeMatthews, 2014). Teachers and staff members must feel included in the decision-making process but must recognize that not all decisions can or will, be made through a democratic or shared process (DeMatthews, 2014). Principals should be aware of the continuum of shared decision-making, the benefits and pitfalls of engaging in

shared decision-making process, and strategies for engaging in shared decision-making (DeMatthews, 2014). Under the right circumstances, school administrators can benefit from engaging with teachers and staff in the decision-making process (DeMatthews, 2014). Principals and teachers who are involved in shared decision-making processes have opportunities to learn from experts or individuals with relevant experiences (DeMatthews, 2014). Shared leadership allows teachers and staff members opportunities to share their perspectives and building meaningful relationships (DeMatthews, 2014). When teachers and staff members have influence over decisions, they are more likely to accept decisions and work diligently to implement those decisions (DeMatthews, 2014). A shared approach to decision-making provides teachers and staff members with opportunities to better understand decisions, how they will be affected, and a forum to share their fears, worries, and concerns (DeMatthews, 2014).

Zehr (2002) found that RPs have that restorative mindset where the focus is on repairing and restoring harm caused by the offense instead of punishment and retaliation. A restorative practice approach focuses on building and restoring relationships to reduce conflict through proactive and reactive methods (Gregory et al., 2015; Wachtel, 2013; Hendry, 2009). RPs are school based practices that focus on restoring and repairing the relationship instead of traditional, punitive methods (Johnstone, 2011; Kehoe et al., 2018). There is a need for schools to move away from punitive discipline and move toward more holistic strategies that focus on inclusivity and relationships (Schiff, 2018). RPs in education can help create a school culture where all students and adults are accepted as they are regardless of race, gender, or identity (Evans & Vaandering, 2016).

Restorative education nurtures healthy relationships, restores relationships, and resolves disagreements (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Restorative education creates just and equitable learning environments where all students and adults are acknowledged and accepted for who they are, irrespective of race, gender, identity, or other cultural identity; nurture healthy relationships and, repair harm and resolve conflict (Evans & Vaandering, 2016).

Wachtel (2016) noted that the IIRP deems restorative justice to be subsection of restorative practices. As a social science, restorative practices looks to find ways to decrease bullying, improve student behavior, provide effective leadership, and repair relationships (Wachtel, 2016). The IIRP president, Ted Wachtel, found that the social science of restorative practices has a strong connection with theory, research, and practice in fields that are diverse such as social work, education, and criminal justice (Wachtel, 2018). Using the lens of different conceptualizations of shared leadership and restorative justice, I examined the three overarching topics: (a) leadership strategies in schools, (b) the impact of leadership strategies, and (c) factors to support the reduction of student discipline.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Leadership Strategies in Schools

Researchers advised not to underestimate the impact of school leadership on climate. Since the mid-1990s there has been a shift in schools from the traditional punitive way of dealing with challenging behavior to something quite different called restorative practice (O'Reilly, 2017). In contrast, restorative justice is commonly based

on an older understanding of wrongdoing such as that seen in aspects of the indigenous justice paradigms of the aboriginal inhabitants of North American and South Pacific continents (O'Reilly, 2017). In the example, crime is acknowledged as a violation of people and of interpersonal relationships that create obligations towards one another, the most important of which is putting right to wrongs (O'Reilly, 2017). Kidde (2017) noted that restorative practices schoolwide create a positive school climate where the focus is on relationship building and repairing harm.

Restorative practices are an approach that can improve school climate and student outcomes by shifting the imbalance of current school discipline practices (Kervick et al., 2020) RP is one approach that is gaining credibility and popularity to build classroom relationships (Silverman & Mee, 2018). Although communities have been living restoratively for generations, school-based restorative practices have grown in popularity in recent years as a response to the disproportionality of high suspension and expulsion rates in the United States (Hall et al., 2021). Relatively little is known about restorative practices policy or the reasons why some schools have not had effective implementation (Hall et al., 2021). Unfortunately, many schools still utilize exclusionary practice, which can further disengage and disconnect students from the learning environment (Breedlove et al., 2020). In hope of changing the use of punitive discipline, schools have begun to implement restorative practice (Breedlove et al., 2020). Barriers identified for implementation included punitive discipline dispositions, the parallel and conflicting practices of punitive and restorative practices, and implementation inconsistencies which facilitate discipline inequity (Joseph et al., 2021). Barriers identified in Joseph et al.'s

(2021) case study include punitive discipline ethos, conflict between restorative practices and punitive methods, implementation inconsistencies, and a failure to examine racial disproportionality in detention referrals.

Restorative justice practices introduce a different way to frame student relationships and provides an alternative of handling student misbehavior that strives toward accountability, repair and harmony (Joseph et al., 2021). This focus on relationships is a drastic shift in discipline ethos and must be addressed by school leaders well before implementation of restorative practices begins (Joseph et al., 2021). As explained by Goings et al. (2018), "school leaders have the important task of considering school culture, district policies and politics, and student history when making decisions that could potentially remove students from school" (p. 34). Restorative practices are effective and beneficial, but they must be worked in as punitive methods are pushed out (Joseph et al., 2021). Restorative practices is a paradigm shift for many educators (Gregory et al., 2020). Schools shift from deeply held beliefs that punishment is the primary deterrence for wrongdoing to beliefs that community building and strong relationships encourage right-doing in the first place (Gregory et al., 2020). Research in school discipline suggest that punitive and exclusionary sanctions have adverse effects on students and are disproportionately administered to students of color and low-income students (Gomez et al., 2020). School-based restorative justice practices have recently gained attention as an alternative disciplinary approach that emphasizes that reparation of harm and reconciliation among students involved in conflict (Gomez et al., 2020).

As RP approaches become more popular alternatives to traditional punitive school discipline strategies, more rigorous research is required to investigate the effectiveness of such programs and to understand the mechanisms by which they may influence student outcomes (Gomez et al., 2020). Measures of implementation fidelity, including levels of exposure, adherence, and quality of delivery may be expected to influence the effectiveness of RP programs adopted by schools (Gomez et al., 2020). Kervick et al. (2020) shared that schools across the United States are implementing restorative practices to reduce exclusionary discipline and improve the school climate. A growing number of researchers have begun to analyze restorative practice implementation and its effectiveness as an alternative to punitive discipline (Kervick et al., 2020). Schools have begun to integrate RP into existing efforts to support student behavior in order to more fully address exclusionary discipline disparity (Kervick et al., 2020). The field of research of RP as an alternative disciplinary system in schools is still emerging (Fronius, 2019).

Agreement among school leaders about purpose, implementation, and facilitation is the first step in ensuring consistent program adherence (Joseph et al., 2021). The reliance on punitive discipline in schools presents a barrier for restorative practice success (Joseph et al., 2021). Restorative justice is a framework that seeks to reframe conflict as a matter of harms to be healed rather than behavior to be punished (Zehr, 2019). Restorative practices refers to school-based policies that are rooted in restorative theory as opposed to traditional, punitive models of discipline (Johnstone, 2011; Kehoe et al., 2018). Administrators need to consider healthy development experiences for their

students as they spend many hours at school regularly (Breedlove et al., 2020). School administrators and their staff are increasingly implementing RP initiatives across the United States, including in large urban center such as Los Angeles, Denver, and New York City (Fronius et al., 2019). Recent reviews of research suggest RP hold promise for increasing a sense of community, reducing the use of exclusionary discipline, and narrowing racial disparities in suspension (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory & Evans, 2020).

Despite the proliferation of RP, new studies indicate that RP implementation is challenging and teachers need more training and support (Dorcemus, 2018; Schlesinger & Schmits-Earley, 2020). The comprehensive scope of RP initiatives can be unclear to administrators (Gregory & Evens, 2020). Schools are undertaking a range of reforms, including shifting their codes of conduct to include more opportunities for social emotional learning, implementing positive behavioral intervention supports, educating staff about the effects of trauma on development, raising critical consciousness about the racism and implicit bias, and increasing mental health resources and supports (Fenning & Jenkins, 2019). There exists a need to establish social emotional learning pedagogies like restorative practices at the elementary school level to inform and sustain long-term positive change within school communities (Dyson et al., 2021). A restorative approach to education emphasizes that educators play a critical role in building relationships amongst school stakeholders (Webb, 2021). In such a comprehensive understanding, RP is linked to all kinds of interactions that occur during the school day including its

ceremonies, curricula, physical environment, and the school culture itself (O'Reilly, 2019).

In 2014, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice launched the Positive School Discipline Initiative, requiring district administrators to reduce suspension rates; shift to positive behavioral interventions; and either reduce racial disproportionality in discipline outcomes or face litigation (Lustick, 2020). Districts have responded with suspension bans (Hashim & Dhaliwal, 2018), but that is only one way of measuring discipline reform (Lustick, 2020). School leaders strongly influence the learning environment and the work of teachers and staff (Baptiste 2019; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Some administrators have led teachers by inspiring toward a deeper sense of purpose in contributing to the transformation movement by working collectively to overcome challenges and achieve common goals (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

Promoting participation and developing a common language and understanding of values as a school leader will strengthen the school's organizational culture as evidenced through its norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions (Damanik & Aldridge, 2017). Engagement and commitment to an intended change (as well as the likelihood of success) increases when school leaders share or distribute leadership responsibilities, as one individual can rarely carry out the planning and implementation of an initiative (Judkins et al., 2019). The importance of principals' leadership does not reduce the importance of sharing leadership with those responsible for the daily implementation of initiatives (Judkins et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, the principal plays a critical role in the implementation process but rarely is one person able to implement a complex school-

wide change initiative without considerable assistance from many other stakeholders (Judkins et al., 2019). Recent studies suggest punitive disciplinary practices have increased within elementary and preschool settings (Jacobsen et al., 2019; Meek & Gilliam, 2016). It is imperative to ensure that restorative practices effectively address behavioral challenges in elementary-age children and thus build prosocial behaviors that promote educational success (Kervick et al., 2020).

The Impact of Leadership Strategies

Studies show that RJP improves relationships between students and staff members and it improves the overall school climate (Augustine et al., 2018; Reimer, 2019; Varnham et al., 2014). A recent study suggested that restorative philosophy and practices lend themselves to building a strong sense of coherence (Reimer, 2020). RJP gives people voice and a meaningful role to play in decisions that affect them (Reimer, 2020). When leaders invest in a restorative philosophy through dialogue, they continue to reframe the culture and change it toward one where students and educators are flourishing (Webb, 2021). Leading for restorative culture change requires continual investment in all relationships, first by school leadership, and ultimately by every member of the organization, such that through positive relations, a culture is created whereby each member takes ownership for constructing the culture (Webb, 2021). RJP emphasizes the importance of trusting relationships as central to building a strong community in the school with the intention to foster the type of environment that students need to learn and teachers need to effectively teach (Kaplan, 2020). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive

discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. Even experienced and capable teachers were challenged in implementing RP and the underlying beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about programming appeared to influence implementation (Humphrey et al., 2018). This research demonstrated how restorative justice creates a sense of coherence and emphasizes the importance of building trusting relationships.

Culturally relevant strategies must be utilized to ensure restorative practices have their desired effect not only on behavior but on shifting the culture of schools and the paradigm of disciplinary power that restorative methods make possible (Lustick, 2017). Restorative practices have the potential to strengthen the relationships between faculty and peers (Breedlove et al., 2020). School leadership play a vital role in the success of restorative practices. The transformative elements of restorative practices cannot be realized when punitive and inequitable practice persist (Joseph et al., 2021). School leaders are interested in avoiding barriers during early implementation should consider the potential for these barriers in their school to evade poor fidelity and inequitable practices (Joseph et al., 2021). Schools in Los Angeles that implemented restorative justice had a significant drop in suspension rates, but racial disparities persisted (Hashim et al., 2018). One possible cause for these persistent disparities was the use of ahistorical and colorblind intervention to approach a racialized issue (Joseph et al., 2021).

Lustick (2017) argued that the same misunderstandings that exist with traditional forms of discipline carry-over through new interventions making anti-racist and cross-cultural tools all the more relevant to address racial disproportionality. Administrators

implementing discipline related interventions should engage with and support teachers with opportunities for anti-bias and culturally responsive training that can enhance reflexivity, awareness, and the development of culturally responsiveness practices (Joseph et al., 2021). The focus on relationships is a drastic shift in discipline ethos and must be addressed by school leaders well before implementation of restorative practices begins (Joseph et al., 2021). Using restorative practices in schools as an attempt to narrow the discipline gap must be done intentionally with open and honest dialogue (Joseph et al., 2021). Failure to acknowledge and discuss racial inequity leads to haphazard introduction of change policy that can only result in the partial success of practices that have no chance of being fully recognized (Joseph et al., 2021). By recognizing these potential pitfalls, school leaders can identify best practice guidelines and commit to maintaining them (Joseph et al., 2021). Effective leadership throughout implementation is essential for restorative practices to truly re-shape the disciplinary ideology and policies in schools (Joseph et al., 2021). Restorative practices can be transformative, but they must be given the chance to be effective first (Joseph et al., 2021). Restorative justice practices introducing a different way to frame student relationships and provides an alternative of handling student misbehavior that strives toward accountability, repair and harmony (Joseph et al., 2021). To do so, conscientious and social justice school leadership must pave the way (Joseph et al., 2021). This research demonstrated school leaders must be intentional and be willing to discuss racial inequalities and disproportionality.

Despite the challenge of comparing distinct RP initiatives across schools, there is growing evidence that RP reduces the use of exclusionary discipline, based on findings from randomized control trial (Augustine et al., 2018), policy studies (Hashim et al., 2018), and numerous case studies (Armour, 2015; Manfield et al., 2018; Summer et al., 2010).

Exclusionary discipline strategies such as suspensions put students at higher risk of poor attendance, low grades, and failure to graduate (Anderson et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2011; Rausch et al., 2005; Skiba et al., 2014). Although research on the effects on RP on student outcomes has consisted mainly of qualitative and descriptive studies, with a notable dearth of rigorous RCT studies. The majority of these reports highlights reductions in school-level disciplinary outcomes (Fronius et al., 2019; Sandwick et al., 2019). Research shows that suspension is in fact negatively related to academic achievement (Anderson et al., 2019; Arcia, 2006). This research showed that exclusionary discipline like suspensions have negative impacts of future academic achievement.

The structure of RP programs is thus more conducive to processes that have been shown to reduce implicit bias in social interactions (Ispa-Landa, 2018) and to building authentic, caring relationships between teachers and students (Brown, 2017). Qualitative evidence from Sandwick et al. (2019) suggest that time spent building teacher-student relationships during RP implementation increases teachers' abilities to read students' social and emotional cues to proactively address their needs and prevent misbehavior. Some problems that interfere with high quality implementation of RP programs include

educators' implicit bias (Ispa-Landa, 2018) or low buy-in from school leaders (Fronius et at., 2019). Practitioner and scholars have made the case that restorative practices are grounded in the principles of respect, accountability, fairness, and community (Davis, 2019; Evans & Vaandering, 2016; Riestenberg & McCluskey, 2019; Zehr, 2002). RP must focus on increasing access to high-quality educational contexts and supportive adults for minoritized and marginalized groups (Winn, 2018). Staff needs shift their mindset to understand that restorative work is about restoring, it's not about retribution (Gregory et al., 2020). RP leaders indicated that shared leadership is the key to successful schoolwide implementation (Gregory et al., 2020). Schools need a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and perspectives to share responsibility in decision-making to drive the RP initiative forward (Gregory et al., 2020). Instead of letting RP rest on the shoulders of one person, specifically the RP coordinator who is often in a consultant role, she suggest RP is more sustainable with collective responsibility from staff in diverse roles (Gregory et al., 2020). Ultimately, circles can serve to increase sense of belonging and inclusion (Gregory et al., 2020). This research showed that staff buy-in is critical and shared leadership may be one way to increase inclusion.

In addition, RP adoption by a leadership team at the high school level has found and reduction in suspension rates (Mansfield et al., 2018). Restorative practice studies compared 22 schools implementing RP to 22 control schools and found there was a large discrepancy in the number of school days missed due to suspension (Augustine et al., 2018). Current studies have found an increase in exclusionary discipline at the preschool and elementary school level (Jacobsen et al., 2019; Meek & Gilliam, 2016). In literature,

one of the challenges noted about RP implementation was that there are multiple definitions for RP as well as multiple approaches for implementation (Beckman et al., 2012; Berkowitz, 2012; IIRP, 2010; Kidde, 2017; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013; Wachtel et al., 2009). The passion and vision of the principal is key to the implementation of restorative practices (Kervick et al., 2020). Kidde (2017) shares that for schools in the initial stage of RP implementation, it is about getting started, trying it out, and leveraging the individual and collective learning that takes place to enhance and improve the way the restorative approach is carried out (p. 21). The data and information shared from the research showed that RP decreased suspensions and the punitive discipline has grown in younger grades.

A growing body of literature documented how restorative justice approaches have successfully lowered rates of exclusionary punishment, reduced disproportionality, and improved student outcomes such as graduation rates and attendance (Payne & Welch, 2018; Anyon et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 2012). Evidence points to the role of restorative justice in helping students feel heard and cared for in their school communities (Brown, 2017; Cavanagh et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). School leaders who want to work within a restorative approach must grapple with the fact that removing punitive discipline policies can be unsettling and difficult for teachers, who may feel insecure about fostering the relationships that are foundational to restorative work (Bruhn, 2020). RP can decrease student suspensions and behavior referrals and potentially improve students and teacher relationships (Weber & Vereenooghe, 2020).

Punitive school discipline is often exclusionary in nature and is theoretically rooted in zero-tolerance policy (Hall et al., 2021). Recent discipline data suggest the need for a paradigm shift toward restorative discipline, which is inclusionary in nature and derived from restorative justice (Hall et al., 2021). The rise of restorative practices has brought about some confusion with implementation (Hall et al., 2021). A common thread through the research on implementation is that although many schools are claiming to use restorative practices, it is hard to tell which are doing it with fidelity, and which are saying so to alleviate societal pressure (Schiff, 2018; Wood et al., 2018). Schools are faced with challenges of clashing philosophies, lack of time, resources, support, leader engagement, and conceptual clarity, teacher skepticism, insufficient training, student characteristics, competing demands, and institutional racism (Acosta et al., 2019; Augustine et al., 2018; Short et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2013; Song & Swearer, 2009; McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison et al., 2005). The research showed the need for school leaders to support staff through the paradigm shift as it will prove challenging. It also shared how a clear vision is needed to garner the support of the staff as many schools are claiming to use RP practices but not with the support needed for successful implementation.

In 2017, a school district in Southern California implemented a School Climate Bill of Rights built upon restorative practices, and this eventually spurred the passing of ACR-8 in 2019, a resolution that formally declared September as Restorative Practices in Schools Awareness month in California (Sridhar, 2019; Washburn & Willis, 2018). The structure of the public school system has been inherently punitive and dehumanizing for

decades, which makes the push for a restorative policy challenging- but necessary (Hall et al., 2021). Restorative justice is a framework that seeks to reframe conflict as a matter of harms to be healed rather than be behavior to be punished (Zehr, 2019). Existing literature on restorative practices heralds their potential to stem the schools to prison pipeline specifically by balancing power and granting students more voice and agency in disciplinary proceedings (Lustick, 2020). Guhungu's (2018) analysis of the 2011-2012 Crime and Safety Survey data revealed that, as administrators strive to reduce suspension rates, teachers feel underprepared to address conflict in their classrooms. Recent studies found that dialogue between administrators and teachers is key to agree on expectations, systems, and practices (Lustick, 2020). To date, only two randomized control trials (RCTs) have been conducted investigating the effectiveness of RP in relation to reducing peer victimization and improving school climate (Acosta et al., 2019; Augustine et al; 2018). Given that exclusionary disciplinary practices remove students from the classroom, potentially breaking bonds between students and teachers, it seems likely that the increased use of suspensions will result in negative perceptions of school climate (Huang & Anyon, 2020). A recent study shows that students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions or in-school suspensions generally had poorer perceptions of school climate and more negative attitudes toward schooling than their non-disciplined peers (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Findings show that students who have been suspended (in-school or out-of-school) reported worse perception of disciplinary structure and school bonding than those students who were not disciplined (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Students with out-of-school suspensions reported greater disengagement than their peers

who were not suspended (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Despite the existing literature on school violence prevention, there are extensive challenges faced by schools to bridge the gap between research and practice (Kingston et al., 2018). The research shared existing literature about the negative effects of suspension and the challenges facing school administrators to bridge the gap.

While many studies indicate that implementation of RJ practices results in positive student outcomes, the research for the variety of approaches being used is lacking (Katic et al., 2020). An important consideration is the feasibility of RJ practices in schools. For schools already implementing a multi-tiered systems of support framework, a variety of RJ practices may be implemented at each level to provide school violence prevention and intervention services (Katic et al., 2020). For example, Tier 1, community building circles may be implemented to build relationships among all students in the classroom. Within Tier 2, peer mediation or responsive restorative circles may be implemented as a response to a minor conflict between students. Lastly, at the Tier 3 level, a restorative conference may be implemented as a response to a serious conflict at school, as it is a more intensive, individualized intervention (Katic et al., 2020). According to the most recent Civil Right Data Collection from 2015-2016, there were approximately 2.6 million suspensions and 120,800 expulsions in the United States (Office of Civil Rights, 2018). Furthermore, African American students are suspended at a rate of 8%, which is twice as much as White or Hispanic students who amount to a much larger proportion of the population (Harper et al., 2019). The school-to-prison pipeline is the disproportionate tendency of minors and young adults from disadvantaged

backgrounds to become incarcerated because of increasingly harsh school discipline policies (Hall et al., 2021).

A common thread throughout research on the implementation of RP is that although many schools are claiming to use RP, it is hard to tell which are doing so with fidelity, and which are saying so to alleviate societal pressure (Schiff, 2018; Wood et al., 2018). This research helped to point out the challenges with implementation and possible way to begin implementation of RP.

Educational professionals across the country must be aware of the barriers to implementation and establish strategic, intentional plans about how to overcome them (Hall et al., 2021). More policy changes need to be achieved to properly equip schools with the support tools, and funding required for effective implementation (Hall et al., 2021). Another critical challenge of implementing restorative practices is the resistance to change (Hall et al., 2021).

The most opposition to the paradigm shift of educating restoratively came from teachers with some preliminary push back from parents (Hall et al., 2021). The challenge is that the zero-tolerance mentality is still ingrained in a lot of our staff members' brains because of their own training and school experience (Hall et al., 2021). School are starting to utilize RP to alleviate high and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsions, create an equitable learning environment, and establish a more inclusive school culture (Hall et al., 2021). Restorative practices are a fitting policy for students that need healing and restoring (Hall et al., 2021). However, it takes much time, effort, skill, and personnel to do so, and as aforementioned, schools are often short in these areas

(Hall et al., 2021). Overall, the study reinforces and adds to key findings from the literature, attempts to decrease the lag in research behind the practice, and provides insight for education leaders of barriers that need to be removed to achieve more effective implementation of restorative practices (Hall et al., 2021).

There must be a philosophical shift generated county-wide to decrease the numbers of exclusionary discipline and rates of disproportionality (Hall et al., 2021). Serious, intentional, committed buy-in from administrative leaders and entities is warranted which includes adequate funding, personnel, resources, and a designated time within the school day for restorative practices (Hall et al., 2021). Many challenges come with achieving widespread buy-in, but it starts from those in key decision-making roles to prioritize the policy (Hall et al., 2021). There is a call to action for educational professionals to be change leaders which is a sizeable request as they must work on reverse years of systematic oppression in addition to educating children (Hall et al., 2021). Institutions built on the punishment of vulnerable groups requiring intentional restructuring that confronts traditional systems of racially disproportionate exclusion and control (Hall et al., 2021). Education leaders should strive to build structures that value community, social capital, and shared power and be ready to problem solve and overcome barriers that stand in the way (Hall et al., 2021). Restorative practices require intentionality, consciousness, and a justice-minded way of being (Hall et al., 2021). To embrace the identity of a change leader, it will require education professionals to be vulnerable, emotionally available, and restorative (Hall et al., 2021). The study

highlighted the importance of school leaders to be change leaders and address the restructuring of the traditional punitive discipline.

Recent news and climate change in our schools underscore the importance of building positive relationships in our classrooms and working to resolve conflict (Silverman & Mee, 2018) more constructively. A climate of trust is essential for learning but is fragile among the complex interactions of many humans each school day (Smith et al., 2018). Restorative justice theory and practice continue to call for educational and justice systems that move away from responses to harm based primarily on individual behavior and toward more holistic strategies focused on movement building and inclusive social relationships (Schiff, 2018). To address disproportionalities in suspensions for students of color, many districts have prohibited schools from suspending students for willful defiance of school authorities and implemented RJPs that address student misconduct using alternative conflict resolution practices (Hashim et at., 2018). Suspension bans and RJP have quickly gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners over the past 5 years (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017; Sumner et al., 2010), yet there is little evidence on the efficacy of these policies (Hashim et at., 2018). The study highlights the importance of building positive relationships and using alternative discipline that will address the disproportionalities in suspensions.

Current literature on the school-to-prison pipeline does not acknowledge the deep cultural impact zero-tolerance policies have had, or, in turn, the deep work administrators must do to shift that culture (Lustick, 2020). Teachers indicated that school leaders play an important role in creating a nurturing environment for students and staff by modeling

and setting norms for collaboration (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). School and district contexts characterized by distributed leadership and shared decision-making are exemplars for power sharing, professional discretion, and development of accountable autonomy (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). A recent study found that teens who experienced a childhood suspension were more than twice as likely to be arrested than those who had the same observable risk for a suspension but who had not been sanctioned (Mittleman, 2018a). Some schools are focusing on providing alternatives to a suspension through their use of restorative conferences (Gregory et al., 2021). Despite the challenge of comparing distinct restorative practices initiatives across schools, there is growing evidence that restorative practices reduce the use of exclusionary discipline, such as the findings from one randomized control trial (Augustine et al., 2018). Given the deep-seeded punitive mentality that prevails in our schools, justice system, and society, and the ways that zero-tolerance policies perpetuate racial inequality in disciplinary outcomes, it must be noted that the culturally relevant strategies play a crucial role in instituting restorative practices that have their desired effect not only on behavior but on shifting the culture of the schools and the paradigms of disciplinary power that restorative methods make possible (Lustick, 2020). Sprague and Tobin (2017) found that restorative circles are emerging internationally as a radical paradigm shift within schools to positively transform school culture while simultaneously reducing rates of exclusionary and punitive discipline. The research provided information about the negative effects of zero-tolerance policies and how restorative practices are being utilized more to shift the culture.

Restorative circles and practices can perhaps best be described as a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support that incorporates an umbrella of tools (Sprague & Tobin, 2017). Sprague and Tobin (2017) discovered that school staff, faculty, and students use these tools to create a culture of care, to establish positive relationships that prevent conflict and undesirable behavior, and to repair relations that have been damaged by conflict or harm. My study used the review of literature as a platform to show readers how and why using restorative circles, as an alternative to punitive practices, supported a reduction in the number of referrals and suspension given in schools to reduce, and ultimately eliminate the disparities in discipline data across the nation. This also provided a better understanding for staff as to the benefits of restorative circles.

Mansfield et al. (2018) found that restorative circles contributed to downward trends in the discipline gap, suspensions, and recidivism and, thus, may be a viable alternative to punitive discipline procedures. Mansfield et al. shared those tentative results of community-engaged research investigating the impact of Restorative Justice Discipline Practices on persistent discipline gaps in terms of race, gender, and special education identification. This research will aid in training for and justification of restorative circles. Manassah et al. (2018) found that restorative circles have the potential to help improve school climate through supporting conflict resolution and community-building, yet little research exists on this practice. The study examined how educators in four urban schools (two elementary, one middle, and one high school) used restorative circles over a seven-month period, 22 restorative circles led by 13 different teachers and

rating them using the RP-Observe tool. This research demonstrated how restorative circles were used to address issues percolating beneath the surface or incidents that had already caused harm and required repair of relationships.

When the considering next steps and advancing an agenda, it is important to acknowledge the pitfalls of training teachers about the nuts and bolts of restorative circles and provide enough trainings, workshops, or required readings to make the adjustments necessary for sustainable change. Garnett et al. (2020) described the utility of field-initiated implementation readiness assessments that might guide school districts by targeting the needs of faculty and staff. Regular assessments are needed to identify implementation needs, barriers and supports to ensure that school-wide reform efforts maintain student and faculty buy-in and ownership to support implementation fidelity (Garnett et al., 2020). The school stakeholders in this study identified concrete needs to ensure that restorative practice implementation was sustainable and effective including time, training, resources and professional development, administrative support, and integration with existing school-based initiatives (Garnett et al., 2020). Despite the limitations, the results of this study offer important areas of corroboration and growth with the existing knowledge base on restorative practice implementation. The study highlighted the importance of routine assessment of professional development activities, in addition to effective planning of professional development trainings based upon feedback and data from school-based professionals. Restorative circles can be used for a variety of purposes including morning check-in, exploring community values, building

understanding of expectations, and celebrations in addition to addressing conflict (Kidde, 2017).

Sandwich, et al. (2019) provided a portrait of what restorative circle implementation efforts looked like in five New York City public schools, including key practices, processes, and resources used. Based on purposive sampling of key school staff, students, parents, and school safety agents who met the criteria and maximized diversity with respect to grades, location, and special features. During this process, case similarities and differences were further delineated and the thematic map was reorganized and revised to better represent relationships among the themes and subthemes (Sandwich et al., 2019). Although the conceptual framework was not identified at the onset, the researchers developed a conceptual framework post hoc to provide a portrait of RP in the case study schools and provide guidance to school communities and policymakers interested in expanding the presence of restorative circles in schools (Sandwich et al., 2019). The findings present a context-rich picture of what RP-specific restorative circles looked like "on the ground" in a diverse set of New York City public schools, with findings presented in three parts. First, the authors describe the practices, processes, and resources used to build restorative circles in the study schools, lifting common approaches and key differences. Then, they provided an overview of how members of the school communities perceived their school's restorative approaches. The third section laid out six crosscutting lessons which integrate findings about implementation challenges and strategies for fostering restorative school cultures. The research is pertinent to my study as it outlines some of the challenges with the implementation of

restorative circles. Garnett et al. (2019) found that stakeholder buy-in is growing but implementation readiness must be addressed to determine potential barriers, to configure how restorative circles fit within other district priorities, and to address the contextual needs of faculty and staff through professional development.

Lustick (2017) found professional development could move beyond culturally responsive pedagogy in general and focuses on restorative circles including culturally responsive discipline. Lustick called on leaders and scholars to look beyond labels of "socially just" and "democratic" discipline to how power is exchanged in the context of restorative practices. Lustick suggested what Foucault's philosophy of discipline can reveal about power within the restorative process and explains why it is crucial to examine restorative work at this micro-level. Rubio (2018) found the implementation of restorative justice practices can take many different forms. The data presented in this research study agreed with information found in the literature regarding implementation of restorative practices. Rubio shared that having an established restorative team, providing training on restorative circles, and assigning someone to support implementation were key components of effective implementation. Rubio found that further research is needed to identify the effectiveness of restorative circles. My proposed study builds off the efforts of this researcher in supporting the findings and adding to the information with further research on effective restorative implementation.

In schools with principals who share the leadership responsibilities with teacher leaders, these reforms are more likely to lead to school improvement and academic success for students than in schools without broader representation of faculty in a top-

down approach (Sebastian et al., 2017). In such a decentralized approach, these teams of teachers and/or administrators provide the energy, staffing, and support to plan and implement innovation, initiative, or reform in the school setting (Judkins et al., 2019). Research from several disciplines shows that successful implementation of any school-wide initiatives relies heavily on school leaders to create the conditions for success (e.g., Judkins, 2014; Sebastian et al., 2017).

Although many initiatives and reforms are dictated by district-level leadership, site-level leaders directly affect school climate and the implementation process (Hallinger, 2018; Thoonen et al., 2012). Similarly, in an analysis of data from the UChicago Consortium on School Research, Sebastian et al. (2017) posits that high school principals impact school learning climate by "promoting teacher influence on climate-related policies and also directly assuming responsibility for these functions" (p. 478). Other empirical literature primarily has focused on the impact of effective teams on school outcomes with respect to shared leadership (Chrispeels et al., 2000; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017) investigated the relationship between professional learning communities and collective efficacy, finding that collective goal setting predicted higher team competency.

Factors to Support the Reduction of Student Discipline

Green et al. (2019) identified restorative practices in schools in two tiers. The first tier involves proactive practices that are used daily to foster relationships and prevent conflicts (Green et al., 2019). The second tier focuses on more formalized practices to address harm with those directly involved (Green et al., 2019). Success of RJ initiatives is

often measured by reduced expulsion rates, fewer office visits, and increased student attendance (Green et al., 2019; Jain et al., 2009). RJ gives people voice and a meaningful role to play in decisions that affect them (Reimer, 2020). Using the lens of a sense of coherence could assist in differentiating between various RJ approaches and can ensure that when RJ is implemented it is helping students to make sense of their school lives (Reimer, 2020). In helping students see their lives as comprehensive, meaningful, and manageable, we can build learning communities where individuals and collectives can thrive (Reimer, 2020). Frydenberg and Muller (2017) believe initiatives that are not embedded in school culture usually have a short shelf life. School connectedness has been identified as a significant mediator to school climate and conduct problems (Panayiotou et al., 2019). Leaders must ensure students and staff are known, and dialogue is the medium in which knowing takes place. Through this knowing, relationships are established, empathy is created, and an effective community of learning is created and strengthened daily through restorative dialogic processes (Webb, 2021). Every interaction one has in school in some capacity impacts future decisions by that student regarding interacting with others and how they trust, care, learn, and lead with others (Webb, 2021). This research was pertinent to my study as it shared how leaders must understand the importance of embedding RP into school culture and school connectedness.

School stakeholders identified time, training, resources and professional development, administrative support, and integration with existing school-based initiatives as critical during early implementation of RP (Garnett et al., 2019). When implemented comprehensively, restorative practices have many benefits including

improved climate and safety, increased school connectedness, the development of conflict resolution skills, improved academic performance and social emotional learning (González et al., 2018). These benefits have led schools to utilize restorative practices to improve student–teacher relationships and increase mutual understanding which can work together to reduce disparate discipline outcomes (Gregory, 2016; Lewis, 2009; Welsh & Little, 2018). The psycho-social and improved school climate benefits have led many schools to utilize restorative practices as a means to significantly reduce overall school suspensions (Gregory, 2016; Lewis 2009; Welsh & Little, 2018). First-hand experience in RP and modeling from leadership was seen as fundamental to leading change in the schools (Gregory et al., 2020). A key to success is when administrators model RP using restorative language throughout the school, advocate for equity through data monitoring, participating in RP training and circles, and building relationships with staff, students, and families (Gregory et al., 2020). Leaders need to be direct and intentional even if it makes people uncomfortable (Gregory et al., 2020). Support from administrators include a personal commitment to restorative beliefs along with concrete actions align school policies and procedures with a restorative philosophy (Gregory et al., 2020). Administrative support can manifest actions such as designating space in the building for restorative conferences, allocating time in the schedule for community-building circles among staff and students, and assigning personnel to advance the initiative (Gregory et al., 2020). Single workshops were not seen as sufficient, consistent with existing research (Shernoff et al., 2017). Strategies for fostering schoolwide buy-in include having regular opportunities to participate in the RP process, celebrating small

steps in improving school climate or interactions, and sharing personal and cultural values with one another (Gregory et al., 2020). The biggest thing we have to do more than policy, more than discipline, more than anything, is create a welcoming space where all students feel like they are a part of the class and that they belong (Gregory et al., 2020). RP leaders also emphasize the need to strategically foster adult buy-in and commitment to RP initiatives (Gregory et al., 2020). The information gleaned from these studies will help school leaders determine where to start and what is needed for continued success.

Beyond addressing adult educators' view on discipline, in order to increase diverse students' school connectedness, adults also need to address their own bias and racial positionality, often including White privilege as it operates within a system of White supremacy (La Salle et al., 2020). As schools move beyond the early stages of RP implementation, they must integrate restorative principles, processes, and practices into the school infrastructure to support a whole school restorative approach (Kidde, 2017, p.23). Restorative justice as an ethos honors young people not just as students but as complex individuals with many different needs and desires (Bruhn, 2020). Doing something wrong is not seen as grounds for exclusion but rather an opportunity to build and repair relationships (Bruhn, 2020). Restorative justice provides school community members with a framework for the prevention and intervention of school violence (Katic et al., 2020). The CDC (2018) stated that school violence prevention programs are most effective when they are evidence based and rigorously evaluated, strengthened by community-wide prevention activities that are strategically planned and implemented,

and evaluated through schools, community leaders, organizations, and families. Restorative practices have the potential to strengthen students' interpersonal relationships with peers and adults (Breedlove et al., 2020). There is a need for more assistance from leadership to be able to develop an environment that can sustain restorative practices (Hall et al., 2021). A lack of support from administrative leaders and entities was reported to be problematic in effectively implementing restorative practices on the school level (Hall et al., 2021). Restorative practices can be a difficult transition for staff if they were already feeling overwhelmed with managing their responsibilities, and there is no one available to help lighten the load (Hall et al., 2021). Without having teachers and administration that are proficient and experienced, the policy does not produce intended outcomes (Hall et al., 2021). It is likely that if administrative leaders encourage ongoing learning opportunities, promote the collective sharing of successful strategies, identify a time in the school day and in staff meetings for restorative practices, and conduct their own work restoratively then teachers will also feel empowered to prioritize restorative practices in the classroom (Hall et al., 2021). This research proved relevant as it shared the bias and racial positionality that may be percolating under the surface. It also addressed the need for school leaders to understand the transition to restorative practices is not easy.

The radical nature of the culture change and shift in philosophy from punitive discipline to restorative practices, and the length of time and effort it takes to integrate through all levels of the educational structure is presented as a challenge throughout literature (Morrison et al., 2005; Payne & Welch, 2015; Schiff, 2018). To reap the

benefits of restorative practices and see the transformational growth, commitment to the

long-term goal requires patience on behalf of education policy makers, administrators,

teachers, and parents (Hall et al., 2021). A system that has continuously dehumanized

certain groups of students must be met with a movement based in human connection and

dignity (Hall et al., 2021). Educational professionals must rise to this challenge and

utilize restorative practices as a tool to begin to confront unjust elements of educational

structures (Hall et al., 2021). As teachers work to redefine their disciplinary practices, it

is also necessary that they build positive relationships with their 'misbehaving' students

(Kocon, 2018). Garnett et al. (2020) shared that exclusionary discipline procedures

continue to negatively affect educational outcomes for students from specific, racial,

income, and ability classifications. Restorative practices is an approach to alleviate and

ease the inequalities shown with exclusionary discipline by focusing on improving the

school climate and culture (Garnett et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that RP can help keep

youth in school by redefining school disciplinary options to minimize the use of

exclusionary school discipline and helps promote a set of values that emphasize

inclusiveness, respect, trust, honor and engagement (Schiff, 2018). This research was

included in my study as it determined the unjust elements of current educational

structures and the challenges school administrators must meet in order to minimize

exclusionary discipline.

Restorative justice is a framework that seeks to reframe conflict as a matter of

harms to be healed rather than behavior to be punished (Zehr, 2019). Dialogue helps

establish and maintain community, and the most common form is restorative circles in

which participants take turns sharing responses to a question or discussion (Lustick, 2020). The term "restorative practices" refers to school-based practices that are rooted in restorative theory as opposed to traditional, punitive models of discipline (Johnstone, 2011; Kehoe et al., 2018). Common restorative practices include community-building circles, restorative conferences for addressing harm, and reentry circles for preparing suspended students to reenter their school community (Lustick, 2020). It is common for schools to refer to "community building" restorative circles as a Tier 1 restorative practice, restorative "conference" circles as a Tier 2 restorative practice, and "reentry" restorative circles as a Tier 3 restorative practice (Lustick, 2020). Practitioners and scholars have made the case that restorative practices are grounded in principles of respect, accountability, fairness, and community (Davis, 2019; Evans & Vaandering, 2016; Thorsborne et al., 2019; Zehr, 2002).

An integral part of the discipline reform of restorative practices encourages educators to handle discipline "in house" or in-class before relying on administration or sending students out of class (Gregory et al., 2021). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. Reimer (2019) discovered that relationships are the essence of education. This was important as relationships are key to restorative circles. Reimer (2019) shared that by using circles as a window to make school relationships explicit, we can examine the quality and character of relationships and, with this, ask questions of how relationships are used to control and/or engage. Manassah et al. (2018) stated that

many of the educators reported that restorative circles can positively impact students' attitudes and behaviors. Manassah et al. found the need for appropriate training and support to help teachers gain confidence in and become proficient at using restorative circles. This was relevant to my research as it will help lay the groundwork for further research that will be conducted to effectively implement restorative circles. High (2017) shared as schools continue to embrace restorative practices as a means of transforming school climate and student behavior, circles can be used to actively create a safe space where children feel seen, heard, and understood, and as such are acknowledged as inherently worthy. In this way, circles and other restorative practices have the potential to help create classrooms that are dignity-enhancing communities. High found that circles are just one of many skills that can be implemented as part of a movement towards a restorative school climate that emphasizes respect, collaboration and relationships. Research continues to support the importance of school environment as we seek to reduce problem behaviors and improve student experiences in school (Daily et al., 2020). This was pertinent information regarding the proposed problem statement. Restorative circles emerged as an evolving evidence-based approach that holds great promise to mitigate disparities and to improve school climate. Stakeholders buy-in is growing, but implementation readiness must be assessed to determine potential barriers, to configure how restorative practices fit within other district priorities, and to address the contextual needs of faculty and staff through professional development. The study was important to my study as more research is needed to understand the essential structures and strategies

that foster commitment and buy-in among school stakeholders in the early stages of restorative circle implementation.

Garnett et al. (2019) shared that the restorative circle approach is gaining momentum as an effective support mechanism for all students but identifying the opportunities and challenges related to implementation is necessary to avoid ineffective efforts. This was pertinent as the research provides recent efforts with restorative circle implementation. Hulvershorn et al. (2018) conducted an analysis of current research to examine when restorative practices are implemented with social emotional learning programming, the opportunity is provided for educational practitioners to address issues around race, gender, disability, and other aspects of diversity. Hulvershorn et al. found that an understanding of the effects of zero tolerance policies in schools has resulted in the rethinking of approaches to prevent conflict and create a healthy school climate. Hulvershorn et al. shared those restorative circles have been looked to as an alternative to zero tolerance policies. This study was relevant to my study as it provided a look at the historical context shaping the development of restorative practices and explored connections between restorative practices and social emotional learning. The analysis offers considerations for implementation and conceptual models for implementing restorative practices. Based on firsthand work with schools and districts implementing restorative and social emotional learning practices, as well as the knowledge and insights gained from this analysis of research, one important need to consider is the need to implement restorative practices into the school context and existing structures. Hulvershorn et al. synthesized the evidence acquired from articles, models, and reports

on restorative practices pertaining to school discipline policies and agreed that a paradigm shift is needed within many schools. This research was pertinent as it examined the current research about the importance of shaping the development of restorative circle implementation.

If a teacher is adopting restorative circles, the action and planning must be individualized as they will need to identify where within the school day it would be appropriate; therefore, collaboration is key (Evanovich et al., 2019). The practice of restorative circles can provide additional support to students across all tiers in building relationships, learning empathy, reinforcing academic content, and practicing problem-solving in a structured and predicable manner (Evanovich et al., 2019). A strong culture of collaboration is needed among staff, as is a commitment to partnering with families and the community to serve students (Kervick et al., 2020). A recent study found that it is of critical importance to have shared and relational leadership to initiate and build school staff buy-in for restorative implementation (Kervick et al., 2020). Leadership and staff buy-in have been documented as levers of implementation efficacy and sustainability and thus demand continued attention and support with the context of restorative practice implementation (Horner et al., 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

In the literature review, I examined the conceptual framework of shared leadership theory and restorative practices focusing on leadership strategies in schools, the impact of leadership strategies, and factors that support the reduction of student discipline. The literature review considered numerous attributes of effective school

leadership. Researchers found that a single characteristic cannot advance school leader effectiveness. The leadership behaviors and strategies of school leaders were essential in cultivating a cohesive and collegial school climate focusing on building professional capacity. The strategies and behaviors of the school leaders were central factors in developing a collaborative environment of continued professional growth in which relationships with faculty were built on trust, and a school culture that promoted success for all students and teachers. Additionally, effective leadership strategies shared with the staff encouraged collaboration in the decision-making process.

The role of the principal included information on the increasing demands of the position over time. These demands include shaping the culture and climate of the building as well as utilizing leadership strategies in both teacher growth and understanding. In synthesizing the study, shared leadership and restorative practices are needed for schools to advance discipline outcomes. Shared leadership creates buy-in, peer support, and will help to set high performance targets, creating alignment for clear direction and intentionally focusing on a restorative mindset. Leadership capacity extended well beyond the school administrator as time was afforded for collaboration and personal growth. Finally, school leaders focused on building a restorative mindset and collaborating with staff members to build a positive school climate propagating high expectation while celebrating and championing the success of each student, both individually and as part of the team.

In Chapter 3, I will explain the research methodology that will be used for the study and provide the process for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to investigate how administrators in a rural NE school district implement leadership strategies that are intended to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. Leadership strategies were examined through the lens of shared leadership theory and restorative justice theory. The gap in practice addressed in the study was concerning school leaders' need for a greater understanding of specific leadership strategies that influence the reduction of school discipline issues. This comprehensive analysis was intended to yield informative explanations of how the phenomenon of interest, the leadership strategies of school leaders, is linked to the successful reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. The school leader is essential in creating a positive school culture and climate in addition to establishing effective relationships. Relationships are the heart of education (Reimer, 2019).

Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the study's methodology along with the rationale for its use. Included in this description of the study is the research question, the population and setting, instrumentation, and interview protocol selected for data collection and analysis. Additionally, this chapter contains information on reliability and validity, measures for ensuring ethical protection of participants, a description of the researcher's role, and the approach for data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

My research for this study was guided by the following research question: How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom?

The methodology for this study was based on a basic qualitative design, which included data collected from the eight school district administrators and the seven school district classroom teachers regarding their experiences. This study was built on prior studies to make an original contribution to research while addressing the identified gap in practice. Qualitative researchers use an interpretive approach to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) considered the philosophical assumptions including epistemology and ontology as key premises that are folded into interpretive frameworks used for qualitative research. An *epistemological* assumption refers to beliefs about knowledge and how it is constructed. The epistemology focuses on the nature, limitation, and justification of human knowledge. The *ontological* assumptions are related to reality and pertain to what exists. Ontological research is essential to a paradigm because it helps provide an understanding of the things that contribute to the world, as it is known (Scott & Usher, 2004). In this study, I looked for common themes through the interpretation of the phenomena. The process for collecting data included semistructured interviews using predetermined questions, follow-up questions as needed, voice recording, transcribing, and coding. I conducted these semistructured interviews with rural northeastern administrators and teachers regarding how teachers and administrators report their practice of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom and how they perceive restorative circles and their implementation in their schools.

A case study was another option for my qualitative approach which would have included a different way of gathering information. Research through a case study would focus on collecting multiple types of data which could include interviews, artifacts, observations, and other relevant sources (Ravitch, 2016). I did not select this approach as my focus was on gathering information about the perspectives of rural northeastern administrators and teachers rather than focusing on all of the school districts in the State of New Jersey. A case study can be used when the findings are extended from one case to the next (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In a case study, additional data are also collected and analyzed over a longer period of time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The phenomenological research method is associated with a specific event and situation and is studied over years. Ravitch and Carl (2016) showed that interviews and observations can be used for data collection as research methods will include identifying a specific phenomenon based on how the participants perceive them. The approach focused on the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon. My research only included interviews about previous experiences, such as how they report their leadership strategies to reduce student discipline in the classroom and how they perceive restorative circles and their implementation.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was formed through the process of planning and designing. I understand that people are expert in their own experiences, and I used purposeful sampling, individual interviews, and an interview protocol to make sure that the study methods used were useful to data collection. I am aware that my own

experiences, beliefs, and bias as a rural northeastern school principal could potentially influence my study. Yazan (2015) found that the role of the researcher includes the responsibility to be honest, especially as to the nature of the study. While conducting my research, I used the interview protocol as a guide. I was honest and transparent with the participants. Additionally, I reviewed the participants' transcripts multiple times and adjusted the transcripts as needed. I realized my role included being able to accept and understand that I was part of the process. I determined my personal influence on the data through using my questions to investigate and understand the complexity of each participant's experiences. To ensure that my thoughts of the data were included in my memos, research journals, and interviews, I used reflexivity to shape my experiences. The researcher's role directly impacted and affected the data collected as the interaction with the participants and the researcher was the primary instrument of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a researcher, my role included developing questions aligned to my research problem, purpose, gap, and research questions. Prior to the start of the interview, I provided the participants with adequate information on the interview process, which informed them that the session was recorded and identifiable information was not used. During the interview, I made sure the participants were aware of the interview procedures and the discussion allowed me to gather sufficient information for the research.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The participants for my research were selected from a rural, northeast K-8 school district. The criteria for participant selection was being a school district administrator or

school district teacher and be available to participate in the interview process through in-person meetings, virtual meetings, or telephone calls. I investigated the participants' perspectives of how administrators report their practice of leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom. I used Microsoft Teams to record the interview and transcribe the responses. The participants' perspectives provided an understanding of this phenomenon. Nonclassroom teachers, students, parents, nurses, central office staff, CST members, guidance counselors, and district supervisors were not invited to participate in my study as they are not an administrator or classroom teacher who deals with student discipline in the classroom. The population for my study focused on school district administrators and teachers from a rural, northeastern K-8 school district. The sample included eight school district administrators and seven school district classroom teachers who met the participant selection criteria. Ravitch and Carl (2016) found that purposeful sampling should be used to select participants in the same region who have a shared experience and have knowledge related to the study. Based on my selection criteria, I used purposeful sampling to select my participants, which included eight school administrators and seven school district classroom teachers from the rural, northeastern K-8 school district. Purposeful sampling was aligned to the research design, purpose, research questions, and data. The data collected from individual interviews were gathered into a shared experience description.

Instrumentation

For the study, I was the primary data collecting instrument, conducting semistructured one-to-one interviews with each of the study participants. Yin (2018)

shared that a researcher is the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative research study. A data collection instrument is a tool a researcher uses to gather, understand, and explain the results of the study (Goodman et al., 2012). The data collection instruments I used in this research included semistructured interviews and taking reflective notes during the interview. Researchers use interviews related to their research to gather information for analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Medhurst and Albrecht (2016) noted previous researchers studying participants' perspectives used semistructured interviews as the data collection instrument. I used semistructured interview questions as a data collection instrument.

Qualitative researchers use a variety of in-depth interview formats, which depended upon the research design, and the alignment of the research question (Yin, 2018). Bott et al. (2017) noted the importance of researchers using semistructured interviews to gather rich data from participants. Morse and Wilson (2016) posited that the researcher could probe the participants' responses at a deeper level and gain rich data from each participant using a semistructured format. To provide for flexibility within the standard interview protocol, the interview protocol was used to conduct the semistructured interviews. Researchers use an interview protocol to outline the procedures and rules to conduct research and to ensure data collection, analysis, and reporting to stay absorbed on the research (Yin, 2018). I used a protocol to conduct the semistructured interviews to maintain interview process consistency. Each interview consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions covering the participants' perspectives of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

Researchers who use semistructured interviews allow participants to be flexible when answering the interview questions (Wethington & McDarby, 2015). Each participant was asked to expand their response to identify and collect additional details and rich data. The interview questions aligned with my research questions. During the semistructured interviews, I collected data from the participants who, in response to the interview questions, share their strategies, insight, and knowledge of leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

After collecting and interpreting the data, researchers can return to participants to request feedback on the interpretations using member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use member checking to verify the accurate collection and interpretation of data and to increase the reliability and validity of the study findings (Morse & Wilson, 2016). After completing and analyzing the data from each semistructured interview, I asked each participant a question again for member checking and to obtain verification and clarification related to the data collected and the interpretation of the data.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (06-21-22-1019517), the purposeful selection of prospective participants from the targeted population occurred. Possible participants who met the eligibility criteria for participants in the study were emailed an informed consent form. The prospective participants provided consent by replying to the email ("I consent"), signing, and returning the informed consent form, or by signing the form before the start of the interview. The informed consent form contained clear language regarding the participants' right to withdraw. Wilson (2016)

noted that the informed consent form would indicate that participation will not involve any monetary incentives, and participants can withdraw from the study at any time. One-to-one interviews were scheduled virtually and lasted 45 to 60 minutes. Each individual interview was video and audio recorded. Probing and follow-up questions were used during the interview. Consent forms were collected prior to beginning the study and any additional questions participants had related to the study were answered.

To ensure rigor and validity of the interview protocol, one retired teacher and one retired administrator reviewed the interview protocol for content validity and participated in pilot interviews. I modified the research questions based on their feedback to create greater alignment, ensure no major gaps in information, and invite alternative points of view and various perspectives (Rubin, 2012). Through piloting, detailed memos were taken to describe the process and ways in which the process shaped and refined the interview protocol and the research design. According to Ravitch and Carl (2012), this careful, reflective process helps to achieve a high level of validity and rigor for the study. A sufficient level of refinement was attained after two pilot interviews.

This study was intended to have implications for school leaders and policymakers. Educators need to move away from zero-tolerance punitive discipline and find ways to best implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom. The study was intended to inform educational practices and inspire new ways of thinking about how to implement leadership strategies to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Walden University requires that students have their proposal accepted before beginning the study. Once I received approval from the IRB, I followed the participant selection criteria to find participants for my study. I communicated through in-person meetings, emails, or telephone calls to contact potential participants from the rural northeast K-8 school district. I called potential participants to see if they met the participant selection criteria for my study. After I had the potential participants for the study, I reviewed the expectations and process for selecting participants as well as answered any questions. I stayed in contact with the potential candidates and when I obtained consent, I scheduled one-to-one interviews. I remained flexible in case a participant's schedule changed.

The data for my study were collected through individual interviews. The participants were school district administrators or school district teachers from a rural, northeastern K-8 school district. I directly contacted the participants I recruited for the study and stayed in close contact through phone calls, emails, virtual meetings, and in-person meetings. The interviews took place virtually through Microsoft Teams to record the responses and they were uploaded into Dedoose for analysis. Once the transcriptions were verified, participants were commended for their participation with an email.

Data Analysis Plan

Research questions embed values, world view, and direction of an inquiry and they are influential in determining what type of knowledge is going to be generated (Trede & Higgins, 2009). I always kept the research question central to my inquiry to

ensure I generated the right type of knowledge (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As such, the

analysis of the interviews was conducted using the grounded theory study method.

Specifically, to inform all phases of the data analysis process, I repeatedly reference the

research question: How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a

rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the

classroom? I used a thematic analysis approach, which included an extensive review of

preparing data and organizing it by coding and the forming of themes and categories.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) found that qualitative research coding organizes and breaks the

data into manageable sections and identifies or names those sections. Data from each

participant were analyzed to identify themes that align with the research question.

In qualitative research, the coding process assigns meaning to the data through a

word or phrase that explains or describes what is present in the data (Ravitch & Carl,

2016). Codes represent the first step in assigning meaning to data from an interview

transcript. Rubin and Rubin (2012) found that codes can be based on what is central to

the research questions, what is raised by interviewees, and what is suggested by prior

research. I incorporated all three through the use of constant referencing to the research

question and the theoretical framework.

Member checking ensured that participant responses were accurately captured and

interpreted. Member checking is often used in qualitative research as an approach to

maintain validity (Candela, 2019). Member checking is an essential part of creating

trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986;

Stake, 1995). Member checking offers a means for the researcher to ensure the

representation of participants' voices are accurate by providing the participants the opportunity to confirm or refute the accuracy and interpretations of data while adding credibility to the qualitative study (Candela, 2019; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stake, 1995).

Throughout the process of analysis, data were captured, sorted, and analyzed using Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Dedoose, and Google Docs to yield greater accuracy and perspective. Coding connected the data collected with the explanation of meaning. Saldana (2016) shared that coding in qualitative research is the process of identifying a word or short phrase that will stand as a symbol that can summarize the essence of language-based data or visual data. My coding involved at least two cycles. During the first coding, I used values coding to break the data down from single words, short phrases, or a full paragraph (Saldana, 2016), whereas I used axial coding for the second cycle of coding to break down the data by similar group phrases, longer passages, analytic memos about the data, and some of the codes required to be reconfigured (Saldana, 2016). The thematic data analysis process for this study included values coding and axial coding.

Values Coding

Values coding applied codes consisting of three elements, value, attitude, and belief to examine a participant's perspectives or worldviews (Saldana, 2016). Values coding involved coding that relates to the participants' worldviews. This type of coding focused on excerpts that reflect the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. Values coding was therefore very useful for research exploring cultural values and

intrapersonal experiences and actions. The aim of initial coding was to understand and familiarize me with the data and to develop initial codes. Values coding allowed the data to be arranged so that it was easier to navigate during the next stage. By applying the Values codes to the data from the interviews, the coding reviewed collective meaning about leadership strategies used to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. If adjustments were needed the rationale was described in the field notes.

Axial Coding

Axial coding was used for the second coding as it determined which codes stemming from the data are dominant and less dominant to organize them systematically. Axial coding allowed me to further reorganize and condense my results into smaller categories. Saldana (2016) defined axial coding as describing a category's assets and the relationship between subcategories by extending the previous first coding by identifying the dominant codes and the less essential codes. Amidst the second coding, my concentration was on the critical themes in the data collected during my individual interviews. Using a variety of data readings, unstructured reading occurred to identify themes in my data which were centered around my research question. Axial codes were represented in Dedoose and visual displays were developed to aid the refinement of categories and the identification of new categories. If adjustments in coding were made, the changes and the rationale was described in detail in the field notes.

The second step of axial coding involved looking for patterns among categories to form themes. The phase of coding began with a rereading of all transcripts, codes, and categories to see if any overarching themes emerged. Ravitch and Carl (2016) shared that

through thematic analysis, the research question and theoretical framework provided a lens through which to evaluate the relationship of codes to themes, to determine what was missing, and to develop subthemes. Data were identified to confirm or disconfirm the themes and the themes' alignment with the broader context of the data, the literature, and the theoretical framework. A thick description was provided sufficient depth and richness so that a reader could evaluate the applicability of the study's findings, thus increasing transferability (Thomas, 2017). The categorical data developed an understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences to form my conclusions. Thematic analysis culminated with themes based on leadership strategies that support the reduction of discipline issues in the classroom. These themes answered the research question.

Within research a discrepancy can be explained as two or more statements that cannot be both correct. The treatment of discrepant information for my study will be to identify the cause, assess the error, and determine appropriate action (Brady, 2017). Member checking will provide the opportunity for the participants to be heard and share any inaccuracies.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

When designing my research, I developed validity methodologies and ensured alignment with my research questions, goals, and contexts of my research. Credibility refered to the confidence in the data and is considered the most important criterion of a research study (Connelly, 2016). Credibility for this study was increased by the tight alignment with the problem and purpose statements, the research questions, the interview

questions, and the methodology. Credibility was established by drawing meaningful inferences from collected data and ensuring that my interpretation of the data through coding of themes aligned with the participants' responses. The use of member checks enhanced credibility through a process called progressive subjectivity (Burkholder et al., 2016). Then, before finalizing themes, the participants' feedback from the member checks was reviewed and analyzed.

As a researcher, considering my personal reflexivity and how my own experiences, self-reflection of biases, relationships with participants, and the understanding of analytical explanations were constantly be considered to assess my positionality and biases (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). The way that we as researchers view and interpret the world around us impacts our research interests and how we approach the research and participants as well as the questions we ask and how we interpret the data (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). As researchers, being clear and open about our social identities allows us to create research that is reflexive (Maxwell, 2008). Being explicit about our social identities in comparison to the social position of our participants provided a better understanding of the power relations instilled in the research and further provide an opportunity to be reflexive in a responsible and appropriate way (Maxwell, 2008).

Transferability

For qualitative research, transferability was how the study can be applicable to a larger context while keeping the original context. I implemented transferability for my research by including detailed descriptions of my data, including rich descriptions, for

readers and other researchers to compare my research to other studies based on the

provided information (Ravitch, 2016). This allowed readers to make connections to my

study design and data instead of reproducing the design and findings.

Dependability

Ravitch (2016) shared that dependability is produced when data in research can

state how data collection occurred and that the data are consistent with the researcher's

argument. Dependability is the idea that if another researcher uses the data presented,

they will arrive at a similar finding, interpretation, and conclusion (Shenton, 2004).

Through the use of the research questions, the data from my study reflected the answers

to justifying the use of coding as my method for achieving dependability. Besides,

justifying my use of interviews, I also explained why I chose the data collection method

used, and how it aligned with my research questions. While collecting the data, I

recorded the participants' responses to confirm the data collected was accurate.

Confirmability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) shared that confirmability was the last criterion of

trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher must establish. This gauge was measured by

the level of confidence that the study's findings are based on the participants' narrative

and words rather than potential research biases. Confirmability occurs when researchers

acknowledge that inevitable biases exist and that researchers do not seek objectivity;

however, their findings can be substantiated (Ravitch, 2016). A researcher must often

recognize and examine their biases and preconceptions while analyzing data through the

reflexivity process to establish confirmability. To ensure the validity of the findings, I

used different coding methods to triangulate the data. I reflected often throughout the study asking myself what my plan was for conducting the research. I also continued to reflect on the potential challenges I encountered. Additionally, I considered how my thinking changed based on the research collected. I monitored and questioned my own biases and prejudices consistently to ensure my study had the rigor and validity needed to demonstrate that confirmability was taking place.

Ethical Procedures

There were several aspects to consider when considering research ethics. Ethical concerns in qualitative research can be complex, contextual, emergent, and relational (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A relational approach allowed me to become reflexively engaged in interactions with others (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A relational approach permitted me to develop an understanding of the participants' viewpoints through collaboration and the readiness to make changes as needed. Qualitative research often generates questions about the ability to protect the confidentiality and the role of the researcher as a data collection instrument.

Treatment of Participants

Ethical principles are primarily centered on protecting participants, ensuring no harm is done, respect, and an appreciation for differences that may exist. Researchers should always have the well-being of the participants in mind and should not cause harm to participants in any way (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Obtaining IRB approval, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and transparency, and obtaining consent are all paramount components of ethical considerations in data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). IRBs

provide critical safeguards against harm to study participants and pointed out any potential ethical problems prior to the beginning of the study. It was an ethical obligation of the researcher to ensure that any information disclosed during the study remained confidential and the participants' identities were never disclosed.

Additionally, a study ensured the participants having given full consent, are fully informed as to the purpose of the study, benefits, and potential risks along with the opportunity to ask questions. In conducting an ethical study, all required permissions and approvals needed for both Walden University and the participants was obtained. The appropriate IRB application was submitted to obtain permission to proceed with the study including data collection and identification of the participants. Participant consent was obtained via the Informed Consent Form before conducting the research interviews. The consent form was reviewed with each participant and emphasized the assurance of confidentiality, it is voluntary, the process for early withdrawal, and the proper elimination of the data once the study was complete.

Throughout the recruitment process, participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and there was no monetary compensation as well as ensured that no one was coerced to participate in the study. Each participant was advised that there is no significant risk involved in the study and any request for withdrawal from the study was honored. The prospective participants were informed of the potential educational benefits and impacts on social change. In addition to using pseudonyms to fulfill the ethical responsibility of confidentiality of the participants involved in a

research study, Miles et al. (2014), noted the importance of using appropriate measures to guard and protect the participants' information. Those actions include the following:

- Guarding and protecting participants' information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss, or theft by making sure the data is secure and inaccessible to others.

- Assuring that participants' information is safe on my personal computer that requires a username and password for login. I will also store the participants' information on a flash drive.

- Storing written documentation and transcriptions in a locked cabinet safe in my home office.

Treatment of Data

I will follow protocols for storing and maintaining the participants' confidentiality as well as address ethical concerns related to collecting, storing, and ensuring the data secure. Using the internet to assist with collecting the data can be beneficial; however, there are some aspects to consider specifically privacy rights which could present confidentiality challenges. The data will be stored on an external drive to avoid any third party trying to access it. Ravitch and Carl (2016) shared the importance of identifying ways that data security can be breached, and I weighed the pros and cons of using the internet, social media, and my research design. To help protect my participants privacy, I created pseudonyms for my data as well as an action plan in the case my data became compromised. The data obtained from each participant in my study remained confidential. Miles et al. (2014) advised that qualitative researchers should secure data by

backing up data regularly and storing all transcribed files in several locations. Three electronic copies of the data were kept in two different locations to ensure that the data were available if the originals were lost or corrupted. Once the research was complete, I secured the documents and will keep them for a period of five years and then destroy all electronic data including information stored on my personal email account, external hard drives, and laptop.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research method, the design, and the rationale for my study were shared. In addition, the role of the researcher, the methodology, and the instrumentation were explained. Furthermore, the requirements for participant selection, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection were detailed. This chapter also outlined how data from the study will be analyzed as to how the researcher ensured trustworthiness, minimized threats to validity, and what ethical procedures were taken through the course of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to investigate how administrators in a rural NE school district implement leadership strategies that are intended to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. A qualitative approach to answer the research question, "How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom?" was used. In this chapter, I describe the setting where the data were collected, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, the participants including demographics, the characteristics of the participants connected to the study findings, and the evidence of trustworthiness.

Fifteen participants consisting of school classroom teachers and school administrators contributed to this study. I identified the participants through the professional network and through emails sent to individuals who met the criteria for my study based on their background and/or position. All of the participants were working in the K-8 school district at the time of data collection.

Setting

This study took place in a rural northeastern K-8 school district. The U.S. Census Bureau has reported the total population for the county the district is located in as 66,034. The number of students enrolled in this K-8 school district for the 2021–2022 school year was 6,481. The district is the biggest K-8 school district in the state.

Demographics

For this study, eight administrators, which included six principals and two assistant principals, and seven classroom teachers participated. The administrators who participated consisted of seven males and two female whose experience ranged from 3 to 25 years in their current position. The classroom teachers who participated in the study included five females and two males whose experience ranged from 3 to 20 years in their current teaching assignment. Eight of the participants were school administrators consisting of six principals and two assistant principals. One of the female school principals and two male assistant principals were from middle school and the other five participants including four males and one female were school principals at the elementary level. Seven of the participants were classroom teachers with three from middle school and four from the elementary level. Of the three middle school participants, two were female and one was male. On the elementary level, there were three female and one male participants. Two of the school administrators and two of the classroom teachers were persons of color. Participant demographics including position, gender, ethnicity, school level, and years of experience are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant ID	Title	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Years in position
P1	Principal	Male	White	Elementary	4
P2	Principal	Male	Black	Elementary	5
P3	Principal	Male	White	Elementary	25
P4	Principal	Female	White	Elementary	15
P5	Principal	Male	White	Elementary	3
P6	Principal	Female	Black	Middle	4
P7	Assistant principal	Male	White	Middle	6
P8	Assistant principal	Male	White	Middle	3
T1	Classroom teacher	Male	White	Elementary	13
T2	Classroom teacher	Female	White	Middle	19
T3	Classroom teacher	Female	White	Middle	20
T4	Classroom teacher	Male	Black	Middle	5
T5	Classroom teacher	Female	White	Elementary	16
T6	Classroom teacher	Female	White	Elementary	3
T7	Classroom teacher	Female	Black	Elementary	15

Data Collection

Fifteen participants consisting of school classroom teachers and school administrators participated to this study. Before I conducted individual interviews, all participants received the Invitation/Consent Form and they provided their consent to participate though email by stating, "I consent". After receiving consent, I scheduled one-to-one video interviews through Microsoft teams at a convenient time for each participant. To begin each interview session, I greeted the participants and thanked them for their time and willingness to participate. The interview protocol, which included the purpose of the study, the study is voluntary, the steps to ensure confidentiality, and finally the consent to be a participant, was reviewed with each participant. I then

requested permission to audio record using Microsoft Teams and began to record each interview. The Microsoft Teams software allowed me to record the conversation while creating a transcription of the interview.

The interview with the participants took place in July 2022. Each semistructured interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. For the individual interviews, I had developed interview questions for both classroom teachers and school administrators. During the interview, I asked follow-up questions and probing questions to ensure clarity and to elicit more details and explanation where needed. After the individual interview, a folder was created for each participant, which contained the handwritten notes from responses, probes, and follow-up questions. All participants were thanked at the conclusion of the participation in the study. No variations or unusual circumstances were encountered during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The thematic data analysis process for this study included open coding of the data, specifically values coding and axial coding. All data will be kept confidential and secure in a password-protected hard drive. Codes were developed based on the research questions, the participants' responses, and field notes. Member checking was used to ensure the responses from the participants were accurate. To begin the coding process, I organized the recorded interviews and used Microsoft Teams to create a transcription of each interview. I then reviewed each transcription by listening to the audio recording and using my field notes to ensure that the transcription reflected the interview correctly.

The transcriptions were uploaded into the Dedoose software to analyze and code the data. I read each transcript line by line to find initial codes using the values coding method. Values coding focuses on excerpts that reflect the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. The aim of the initial coding was to understand and familiarize myself with the data and navigate during the next stage. By applying the values codes to the data from the interviews, the coding reviewed collective meaning about leadership strategies used to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom. I created the value code "Building relationship with students" to represent the following participant statement: "So, I think the number one thing for the those teachers who never have a discipline issue is building the relationship with the child." Another value code I created was "Using positive tone with students" to represent the participants statement, "The teacher's tone answers the question, do I respect their child? Tone is important when trying to build those relationships. Students can tell if you are putting them down with your tone." A third example of a value code created was "engaging students" to represent the participants statement, "The engagement of the student is probably one of the most important things to help the teacher."

During the second coding, I used axial coding for the next stage of data analysis. Axial coding involved the use of connecting strategies to develop the data collected and to find relationships to create categories. The themes became more apparent and defined to shape how administrator and teachers' perspectives aligned to the conceptual framework. Axial coding provided connections with the data, which allowed me to rearrange and reclassify codes into new categories as needed. There were no discrepant

cases. The axial codes were redefined through the use of reflective journaling and analytic memos where the focus was on more dominant patterns aligned with the research question and containing the similar text evidence. Overarching themes became apparent through the use of Dedoose to organize and group the data, the codes and categories created, and the rereading of transcripts. Interpretation of the data involved developing meaning from the participants' responses, which included their perspectives, experiences, descriptions, and conclusions. An example of axial coding that demonstrates how a series of codes are reclassified into a new category is the category, "Creating solutions" which was derived from the four codes: creating a climate of trust and support, utilizing professional development opportunities, building capacity, and having a clear vision. During the coding process, there were several responses and words that were not used as they did not relate to other participants' perspectives. Table 2 provides examples of themes used and data examples. Table 3 shows the codes, subcategories, and categories that informed the overall themes based on the data collected.

Table 2

Themes Related to Research Questions

Themes	Data examples
Working together	"I think a lot of shared leadership is necessary, but it's also contingent upon the involvement of the parties who are taking part in it."
	"I think the vision of effective communication and talking with teachers about problems, so that they have an opportunity to express any concerns."
	"I think empowering the staff to have some of the control of the trainings."
	"I think the first thing you have to do is be transparent and open with the staff."
	"empowering the teachers to highlight and showcase their strengths is"
	"being transparent"
	"I don't know everything and I make it very clear that I don't but I will get you an answer. So, I think that kind of transparency not being a superhero and recognizing that I don't have all the answers."
	"I also share my thinking rationale behind things all the time."
	"Communication … allowing them to have a voice"
Building relationships	"I wrestle with that right because that's to me that comes down to a belief thing on an individual level for that teacher. Really the question to me turns into how do you get that teacher to believe that they can be responsible and that they do have agency over the decisions in their classroom. And that is it, there's no magic bullet theory in my opinion."
	"I think you have to look at each individual teacher and try to develop them."
	"I think the thread that runs through all of that is that relationship piece."
	"So, I think the number one thing for those teachers who never have a discipline issue is building the relationship with the child."
	"I think some of our best teachers that manage discipline are intentionally thinking about ways and starting off their year, focusing on building those norms at the classroom level."
	"If you have an engaging lesson, you're also going to have a reduction in discipline."

Themes	Data examples
Embracing change	"I think the biggest barrier for the staff is that they may have to adjust and make a bigger level change to how they operate normally and bigger level changes are more difficult for everybody."
	"fear of change"
	"They are overworked, they're overwhelmed. Timing is also important for staff buy in. You're trying to roll out some massive project on the heels of them reeling from like a crisis."
	"to get them to buy into that and see the advantages of it."
	"The staff, all staff, has to buy into that."
	"Teachers and instructors who have very, very strong feelings. You have some people who have a very much more narrow view."
	"dealing with people of different core beliefs and cultures that maybe in some instances be contrary to what we're trying to promote here at the public schools."
	"So, change itself is something that people maybe are not comfortable doing."
	"right now, the burnout is big"
Creating solutions	"The stakeholders in those shared leadership experiences feel like their input is meaningful."
	"Teach staff you know about the adolescent brain. It's important for them to know how that discipline is a normal part of growing up."
	"The training is essential, but the training has to be mean, meaningful and pointed."
	"I afforded the opportunity for teachers to go and watch other teachers in their grade level or above or below"
	"You build a capacity"
	"Set up a tool where you can measure if it's working."
	"Build relationships"
	"setting very clear expectations."
	"having a strong understanding of where you want the building to be"
	"professional development"

Table 3

Themes Related to the Research Question

Codes	Categories	Themes
Motivator	Being a good communicator	Working together
Cultivator		
Visionary		
Authentic		
Transparency	Being transparent	
Listen		
Communicator		
Collaborator	Empowering others	
Transformational leadership		
Servant leadership		
Distributive leadership		
Shared leadership	Shared leadership	
Build relationships	Developing relationships	Building relationships
Structure		
Connections	Making connections	
High expectations		
Tone	Using positive tone	
Consistency	Maintaining consistency	
Intentional		
Consequences	Rethinking consequences	
Reflection		
Engagement	Engaging students	
Care/safe space		
Respect	Creating a positive culture	
Trust	Creating buy-in	Embracing change
Frustration		
Teacher overload/burnout		
Fear of change	Fear of change	
Discomfort		
Staff training/support	Lack of professional development opportunities	
Self-efficacy		
Time for professional development	Making time for change	
Modeling		

Codes	Categories	Themes
Staff input/collaboration	Creating a climate of trust and support	Creating solutions
Trust		
Support		
Staff training	Utilizing professional development opportunities	
Modeling		
Committee work		
Research	Build Capacity	
Data		
Belief in one's self		
Embrace change		
Clear goals	Having a clear vision	
Time for training		
Follow through		

Results

Theme 1: Working Together

A common theme throughout the data from interviews were classroom teachers and administrators' perspective of what is important to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. According to the data collected, being a good communicator, using transparency, empowering others, and working together by means of shared leadership all contribute to reducing discipline issues in the classroom. Working together encompasses all of the categories shared but it also focuses on teamwork and everyone moving in the same direction. The theme "working together" represents the behaviors leaders need to strive for to create that environment of teamwork. Teachers need to be good communicators to ensure the team can work together and through any problems. For example, P3 shared,

Communication is important to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. Once you have the expectations, you have to communicate those to the students. After you as the principal, have communicated them to the teachers. To help students have positive experiences at school, it is important that communication is clear and you plan ahead to help that success.

The use of transparency creates a better working environment as everyone knows the leader will be honest. For example, P7 shared, "I think the first thing you got to do is be transparent and open with the staff." T7 stated, "School leaders need to be vulnerable and transparent." She continued, "When you are transparent and honest, it definitely promotes the expectations and goals that are set." Empowering others allows everyone to share their expertise as well as their thoughts about what professional development they may need." P7 said, "I do think that empowering the teachers to highlight and showcase their strengths is good idea." P7 added, "I think empowering the staff to have some of the control of the trainings and then us as administrators listening to them is key."

The shared leadership approach provides opportunities for all stakeholders to work together to do what is best for the school. For example, T3 expressed, "All stakeholders really do play an essential part in a well-run building." P1 said, "I believe the intelligence of the group is always greater than the intelligence of any individual. So, I am a big proponent of shared leadership." P8 continued,

When a consensus is reached at the group level and then a decision is rendered that's not consistent with that, it undercuts that trust that the group has. So, I think

you need to build that culture of trust and transparency that everyone knows what's going on.

T4 shared, "I think shared leadership is valuable as it creates a balance between staff and administration. I think it opens the door for dialogue." P2 stated, "People suggesting or being able to openly share their thoughts is important. The shared leadership approach is not only developing the team, it is also helping with getting the information out to the entire school."

Being a Good Communicator

The participants shared how being a good communicator is important to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. The teacher has to be able to clearly communicate with the students to ensure build a relationship. T5 said, "Leaders should clearly state it." T5 stated, "You have to be a good communicator. You can't just throw terms out there that are not explained as that causes confusion and miscommunication." T3 said, "Leaders need the ability to listen and engage in those difficult conversations even when they may not agree with an idea."

Being Transparent

Teacher and administrators found transparency was an important approach for effective leaders. P6 stated,

Be transparent. I don't know everything and I make it very clear that I don't, but I will get you an answer. So, I think that kind of transparency not being a superhero and recognizing that I don't have all the answers is key. And you're able to have that transparent relationship, then it's able to be to me effective.

T4 said, "Transparency is important as people want to be able to see you and want to see what is going on." T5 shared, "It is important to be transparent so that most people will see your heart and see that you are genuine. You really have to live it." P5 shared, "You got to be open. The open mindedness is critical."

Empowering Others

Some participants believed leaders should have the ability to empower others. P7 shared, "Since they're the practitioners, they need to have some of that empowerment. They need to be empowered to learn from us as an administrative team and/or learn from the experts during training." T3 felt "team building" was important. T3 shared an example of how she empowers others, "Can you explain to me how you think of it?" She stated, "You just have to be able to engage in a conversation as opposed to understanding that they, the teachers, have to feel like they, the administrators, are on their side?" T4 believes leaders should "empower everybody in the building to build a culture that's inclusive." T5 stated, "Leaders need to put the other person's needs above their own."

Working Together Through Shared Leadership

Teachers and administrators both shared that they believed shared leadership can work as long as it is implemented with fidelity. P4 said, "I think that shared leadership will naturally make staff more of a leader." P4 continued, "I think the vision of effective communication and talking with teachers about problems is important so that they have an opportunity to express any concerns." P6 believed, "Shared leadership was the best leadership approach." T3 shared, "Shared leadership could be good to have peers help each other in areas they are lacking."

The participants felt that a culture of shared leadership was needed and that it may take time to build it. P8 shared, "I think there needs to be the groundwork that foundation element needs to be built in. And then that shared leadership experience can be effective. I think you need to build a culture first of shared leadership in order for that to work. And then it will. T7 shared, "Shared leadership, especially in my role as a teacher, helps me build better buy-in with the staff." P3 shared, "The team approach to leadership is important." P5 said,

> If everyone has ownership of everybody, you know I am my brother's keeper thing. We are all looking out for one another. You go back to the whole it takes a village to educate. It needs to be a shared leadership approach especially with a restorative mindset.

T6 stated, "I see a big benefit to shared leadership. I am a team player and whatever is best for the team." T2 said, "Using a shared leadership approach is key."

Theme 2: Building Relationships

All of the participants emphasized the importance of building relationships with students to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. If the students have that special relationship with the teacher, they are going to feel that special connection which helps build trust. The theme "building relationships" represents the importance of creating these relationships with students through positive tone, making connections, engagement, consistency, creating a positive culture, and rethinking appropriate consequences. Building relationships can help teachers create a positive classroom environment that will reduce discipline issues in the classroom. For example, P7 shared,

I think some of our best teachers that manage discipline are intentionally thinking

about ways and starting off their year, focusing on building those norms at the

classroom level. These are also relational teachers who have a great skill set with

building relationships at home with the families.

T7 believed, "You have to build the relationship and respect people regardless of

circumstance, because you are modeling for them to restore them back into the

environment that you want to stay in, which is the classroom. You have to talk with them

because children need relationships and do not need to be in a situation where they are

not spoken to." P8 explained, "The relationship with the student and their families are

essential. They need to know that if there's a problem here, I'm working in best in your

child's best interest to help them navigate this and improve that." P8 continued, "The

relationship has got to be good, it is the thread that runs through all of that." P1 stated,

Proactively, we discuss often the ability of a teacher to connect with the students

and their families with the idea that this will cut down on discipline issues. If we

can deescalate situations that can help avoid major behaviors than we will create a

better climate and culture.

The teachers' positive tone and positive reinforcement can help the students look to make

better choices and unafraid to make mistakes. For example, T5 stated, "The teacher's

tone answers the question, do I respect their child? Tone is important when trying to build

those relationships. Students can tell if you are putting them down with your tone."

Creating engaging lessons is important to peek students' interests. If the students are

engaged in the class discussions and lessons, then they will strive to have that collegial

relationship with the teacher. For example, P3 shared, "The engagement of the student is probably one of the most important things to help the teacher." Creating a positive culture where everyone is respected and celebrated is essential when building relationships with students. For example, P4 also stated,

> The culture of the school is important. Teacher leaders understand that and not only perform their duties but they circulate around to interact with the students and they take proactive steps to prevent any potential problems. When a problem happens, teachers need to welcome students back and let them know that they really care about them.

The teachers need to have consistent expectations so the students know what is expected. For example, T1 shared, "When we are able to break down the language and be consistent it helps our students."

The teachers need to clearly communication expectations but they also want to communicate the consequences if a rule is broken. The administrators agreed that consequences may be part of the policy but the focus should be on the relationship and digging deeper to fit the root cause. The consequence alone is not going to change the behavior and it could hurt the chances to restore the relationship. For example, T6 stated,

> I feel like you have to do the restorative, but these children also need to see that there is consequences. They need to learn like you know, that's what a punishments for, right? Because our children today have no coping skills. They need to learn that. I feel that they do need some consequences.

P4 shared,

Teachers would not like if we were punitive toward them when they made mistakes so maybe just getting them to see how working together is better. In the real world, you wouldn't want someone constantly punitive towards you. I am not saying there isn't going to be consequences but the focus should be on the relationship. In restorative practices, a student could come to the office and receive a consequence but then there is the restorative piece. I think we can do a better job of teacher and student formally talking things out but sometimes this is hard as the teacher wants to lecture the kid which is not what is desired.

Developing Relationships

Teachers and administrators both emphasized the importance of building relationships with students to reduces discipline issues in the classroom. For example, the participants shared the following perspectives about building relationships: P4 said, "So I think the number one thing for the those teachers who never have a discipline issue is their relationship with the child." It is important for the child to know you care for them as a human being and as a person, and all the academic stuff will come later. You have to build a relationship of trust." P7 added, "I think what we have been learning over the past decade is the importance of building relationships and being actively involved. T5 stated, "I love my kids and they have a chance to talk. They know how to turn the table over to the next person." P2 stated, "When looking for ways to reduce discipline issues you have to go back to relationships." T1 stated, "Effective leaders build that relationship." T2 shared, "Build a relationship even as a simple concept like standing outside in the morning and welcome the students by saying good morning." T3 shared,

The most effective strategy for me to build relationships is to learn my students'
names. It is not something I want to wait to happen. It is the first sign that I know
you and I want you to get to know me. Establishing that relationship from day one
is important.

T3 added, "I say goodbye to my students at the end of each day. It is something to
reinforce the relationship. A lot of times, kids won't let their guards down until they get
to know you. They have to trust you before they believe in you." P6 stated, "Building
relationships is crucial. Build a sense of community and build a sense of respect and
human decency. That will allow for an effective teacher-student rapport. I am big on
relationships but how do you get there? Some teachers feel that they do not have time for
that. P5 stated, "Teachers have to be the ones to have the relationship to then understand.
If you don't have that relationship, you will never find out that the kid didn't have a good
sleep last night because the baby was crying all night."

Using Positive Tone

The participants noted how using positive tone can really make a difference when
trying to build relationships and trust. For example, P4 stated,

I think it's also a tone. You don't yell at kids. You talk to them and you try to
understand. If you're yelling at them, they're closed off. They're not going to
open up to you. It doesn't matter even if you think you have a relationship with
them.

T4 shared, "How you set things up, you know your stance, you know your approach,
your voice but your tone is everything.

Engaging Students

The participants agreed that engaging lessons will reduce discipline issues in the classroom. For example, P6 stated, "If you have engaging lessons, it will cause a reduction in discipline." P2 continued, "I think a healthy rapport, engaging lessons, and relationships are important to reduce discipline issues in the classroom."

Making Connections

Both teachers and administrators noted that students need to feel connected and once that connection is reached it will cut down on discipline issues in the classroom. For example, P6 shared, "The students also need to feel connected and that could lead to academic growth." T4 shared, "We should all strive to be connected with our students." T7 continued, "Students need that connection." P1 stated,

> Proactively, we discuss often the ability of a teacher to connect with the students and their families with the idea that this will cut down on discipline issues. If we can deescalate situations that can help avoid major behaviors than we will create a better climate and culture.

P5 shared, "We all make connections with certain kids but making connections with kids is understated thing. With all the demands placed on teachers, connections gets pushed to the side."

Creating a Positive Classroom Culture

The participants stressed that creating a positive classroom culture is essential to developing healthy relationships. P2 stated,

It's all about creating a culture of respect. It is not just in the classroom but throughout the school. We have to help with the positive mindset and model this is how you respect people. The school culture has to include a healthy relationship between teachers and students.

P7 shared, "Some of the best teachers who manage discipline are intentionally thinking about ways to start off their year, focusing on building those norms at the classroom level. T1 stated, "The students know we care and I stress respect for themselves, me, classmates, and administration. It goes along way." T5 shared, "I take care of the students as if they are my own. And I think that if they feel that from your heart it opens up the trust."

Maintaining Consistency

Both teachers and administrators discussed the importance of consistency from their point of view. A need for a culture of consistency was shared often when the participants discussed ways to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. P8 shared, "When a consensus is reached at the group level, and then a decision is rendered that's not consistent with that, it undercuts that trust that the group has. T5 stated, "I wish that we had a little bit more continuity. The number one thing for buy-in is consistency." T4 said, "I think if it's consistent for us and it's believable for us then we are on board." T7 shared, "It is important for staff to communicate with that consistency and rationale behind our rules and expectations." P1 stressed, "Through our communication, we have to make sure we are communicating with a consistent message." T6 stated, "It is important to have a consistent message so that we are all on the same page."

Rethinking Appropriate Consequences

Teachers felt that consequences were important to help reduce discipline issues in the classroom. T1 stated, "Biggest thing you can do is preach those rules early and you preach consequences early. They need to understand consequences." T5 stated,

> It is important to have the conversation with the child present when they are on
>
> suspension. We know that when we make this mistake, that is the consequence.
>
> We all make mistakes and we need to teach that. We have classroom rules and
>
> consequences and rewards that go with them.

Administrators had a different view as they believed the relationship piece was more important than the consequence because they felt the consequence alone does not change the behavior. P3 stated, "There could be consequences with restorative practices but the focus is on the relationship and providing the resources for success." P5 stated,

> They need consequences. They want a pound of flesh no matter what the kid did.
>
> A student earned prize at lunch from a ticket he put in weeks ago from a daily
>
> incentive but because he had a horrible day in the classroom that day, the teacher
>
> took the prize and brought it to me. She said in front of him, he doesn't deserve
>
> this.

Theme 3: Embracing Change

The teachers and administrators both identified buy-in, fear of change, a lack of professional development, time, and self-efficacy as barriers to support the reduction of discipline issues in the classroom. The theme "embracing change" represents the challenges that administrators face to support the reduction of discipline issues in the

classroom. Leaders have to be able to create buy-in with the staff to implement new strategies. For example, T7 believes, "To achieve buy-in, we have to make sure that we can really get everyone on board. Schools should have effective practices so that everyone can buy-in." T7 added,

> The challenges and barriers could come from a lack of buy-in. A staff barrier is
> that they think a student is getting away with behaviors and not getting a
> consequence. This may not be due to a lack of a consequence but more of a focus
> on an inclusive approach where the focus is on repairing the problem.

T4 shared, "It's all about just breaking those walls down. It's about establishing a level of trust." T4 continued, "Sometimes teachers and staff members feel like they are not being heard." P5 stated,

> The staff has to have trust and feel that they are being heard. Education is being
> polluted with all the things that teachers have to do. The challenge is to get the
> staff to see the importance of the connection in addition to the curriculum.

Teachers have a fear of change that prevents them from embracing change. For example, P7 shared, "I think the biggest barrier was staff is that they may have to adjust and make a bigger level change to how they operate normally and bigger level changes are more difficult for everybody." P8 stated, "For fear of change, you could show the greatest thing in the world, and yet, they would still be good with what they know, and think that's better. But I'm good with the awfulness that I know. P1 shared, Understanding that change is uncomfortable, that there's going to be a paradigm shift. Understanding in that, there is going to be a level of being uncomfortable to make these

changes that we're going to be growing and we have to establish this growth model. So, changing itself is something that people maybe are not comfortable doing.

In order for teachers to grow professionally, they need professional development that provides training and resources for the staff to embrace the change. For example, P6 stated, "I have to model the building expectations." P4 stated, "We need to provide more modeling for the teachers so that they have a better understanding of the restorative process." P5 shared, "One of the challenges is there is never enough training." T6 stated, "Professional development has to be meaningful and make the staff feel comfortable. The professional development has to be ongoing instead of an introduction."

In order for meaningful change to happen, there must be time provided to allow for that change and for staff to embrace it. For example, P6 shared, "Time is needed to implement change. You need time to plan for that sustainability to ensure the staff gets the training and support needed. T2 shared, "We are being asked to do more and more and there is no time." Teachers should take some responsibility in finding answers to help their students in the classroom. Self-efficacy is a challenge and it is a change that leaders must get teachers to embrace. For example, T2 shared, "I am always researching new trends because the students are not the same anymore. They don't learn the same and they have different attitudes. So, I am all about what do I need to do to get them in line."

Creating Buy-in

Trust, frustration, and teacher burnout were also noted by several participants as a challenge to achieve buy-in. P6 shared, "Teachers are overworked, they're overwhelmed. Timing is also important for staff buy in. You're trying to roll out some massive project

on the heels of them reeling from like a crisis." P3 said, "You get them to buy into that and see the advantages of it." P3 added, "Some teachers have very strong feelings and others have a narrow view which causes frustration." P2 explained, "The staff, all staff, has to buy into that. They have to buy-in to you as the leader." T2 said, "We're all tired. You know and you are being asked to do more. So, more and more is being dumped on the schools. The teachers are in the so-called trenches of it all." T2 continued, "Right now, the burnout is big. Some teachers are feeling like I'm done." T5 shared, "You have to get them to buy-in. That's the mission of the group." T6 shared,

I feel it is important to listen before trying to achieve buy-in. Make everyone feel that they are included and that they have a say. The surveys are another way to gauge where people are. You have to build that trust.

Fear of Change

The fear of change was identified as a challenge and the participants noted some views that needed to be considered to help staff embrace it. P5 shared, "Staff members may have a fear of change." T3 stated, "Staff members have insecurities and they have to be able to go out of that comfort level because things are changing." P3 stated, "We are constantly revising and analyzing and we are making changes to meet the needs of our students. Teachers have very strong feelings and some people have a very narrow views which makes change difficult. T5 stated,

I'm like putting other people's thoughts in front of mine. I am willing to do whatever I need to do to help my students be successful. It is hard for people to

embrace that because they feel they are the one with the power. I should be the

one in charge. I shouldn't have to do these things.

P5 shared, "Individual teacher ideas may not always be the best ideas for the whole

school.

Lack of Professional Development

A barrier that was consistently mentioned by the participants was a lack of

professional development. The participants shared how modeling, staff training, and

support need to be ongoing to help staff members welcome the change. T5 stated, "I

definitely feel that we need more education. We have to model it." P4 believed,

"Professional development like presentations is needed in addition to meeting regularly

with PLC's to help us." P6 shared, "You need their feedback and then provide the

training. PLCs and department meetings are some of the ways to answer the question.

How am I going to support that systematically?" P7 explained,

Training opportunities for the people that are interested so that they can turnkey.

Hopefully some of your teacher leaders can step up and you've already identified

who those people are that you know can kind of be that liaison for trainings and

for some of that committee work that definitely needs to be done.

P5 said, "The training is essential, but the training has to be meaningful and

pointed. T3 shared,

It has to be modeled. What does it look like? Survey could come into play. Going

to observe another classroom so they can get an idea of how certain things are

transitioned or handled to keep the students' interest.

T7 stressed, "Professional development that specifically focuses on how people are doing right now."

Making Time

Time was a challenge that was a common concern among participants and it was also noted that time is needed to build capacity. You need their feedback and then provide the training. T3 shared, "When it is new, buy-in is going to take some time." P4 shared,

> Helping move to a restorative mindset can't be something you come with a hammer because you are not going to get buy-in. I think anything worth doing is going to take time. Time is a challenge and a barrier even though we know it is going to take time for change.

Finding Answers

Participants also mentioned that self-efficacy was a change that staff needed to embrace which would encourage them to search for answers for themselves instead of waiting for them. T3 shared,

> Self-efficacy is important with the students but also the teacher. Teachers, especially new teachers, coming in regardless of them learning the content, they need to feel confident in handling all of the nuances that come with the students and them being able to learn. Self-efficacy is huge as you have to be sensitive with how you handle certain approaches without someone having someone feel like they are a failure because then the students sense that too. And that's where everything could fall apart.

T5 shared, "I read this book Servant Leadership, the heart of a leader. It was recommended by my administrator and it really was helpful."

Theme 4: Creating Solutions

Both the teachers and administrators found to create solutions for discipline issues in the classroom, a climate of trust and support along with ongoing professional development, building capacity and a clear vision are needed. The theme "creating solutions" represents the different ways to help teachers create the school environment and atmosphere needed to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. The participants noted that to create solutions, administrators and teachers need to create a climate of trust and support where all stakeholders can thrive. For example, P2 shared, "We encourage an environment where ideas can be shared freely, we need to create that climate where staff is not afraid to share." P7 shared,

Committee work is extremely important and we need to have our climate and culture committees also be dedicated to classroom climate and culture not just schoolwide. Relationships and getting along with others can impact how they treat kids. Restorative practices can change the climate of a classroom. Hopefully, they will see that better day to day experience and have more fun teaching. A solution is to let staff talk about their frustrations with what resources they have at their disposal and explain that we are in this together.

T5 shared,

A lot stems from the relationships you have with the students. They know you care about them and that you really want what is best for them. It is also for

students to know if they make a mistake, you are not mad at them. That is where

relationships are huge. A restorative mindset is essential when restoring the

relationship. How do I navigate my emotions coming off a mistake? How do I

integrate myself back properly socially?

T6 shared, "Build the teacher up and let them know we are all in this together and I am

here to support you. You have to develop trust with your staff." T7 believed,

> Once you build a relationship, then the respect. You have to build community in
>
> your classroom the first month of school. It is critical and it will eliminate
>
> problems as your students won't know the office. They will think, I am not going
>
> there because that is not where my family is. Family is where I want to be. We
>
> have to make sure we have a culture that we all buy-in. We need to move together
>
> and use common language so students aren't afraid to make mistakes.

P6 shared,

> A climate where staff has the opportunity to collaborate to identify concerns and
>
> brainstorm solutions is essential to achieve buy-in. It is important to develop a
>
> trusting relationship with the staff so that they realize that you want their feedback
>
> as it helps determine the professional development needed. Then, when you
>
> develop that trust you get that transparency. If you foster those partnerships to be
>
> proactive instead of responsive or reactive, then you will find it will cut down on
>
> discipline issues in the classroom.

Utilizing professional development is essential to help the staff get ongoing

support and training to help them grow. These opportunities will provide the staff with

the needed tools to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. For example, T3 shared,

"When something is new, it needs to be modeled and there needs to be time to practice it. It is important to make staff comfortable with what it is going to look like." T3 added, "Provide research and data in reference to the success rate. how it is going to help students, and how it is going to help the teacher have a more successful year." P2 added, "We have to set the example and be prepared to model and explain that rationale behind it." T5 said, "You have to model it. If you are trying to build trust it is important for the students to know you have their best interests at heart." T6 shared, "Teachers need to feel that they can make mistakes and learn from it. They need to feel that support from administration. There needs to be that follow through to provide ongoing support."

In creating solutions, it is important build capacity through ongoing support and common language. It is important for the school leader to build that social and emotional intelligence as well as encourage them to seek answers and professional development to create the optimal atmosphere for learning. For example, P1 shared,

We have to build people's capacity in both social and emotional intelligence. So, by building their capacity and by building their backgrounds, academic backgrounds provide them with the fortitude in order to be a leader as well as the confidence that they know what they are talking about.

T3 shared,

Self-efficacy is important with the students but also the teacher. Teachers, especially new teachers, coming in regardless of them learning the content, they need to feel confident in handling all of the nuances that come with the students

and them being able to learn. Self-efficacy has to look like a team building effort where we are all doing this together.

P3 stated,

There are two types of staff members. One that readily accepts the change and wants to use it and another one who would like to use it but doesn't have the tools which we have to provide. That is where we have to build their capacity through professional development and support.

A clear vision is necessary to create solutions to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. The clear vision allows all stakeholders to understand the direction and mission of the school. For example, T4 shares, "It is important to talk about your vision and direction in the beginning of the year. That way the expectations are clear. Leaders should be visionaries." T4 added, "Having a vision is powerful, especially when it's clear, it's meaningful, and has great depth of purpose." T5 shared, "The vision is the mission of the group as a school. We have to verbalize our vision and can't assume that it is understood." P1 shared, "Laying out the vision in a mission statement sets the expectations. The vision needs to be carried out with integrity and modeled."

Creating a Climate of Trust and Support

The participants felt that a climate of trust and support is essential which can be reached by building meaningful relationships. They also believed that a culture of embracing change is necessary. T4 shared, "Working together genuinely with administration and having that universal language is key." T4 added, "First, create these

relationships and show these kids that you really care and have their best interest in developing who they are as individuals." P4 shared,

> Classrooms that have low disciplinary issues have teachers who have high expectations and a strong teacher-student relationship. There is a climate where students can share personal experiences and the teacher could tell if there was something wrong. It is hard to build trust but it is easy to take down. I think the use of restorative practices could help the teacher and student formally talk about the problems. I think that it is also key to support them throughout the process.

P3 shared,

> Adjustments that are needed should be made based on what the students need as a whole and holistically but also individually. The whole visionary picture that you put in place has to have a plan for students who can't connect with that. Your vision has to plan for that. I think every leader has to have a vision of what the school is going to look like and what the experience is going to be like for those children that come through the doors.

T1 shared,

> When a student makes a mistake, the last thing on my mind is any type of punitive damage. It is more like what did we do and what can we do to fix it. That's the relationship we have.

Utilizing Professional Development Opportunities

Teachers and administrators noted that professional development, training, and modeling were key to successful implementation. P2 stated, "The shared leadership

approach will help develop the staff needs and communicate the united plan moving forward." P7 stated,

> I am going to try to get the expert teacher or staff member in a particular field to turnkey and model for the staff. We need to allow the staff to have a say in what professional development is needed. I am thinking of ways to provide extra training and data to support how restorative practices could provide a safer and more enjoyable learning experience.

P4 said, "I think modeling is a key thing when trying to implement restorative practices."

P3 shared, "A lot of preparation and research has to be done to show the staff the benefits of restorative practices as to how it can make them a more effective instructor." T1 shared, "Professional development should show the direction we are going as a staff not just for today but for the future." P5 shared, "The training is essential but the training has to meaningful and pointed. It really needs to get down to … this is how it works. This is how you get through it. This is how you know." T2 shared,

> How do you feel like things are going like a midway check? What are your thoughts? Is it working? Is it not working? What needs to be tweaked? It is hard to get everyone on board. We have not really had a lot of training with restorative practices.

Let's Build Capacity Together

Administrators shared that there is a need to build capacity in the staff to provide research, data, and support. P2 stated, "Lesson plans are important as those teachers who plan engaging lessons have less discipline problems." P1 shared "The intelligence of the

group is always greater than the intelligence of any individual. I am a big proponent of shared leadership where I can build everyone's capacity to be a leader." P7 said, "I have had some conversations with staff members about accepting sorry. While we may not find it genuine, we do want to accept the apology and clean the slate." P6 said, "You have to build the capacity when you find something you believe in. I reach out to the necessary parties and request the monies needed to provide the training."

T1 explained, "It is important to simplify the language to make sure everyone understands. That common language is biggest need we have." T5 shared, "To build capacity, you should start with a with something simple and build on it slowly as more emotions come into play with something is new." P5 stated,

> I afforded opportunities for teachers to go and watch other teachers in their grade
> level or above or below. Then, other teachers I had to build that capacity by
> providing the behavioral or academic opportunity to see it, explaining this is what
> rigor looks like, and/ or posing questions to ensure they have a good
> understanding.

T6 shared, "We have to meet them where they are and build them up. It has to be realistic." T2 shared, "There is not enough support and how seeing the research behind it and hearing from a school that successful implemented restorative practices would help achieve buy-in."

Having a Clear Vision

Administrators and teachers believed that a clear vision, clear goals, and time are needed for successful implementation. T7 shared, "When there is a desired (shared)

vision, we can all see our role in reaching that decision." P4 stated, "The vision of effective communication is the best way to achieve staff buy-in where staff has opportunities to share. Also, the follow through is the hardest part. So, I think the key is to make sure follow-up meetings are part of the vision." P3 stated,

> Setting clear expectations is the first leadership strategy to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. It starts with yourself as the leader at the top, but then you get input from the people that are going to really do the grassroots contact and engagement of the students. Time is needed to ensure the staff and students can get a good understanding of the change.

T1 said, "The biggest thing is preaching expectations from day one and everyday so that students have a good understanding."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The purpose of the basic qualitative study is to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. The use of thematic analysis, field notes, member checking, reflexivity, and thick description were used to ensure the quality and accuracy of the research findings.

Credibility

Credibility was increased for this study through tight alignment between my methodologies, research questions, problem statement, purpose statement, goals and contexts on my research. Ravitch (2016) shares that qualitative researchers look to establish credibility through the implementation of validity strategies such as

triangulation, member checking, and using peer review, and putting all of the pieces together. The thematic analysis process was used throughout the study with my focus on codes and categories to answer the research question. Credibility was ensured through obtaining meaningful inferences from the data collected. The use of member checking was used by allowing each participant to review the transcript to ensure that my interpretation of the data through coding aligned with their responses. The use of member checking created an iterative process of refining and revising themes and insights found.

Transferability

Transferability for qualitative research focuses on how the study can be applied to a larger setting while keeping the original setting. Transferability was increased through sufficient contextual information about how the study was conducted which included the number of participants, the data collection and analysis methods used, the amount of time for each interview, the number of interviews, the interview questions, and the time period when the data were collected. Detailed descriptions of my data were provided which included thick descriptions of the instrumentation and analysis of data to allow other researchers to compare my findings to other studies. Thick description was used throughout the narratives of the study which included detailed descriptions of the participants, the setting, the findings, and the evidence from raw data.

Transferability refers to how the study can apply to larger context while maintaining its original context. Transferability was increased through sufficient contextual information about how the study was conducted which included the number of participants, a brief description of each participant, the data collection method used, the

analysis method applied, the number and duration of the interview sessions, the interview questions and protocol, and the time period that the data will be collected over. Transferability for my research study was ensured by using thick descriptions including detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, findings, and evidence from data to allow other researchers or readers to use my research to compare to other studies based on the information provided (Ravitich, 2016). This would permit readers to connect the design of my study and my findings instead of reproducing it.

Dependability

Dependability will be increased on my study over time through the strong rationale for how the data were collected and how the alignment of the findings were ensured through the process of thematic analysis. The data collected answered my research question and justified my method of coding as my process for achieving dependability. The steps of the research process were explained in detail along with my rationale for using interviews. Additionally, the data collection method that were selected were explained as well as how it aligned with my research question. To ensure the data were accurate when collecting the data, the participants' responses were recorded. The interviews were conducted in a similar fashion and no anomalies were present during the interview process. Codes, categories, and themes were developed through the data analysis process by multiple readings of the interview transcripts. Any adjustments to the methodology for my study was explained in detail and documented for the reader.

Confirmability

Confirmability happens when researchers acknowledge that inevitable biases exist and do not seek objectivity; however, their findings can be substantiated (Ravitch 2016). Confirmability was enhanced through a reflexive approach to ensure that the researcher had an open mind, objectivity, and avoided including personal biases and worldviews. The use of reflective journaling, analytic memos, field notes, and member checking were confirmability approaches used with fidelity. To ensure the validity of the findings, different coding methods were used to analyze the data to triangulate it. Reflection on my data analysis process was obtained by consistently asking, "What is my purpose for conducting this research?" Through continual monitoring of my own biases and prejudices, my research had the rigor and validity needed while achieving confirmability.

Summary

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of eight school administrators and seven classroom teachers regarding their perceptions of leadership strategies to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. The research question that was addressed in the study was "How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom?" Fifteen semistructured interviews were conducted and the data were analyzed thematically through values and axial coding methods to identifying participants perspectives through their unique experiences, their commonalities that emerge, and major themes in participants' responses. For the research question, the participants

identified four areas of focus which include leadership styles, belief system, barriers, and finding solutions.

Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the research and an interpretation of the findings of the study. It describes how the findings confirm, disaffirm, or extend knowledge in the discipline as well as provides the analysis of the findings. Recommendations for future research, limitations to trustworthiness, and empirical implications of this study will be provided along with the possibility of positive social change and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how administrators in a rural NE school district implement leadership strategies that are intended to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. The participants were defined as school administrators and classroom teachers working with students in elementary or middle school. The participants provided their perspectives about the leadership strategies to reduce discipline issues in the classroom.

The methodology was a basic qualitative design that provided the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the participants through their perception of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). The use of in-depth semistructured interviews helped gain a better understanding of the perspectives of classroom teachers and/or administrators who implement leadership strategies to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. The in-depth interviews were used to gain critical insight from school district teachers' and school district administrators' perceptions about leadership strategies to support the reduction of school discipline issues in the classroom. IPA techniques were utilized to explore and examine the data retrieved to identify themes and patterns from the participants' interviews (Alase, 2017).

The responses correlated with the research question that asked, "How do administrators report their practice of leadership strategies in a rural NE school district to support the reduction of student discipline issues in the classroom?" The participants were able to share their perspectives and experiences related to the research question. The

four major themes that emerged were (a) working together, (b) building relationships, (c) embracing change, and (d) creating solutions.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data collected were carefully analyzed through two cycles of coding, and four themes emerged: (a) working together, (b) building relationships, (c) embracing change, and (d) creating solutions. Prior to restorative practices, zero-tolerance policies, and punitive discipline were commonplace in elementary and middle school settings. Hulvershorn et al. (2018) found that an understanding of the effects of zero-tolerance policies in schools has resulted in the rethinking of approaches to prevent conflict and create a healthy school climate. Restorative practices are considered an approach which provides a philosophy and a framework of proactive and reactive methods toward building and restoring relationships in schools and thereby reducing conflicts (Gregory et al., 2015; Hendry, 2009; Wachtel, 2013). The participants noted how restorative practices could help reduce discipline issues in the classroom by focusing on relationships. Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. A strong culture of collaboration is needed among staff, as is a commitment to partnering with families and the community to serve students (Kervick et al., 2020). Both teacher and administrator participants agreed that a shared leadership approach develops a culture of trust and collaboration. Leadership theorists found that the shared leadership model at the school level is most likely to increase the quality of the decision, the degree to which the

decision is accepted by the school, overall teacher and staff satisfaction with school leadership, and teacher leadership (DeMatthews, 2014). A shared approach to decision-making provides teachers and staff members with opportunities to better understand decisions, how they will be affected, and a forum to share their fears, worries, and concerns (DeMatthews, 2014).

The initial theme of working together builds a climate of trust and collaboration which leads to a decrease in discipline behaviors in the classroom. Working together increases participation and provides opportunities to develop a common language, which allows leaders to create that climate of trust and collaboration where staff members can put their guards down and have real conversations. Good communication ensures that everyone is on the same page, and it allows them to feel included. The biggest challenge—more than policy, more than discipline, more than anything—is to create a welcoming space where all students feel like they are part of the class and that they belong (Greogory et al., 2020). A shared approach produces an environment where all students are respected and valued members of the class. In order to facilitate a shared approach, principals must develop a transparent approach to show how decision making occurs in their school (DeMatthews, 2014). Transparency makes collaboration easier and builds a culture of trust and openness. A strong culture of collaboration is needed among staff, as is a commitment to partnering with families and the community to serve students (Kervick et al., 2020). When a culture of collaboration is achieved, it empowers others as they feel like they are part of the process. Empowering others provides opportunities for everyone to share their expertise as well as their thoughts about what professional

development they need for growth. Some administrators led teachers by inspiring toward a deeper sense of purpose in contributing to the transformation movement by working collectively to overcome challenges and achieve common goals (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). It is important for teachers and administrators to work together because together they create better learning experiences. When teachers are promoted as partners, it forms a relationship built on respect that grows and develops through collaboration.

Each participant stressed how building relationships with students creates the climate and environment needed to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. Reimer (2019) discovered that relationships are the essence of education. Relationship building makes it easier to resolve conflict and change unwanted behaviors. Recent news and climate change in our schools underscore the importance of building positive relationships in our classrooms and working to resolve conflict (Silverman & Mee, 2018) more constructively. Restorative practices can decrease student suspensions and behavior referrals and potentially improve student–teacher relationships (Weber & Vereenooghe, 2020).When relationships are established, trust is gained, which leads to better classroom management. Restorative practices emphasize the importance of trusting relationships as central to building a strong community in the school with the intention to foster the type of environment that students need to learn and teachers need to effectively teach (Kaplan, 2020). When teachers can create that environment built on positive and trusting relationships, the students want to participate and engage in the class, which decreases discipline issues in the classroom. Restorative circles are a way to ensure each member of the group has an opportunity to share their views or feelings, which can also help the

students stayed more engaged. Reimer (2019) shared that by using restorative circles as a window to make school relationships explicit, we can examine the quality and character of relationships and, with this, ask questions of how relationships are used to control and/or engage.

The use of restorative practices focuses on building the relationship and repairing the harm with less of a focus on punishment. Restorative practices help the students take more ownership for their behavior and allows opportunities to restore the relationship. Restorative practices introduce a different way to frame student relationships and provides an alternative of handling student misbehavior that strives toward accountability, repair, and harmony (Joseph et al., 2021). One component of restorative practices that teachers struggle with is that they want consequences that include punishment. Teachers feel that consequences need to be punitive as it gives them something they are able to hold over students when they are misbehaving. Even some teachers who rarely have discipline issues that leave the classroom shared that their students know the expectations and consequences. The administrators feel that focusing on repairing the harm and restoring the relationship is most important even when a consequence may be given. Moving from a punitive mindset to a restorative mindset is a difficult transition as administrators need to build capacity in their staff by sharing the research and data showing how restorative practices reduce discipline issues in the classroom. Doing something wrong is not seen as grounds for exclusion but rather an opportunity to build and repair relationships (Bruhn, 2020).

The challenge is that the zero-tolerance mentality is still ingrained in many staff members' brains because of their training and school experience (Hall et al., 2021). By building relationships and working together, administrators start to create a culture where teachers embrace change. Administrators help teachers embrace change by providing professional development and training, support, and time. School leaders who are interested in avoiding barriers during early implementation should consider the potential for these barriers in their school to evade poor fidelity and inequitable practices (Joseph et al., 2021). Lustick (2020) shared that Crime and Safety Survey data revealed that, as administrators strive to reduce suspension rates, teachers feel underprepared to address conflict in their classrooms. Ongoing professional development and training will help teachers feel more prepared to deal with discipline issues in the classroom. Schools are faced with challenges of clashing philosophies, lack of time, resources, support, leader engagement, and conceptual clarity, teacher skepticism, insufficient training, student characteristics, competing demands, and institutional racism (Acosta et al., 2019; Augustine et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2013; McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison et al., 2005; Short et al., 2018; Song & Swearer, 2009). When teachers work collaboratively, they will feel more supported, which will increase staff buy-in, especially when there is time provided to master and perfect the new approach or strategy. Time is needed to ensure the staff gets the proper training and support needed to support the students. Staff members will begin to embrace change when they see the data and research of the new approach, are provided with ongoing support, and given time to collaborate with colleagues.

In creating solutions, teachers need to embrace a restorative approach and mindset to create the climate and culture needed for student success. Evidence suggests that RP can help keep youth in school by redefining school disciplinary options to minimize the use of exclusionary school discipline and helps promote a set of values that emphasize inclusiveness, respect, trust, honor and engagement (Schiff, 2018). When implemented comprehensively, restorative practices have many benefits including improved climate and safety, increased school connectedness, the development of conflict resolution skills, improved academic performance and social emotional learning (González et al., 2018). These benefits have led schools to utilize restorative practices to improve student–teacher relationships and increase mutual understanding, which can work together to reduce disparate discipline outcomes (Gregory et al., 2016; Lewis, 2009; Welsh & Little, 2018). Every interaction a student has in school in some capacity impacts future decisions by that student regarding interacting with others and how they trust, care, learn, and lead with others (Webb, 2021). Manassah et al. (2018) stated that many educators reported that restorative circles can positively impact students' attitudes and behaviors. Manassah et al. found the need for appropriate training and support to help teachers gain confidence in and become proficient at using restorative circles. These findings confirm previous findings that building capacity is critical to help teachers promote a set of values that emphasize inclusiveness, respect, trust, honor, and engagement.

The four themes are closely related and key to creating a positive climate and culture where all students can be successful in the classroom. A recent example was during the Covid-19 pandemic, where the administrators and teachers had to work

together to address the challenges presented. Administrators relied on their relationships with the teachers to prepare for virtual learning. By working together and establishing those relationships, the staff was able to embrace the change because they were part of the decision-making process. With all of the staff working together, they were able to embrace the change and create solutions to address the problem and/or challenges presented. The teachers were able to create different online platforms and tools to deliver their instruction virtually. The teachers were open to learning from each other and a school Google classroom was created to share resources. When staff works together, the relationship will grow naturally and the trust can be established. Trust allows staff members to embrace change when they are part of the process and the relationship has been established. Creating solutions is simpler when the administrators and teachers collaborate to make a shared decision. School leaders strongly influence the learning environment and the work of teachers and staff (Baptiste 2019; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Bal et al. (2018) demonstrated the potential for school staff to develop a model of culturally responsive discipline that not only reduced the need for suspension and detention but shifted how staff thought about their purpose as educators. These findings confirm previous findings that a clear vision is key as a leader when trying to move from a punitive mindset to a restorative one.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations to which readers of this study can apply the findings to their own settings may be affected by a couple of factors. The first limitation of this study was a small sample size of 15 total participants, with eight administrators and seven classroom

teachers who were employed for at least 3 years in the northeastern K-8 school district. Due to the limited sample size, the perspectives from the participants may not be reflective of the greater size of teachers and administrators for this school district or other districts within this northeast state or other states.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations for this study warrant further research that would involve other educators and staff members involved in finding leadership strategies to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. Support staff such as school counselors, school-based psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, and behavior specialists often assist in identifying the root causes of behaviors based on their area of expertise. These staff members are key in identifying interventions, strategies, and/or approaches to classroom teachers when trying to reduce discipline within the classroom. Support staff can also provide resources to administrators, teachers and staff members, students, and families to help with mental health concerns, challenging behavior, creating behavior plans and/or incentives, identifying mentors, recommending advocates, or assist with creating referrals to outside agencies. Nonclassroom teachers were not included in this study, and their perspectives could provide additional leadership strategies or approaches to reducing discipline issues in the classroom. Nonclassroom teachers include special education teachers who often work with students of varying needs and behaviors. Their perspectives could provide insight to what strategies or approaches were successful and which ones were unsuccessful and why. In addition, special areas teachers teach all of the students and see more students on a daily basis. Their perspectives could be valuable as

they will see the students in different settings. For example, students may be more successful at physical education class but struggle in a Spanish class. The high school staff members and administrators may have different perspectives. The family perspectives of student discipline and their perspectives on moving from a punitive mindset to a restorative one would be another area that could be worthy of further research. Researching what role student race and/or gender play in the use of exclusionary discipline and further analysis of teachers' perspectives when assigning disciplinary referrals is needed.

Recommendations for Practice

This study centered around elementary and middle school districts identifying strategies and approaches that were researched based on reducing discipline issues in the classroom. Analyzing classroom behavior referrals for student patterns can identify interventions, methods, and professional development for staff and administrators. School counselors, school-based psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, behavior specialists, and mental health providers can provide students with strategies to manage disruptive behavior in the classroom. At the district level, the school counselors received training in areas such as the important of calming corners which is a practice that is important for each classroom. It provides a safe place for students to go and reset without leaving the room. In some Title 1 schools within the district, they have added an additional social worker or guidance counselor to assist with social emotional learning, behavioral needs, functional behavior analysis, behavior plans, resources for students and families, and peer mediation. At the district and school level more training in needed to

prepare our staff members to support our students' everchanging needs. Administrators who are inclined to use alternative disciplines should provide adequate and ongoing training, time, and space for courageous conversations about school discipline (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2018; Gagnon et al., 2018). Training for teachers should include responding to inappropriate behaviors by focusing on expected behaviors to support a classroom where the climate remain positive (Green et al., 2017). In addition to changing the learning environment, training on teaching behavioral expectations should also be provided, such as during the implementation of positive behavioral intervention supports programs, throughout the school year, and data should be reviewed quarterly (Horner et al., 2018; Nese et al., 2020). To build and develop relationships with students and their families and prevent student misbehavior, family engagement is essential. Training for families can include virtual training, learning at home, volunteering at school events, participating in family involvement activities and events, and various training connected to child development.

Finally, a recommendation would be to create a partnership between outside agencies including health care practitioners, therapists, and psychiatrists and the school family which consists of administrators, teachers, students, and families to develop programs and resources for families and the community. This partnership could provide training and support when dealing with students exhibiting intense behaviors. Ideally, this partnership would be housed in the school to help with student immediate needs including medication management, therapy sessions, wellness checks, and referrals to outside agencies. The need for this type of partnership would provide equity as well as

support for the students and teachers. Often, families find it difficult to get early intervention and they are unsure where to go to get help. The goal of this partnership would be to provide more appropriate interventions and supports for our students academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Implications

The data gained from this study may help inform and provide guidance to teachers, staff members, administrators, and district officials on leadership strategies to reduce discipline issues in the classroom. The results from the participants' perspectives about strategies to reduce discipline issues in the classroom can contribute to leader approaches and strategies that lessen those disruptive behaviors in the classroom by using a shared leadership approach and a restorative mindset that focuses on building relationships. Additionally, the results of the study can contribute to how administrators use leadership strategies to reduce discipline issues in the classroom by providing the vision, training, and support to create the climate and culture needed to reduce the discipline issues in the classroom. Further research could include long term studies about if current policies are working in conjunction with the new state initiative to implement restorative practices.

Conclusion

Reducing discipline issues in the classroom continues to be a challenge especially when operating with a traditional "exclusionary discipline" model. Garnett et al. (2020) shared that exclusionary discipline procedures continue to negatively affect educational outcomes for students from specific, racial, income, and ability classifications.

Restorative practices is an approach to alleviate and ease the inequalities shown with exclusionary discipline by focusing on improving the school climate and culture (Garnett et al., 2020). Winn (2018) argued that a systemic and philosophical paradigm shift in schools is required, to address inequity and build relationships through restorative education. A restorative mindset and approach has been researched and continues to grow as the most effective approach to discipline issues in the classroom and throughout the school. Restorative practices emphasize proactively building relationships and establishing a community to prevent conflicts (IIRP, 2017). When implemented comprehensively, restorative practices have many benefits including improved climate and safety, increased school connectedness, the development of conflict resolution skills, improved academic performance and social emotional learning (González et al., 2018).

Fifteen participants which included eight elementary or middle school administrators and seven elementary or middle school teachers were interviewed to investigate how administrators implement leadership strategies in a rural northeastern K-8 school district to reduce student discipline issues in the classroom. The data indicated that a shared approach which focuses on collaboration and working together is essential as an administrator to create a climate of trust. Of the 15 participants interviewed, they all felt that a shared leadership approach would be the best way to collaborate, create buy-in, empower others, build capacity, and/or build trust. The administrator participants shared how it was essential to have a shared leadership approach to create that climate of trust and support with the staff. The administrator participants also stated how ongoing

professional development and training, building staff capacity, and time are key to providing the staff with the tools needed to reduce discipline issues in the classroom.

The study explored the perception of the participants in response to the research questions and each participant noted how building relationships were essential to reducing discipline issues in the classroom. Through building relationships, the students start to make connections and trust can be established. However, to establish these relationships with students, additional training and modeling is needed to help staff members create the climate of trust and support. Administrators need to build the capacity of their staff members so they can create that restorative community and show how exclusionary discipline does not change behavior. The four themes that were essential to reducing discipline issues in the classroom were working together, building relationships, embracing change, and creating solutions. Thus, this study adds to current literature and addresses the need to move from exclusionary discipline to a restorative discipline approach.

Based on the results over the study, social change can be achieved by focusing on building relationships instead of punitive practices. This restorative approach will allow students to stay in the classroom for minor behavior infractions and prepare staff members to deal with these infractions in a positive and productive way. Restorative practices will also contribute to social change as it will provide the students the tools to work out future problems through talking and listening to one another. Moving away from exclusionary discipline will even the playing field for all students regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and ability level. Additionally, training staff

members with effective strategies and approaches to create a climate of respect, trust, and support through a restorative mindset will not only build the relationship with the student it will also extend to the families. This relationship will provide a partnership between school and home which will allow more opportunities for open communication and support for families.

References

Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019).

Evaluation of a whole-school change intervention: Findings from a two-year

cluster-randomized trial of the restorative practices intervention. *Journal of Youth

and Adolescence*, *48*(5), 876. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01013-2

Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good

qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education & Literacy

Studies*, *5*(2), 9-19. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9

Alnaim, M. (2018). The impact of zero tolerance policy on children with disabilities.

World Journal of Education, *8*(1), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v8n1p1

American Civil Liberties Union. (2016). *School-to-prison pipeline*.

https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/school-prison-

pipeline

Anderson, K. P., Ritter, G. W., & Zamarro, G. (2019). Understanding a vicious cycle:

The relationship between student discipline and student academic outcomes.

Educational Researcher, *48*(5), 251–262.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x19848720

Anyon, Y., Gregory, A., Stone, S., Farrar, J., Jenson, J. M., McQueen, J., & Simmons, J.

(2016). Restorative interventions and school discipline sanctions in a large urban

school district. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53, 1663-1697.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216675719

Arcia, E. (2006). Achievement and enrollment status of suspended students - Outcomes

in a large, multicultural school district. *Education and Urban Society, 38*(3), 359–369. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124506286947

Armour, M. (2015). *Ed white middle school restorative evaluation: Implementation and impact, 2013/2014 sixth and seventh grade*. The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue. https://sites.utexas.edu/irjrd/files/2016/01/Year-2-Final-EW-Report.pdf

Augustine, C. H., Engberg, J., Grimm, G. E., Lee, E., Wang, E. L., Christianson, K., & Joseph, A. A. (2018). *Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions? An evaluation of the impact of restorative practices in a mid-sized urban school district*. RAND.

Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology, 60*(1), 421–450. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163621

Babbie, E. (2017). *Basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Bal, A., Afacan, K., & Halil, I. C. (2018). Culturally responsive school discipline: Implementing learning lab at a high school for systemic transformation. *American Educational Research Journal, 55*(5), 1007-1050. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218768796

Baptiste, M. (2019). No teacher left behind: The impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction and student success. *Journal of International Education and Leadership, 9*(1).

Beckman, H. B., Wendland, M., Mooney, C., Krasner, M. S., Quill, T. E., Suchman, A.

L., & Epstein, R. M. (2012). The impact of a program in mindful communication on primary care physicians. *Academic Medicine, 87*(6), 815-819. https://doi.org/10.1097/acm.0b013e318253d3b2

Berkowitz, K. (2012). *Restorative practices whole-school implementation guide*. San Francisco Unified School District.

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802–1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Bott, E. M., Duffy, R. D., Borges, N. J., Braun, T. L., Jordan, K. P., & Marino, J. F. (2017). Called to medicine: Physicians' experiences of career calling. *Career Development Quarterly, 65*(2), 113-130. https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12086

Boudreaux, M. K., & Davis, F. (2019). Teacher leaders' perceptions of charter school principals' instructional leadership practices. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice 2019, 9(1)*, 89-103. https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2019.09.1.07

Brady, A. P. (2017). Error and discrepancy in radiology: inevitable or avoidable? *Insights into Imaging, 8*(1), 171–182. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13244-016-0534-1

Breedlove, M., Choi, J., & Zyromski, B. (2021). Mitigating the effects of adverse childhood experiences: How restorative practices in schools support positive childhood experiences and protective factors. *New Educator, 17*(3), 223–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688x.2020.1807078

Brown, M. A. (2017). Being heard: How a listening culture supports the implementation of schoolwide restorative practices. *Restorative Justice: An International Journal,*

5(1), 53–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/20504721.2017.1294792

Bruhn, S. (2020). The child is not broken: Leadership and restorative justice at an urban

charter high school. *Teachers College Record, 122*(8), 1–34.

https://doi.org/10.1177/016146812012200801

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M. (Eds.). (2016). *The scholar-*

practitioner's guide to research design. Laureate Publishing.

Buckmaster, D. (2016). From the eradication of tolerance to the restoration of school

community: Exploring restorative practices as a reform framework for ethical

school discipline. *Values & Ethics in Educational Administration, 12*(3), 1–8.

Carlson, J.A (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *Qualitative Report, 15*(5),

1102-1113. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1332

Carroll, P. G. (2017). *Evaluating attempts at the implementation of restorative justice in*

three alternative education high schools (Order No. 10619153) [Doctoral

dissertation, University of California, Merced]. ProQuest.

Carter Andrews, D. J., & Gutwein, M. (2020). Middle school students' experiences with

inequitable discipline practices in school: The elusive quest for cultural

responsiveness. *Middle School Journal, 51*(1), 29–38.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2019.1689778

Cavanagh, T., Vigil, P., & Garcia, E. (2014). A story legitimating the voices of

Latino/Hispanic students and their parents: Creating a restorative justice response

to wrongdoing and conflict in schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*(4),

565–579. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.958966

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *School violence: Prevention tools and resources.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/preventio n.html

Chrispeels, J. H., Burke, P. H., Johnson, P., & Daly, A. J. (2008). Aligning mental models of district and school leadership teams for reform coherence. *Education and Urban Society, 40*(6), 730-750. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508319582

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (Custom Edition ed.). Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Sage.

Crimmins-Crocker, J. (2018). *Including creativity in primary school teaching and learning programmes: Teachers' pedagogical practice and the influence of school leadership* [Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera Open Access Theses and Dissertations. https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11895

Daily, S. M., Smith, M. L., Lilly, C. L., Davidov, D. M., Mann, M. J., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2020). Using school climate to improve attendance and grades: Understanding the importance of school satisfaction among middle and high school students. *Journal of School Health, 90*(9), 683-693. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12929

Daly, B. P., Hildenbrand, A. K., Haney-Caron, E., Goldstein, N. E. S., Galloway, M., & DeMatteo, D. (2016). Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline: Strategies to reduce the risk of school-based zero tolerance policies resulting in juvenile justice involvement. In K. Heilbrun, D. DeMatteo, & N. E. S. Goldstein (Eds.), *APA handbook of psychology and juvenile justice* (pp. 257–275). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14643-012

Damanik, E., & Aldridge, J. (2017). Transformational leadership and its impact on school climate and teachers' self-efficacy in Indonesian high schools. *Journal of School Leadership, 27*(2), 269-296. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461702700205

Davis, F. E. (2019). *The little book of race and restorative justice: Black lives, healing, and US social transformation.* Simon and Schuster.

DeAntonio, M. G. (2015). *A comparative study of restorative practices in public schools* [Doctoral dissertation, Alvernia University]. ProQuest.

DeMatthews, D. (2014). Shared decision-making: what principals need to know. *Principal Matters, 100,* 2–4.

DeMatthews, D. (2018) Social justice dilemmas: evidence on the successes and shortcomings of three principals trying to make a difference, *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 21:5,* 545-559. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2016.1206972

DeMitchell, T. A., & Hambacher, E. (2016). Zero tolerance, threats of harm, and the imaginary gun: "Good intentions run amuck." *Brigham Young University*

Education & Law Journal, 2016(1), 1–23.

Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership. (2017). *School-wide restorative practices: Step by step.* Denver, CO: Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership. https://www.skidmore.edu/campusrj/documents/Denver-2017-School-Wide-RP-ImplementationGuide.pdf

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research.* Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* Sage.

Duncan, A., & Santy, R. (2015). US Department of Education. *Race to the Top.*

Dyson, B., Howley, D., Shen, Y., & Baek, S. (2021). Educators' experiences of establishing social and emotional learning pedagogies in an elementary school with at-risk students. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 13*(5), 625–638. https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2021.217

Esterberg, K. G. (2002). *Qualitative methods in social research.* McGraw-Hill.

Evanovich, L. L., Martinez, S., Kern, L., & Haynes, R. D. (2020). Proactive circles: A practical guide to the implementation of a restorative practice. *Preventing School Failure, 64*(1), 28–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2019.1639128

Evans, K. R., & Lester, J. N. (2013). Restorative justice in education: What we know so far. *Middle School Journal, 44*(5), 57-63. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2013.11461873

Fowler, B., Rainbolt, S., & Mansfield, K. (2016, November). *Re-envisioning discipline in complex contexts: An appreciative inquiry of one district's implementation of*

restorative practices. Presentation at the annual convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, Detroit, MI.

Fronius, T., Persson, H., Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., Petrosino, A., & WestEd Justice and Prevention Research Center. (2016). Restorative justice in U.S. schools: A research review. In *WestEd.* WestEd.

Fronius, T., Darling-Hammond, S., Persson, H., Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., & Petrosino, A. (2019). Restorative justice in US schools: An updated research review. WestEd Justice and Prevention Training Center.

Gahungu, A (2018). Indiscipline and safety in public schools: Teachers and principals at odds. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science, 4(2)*, 375-390.

Gagnon, J. C., Barber, B. R., & Soyturk, I. (2018). Positive behavior interventions and supports implementation in secure care juvenile justice schools: Results of a national survey of school administrators. *Behavioral Disorders, 44*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742918763946

Garnett, B., Moore, M., Kidde, J., Ballysingh, T. A., Kervick, C. T., Bedinger, L., Smith, L. C., & Sparks, H. (2020). Needs and readiness assessments for implementing school-wide restorative practices. *Improving Schools, 23*(1), 21–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480219836529

Goings, R. B., Alexander, S. N., Davis, J., & Walters, N. M. (2018). Using double consciousness as an analytic tool to discuss the decision making of black school leaders in disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture & Education, 17*(4), 29–48. https://doi.org/10.31390/taboo.17.4.03

Gomez, J. C. (2020). *High school teachers' descriptions of restorative justice practices as an influence on Hispanic student behavior: A qualitative single case study* [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University].

Gonzalez, T. (2012). Keeping kids in schools: Restorative justice, punitive discipline, and the school to prison pipeline. *Journal of Law & Education, 41,* 281-335.

González, T., Sattler, H., & Buth, A. J. (2019). New directions in whole-school restorative justice implementation. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 36*(3), 207–220. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21236

Goodman, J. K., Cryder, C. E., & Cheema, A. (2012). Data collection in a flat world: The strengths and weaknesses of mechanical Turk samples. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 26,* 213-224. https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.1753

Green, A. L., Maynard, D. K., & Stegenga, S. M. (2018). Common misconceptions of suspension: Ideas and alternatives for school leaders. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(4), 419–428. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22111

Green, A. E., Willging, C. E., Zamarin, K., Dehaiman, L. M., & Ruiloba, P. (2019). Cultivating healing by implementing restorative practices for youth: Protocol for a cluster randomized trial. *International Journal of Educational Research, 93,* 168-176. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.11.005

Greer, L. S. (2018). *Firm but fair: Authoritative school climate as a predictor of restorative justice readiness* [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, San Bernardino]. ProQuest.

Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The promise of restorative

practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school

discipline. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, *26*(4), 325–353.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929950

Gregory, A., Huang, F. L., Anyon, Y., Greer, E., & Downing, B. (2018). An examination

of restorative interventions and racial equity in out-of-school suspensions. *School*

Psychology Review, *47*(2), 167–182. https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-

0073.V47-2

Gregory, A., Osher, D., Bear, G. G., Jagers, R. J., & Sprague, J. R. (2021). Good

intentions are not enough: Centering equity in school discipline reform. *School*

Psychology Review, *50*(2/3), 206–220.

https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1861911

Gregory, A., Ward-Seidel, A. R., & Carter, K. V. (2021) Twelve indicators of restorative

practices implementation: A framework for educational leaders. *Journal of*

Educational and Psychological Consultation, 31:2, 147-179,

https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2020.1824788

Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational*

Management Administration & Leadership, *46*(1), 5-24.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216670652

Hall, B. A., Keeney, A. J., Engstrom, D. W., & Brazzel, P. (2021). Confronting the

traditional system: a qualitative study on the challenges to school based

restorative practices policy implementation. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *24*(3),

361–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2021.1931844

Haney, S. (2017, May 7). Connecticut high school slammed for suspending 150 students for wearing hoodies and forbidden colors at faculty where 84 percent of pupils are black or Hispanic and 83 percent of teachers are white. *Daily Mail Online.* https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4477494/Dress-code-crackdown-suspends-150-students-brings-criticism.html

Hannigan, J. D., & Hannigan, J. (2019). Don't suspend me! An alternative discipline framework for shifting administrator beliefs and behaviors about school discipline. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 19(2),*78-87. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v19i2.1444

Harper, K., Ryberg, R., & Temkin, D. (2019). *Black students and students with disabilities remain more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions, despite overall declines.* Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/blackstudents-disabilities-out-of-school-suspensions

Hashim, A., Strunk, K., & Dhaliwal, T. (2018). Justice for all? Suspension bans and restorative justice programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(2), 174–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2018.1435040

Hendry, R. (2009). *Building and restoring respectful relationships in schools: A guide to using restorative practice.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Herman, K. R. (2016) *The principal role: Distributed leadership.* [Doctoral Dissertation, Old Dominion University] ODU digital commons.

High, A. J. (2017). Using restorative practices to teach and uphold dignity in an

American school district. *McGill Journal of Education, 52*(2), 525-534.

https://doi.org/10.7202/1044479ar

Hitt, D. H. & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systemic review of key leader practices found to

influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational

Research, 86,* 531-569. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315614911

Hopkins, B. (2004). *Just schools: A whole school approach to restorative justice.* Jessica

Kingsley.

Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., & Fixsen, D. L. (2017). Implementation effective educational

practices at scales of social importance. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology

Review, 20*(1), 25-35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-017-0224-7

Horner, R. H., & Macaya, M. M. (2018). A framework for building safe and effective

school environments: positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).

Pedagogická orientace, 28(4), 663–685. https://doi.org/10.5817/pedor2018-4-663

Huang, F., & Anyon, Y. (2020). The relationship between school disciplinary resolutions

with school climate and attitudes toward school. *Preventing School Failure,

64*(3), 212–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2020.1722940

Humphries, M. L., Williams, B. V., & May, T. (2018). Early childhood teachers'

perspectives on social emotional competence and learning in urban classrooms.

Journal of Applied School Psychology, 34(2), 157-179.

http://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2018.1425790

International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2010). *Restorative practices whole-*

school implementation.

http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/SSS_Implementation_Overview.pdf

International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2016). *Defining restorative.*

https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative

International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2017). *Defining restorative.*

https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative

Ispa-Landa, S. (2017). Racial and gender inequality and school discipline: Toward a

more comprehensive view of school policy. *Social Currents, 4*(6), 511–517.

https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496517704876

Jacobsen, W. C., Pace, G. T., & Ramirez, N. G. (2019). Punishment and inequality at an

early age: Exclusionary discipline in elementary school. *Social Forces, 97*(3),

973–998. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy072

Jain, S., Bassey, H., Brown, M. A., & Kaira, P. (2014). *Restorative justice Oakland*

Schools: Implementation and impacts. U.S. Department of Education: Office of

Civil Rights. Retrieved February 12, 2015 from

https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/OUSD-

RJ%20Report%20revised%20Final.pdf.

Johnstone, G. (2002). *Restorative justice. [electronic resource]: ideas, values, debates.*

Willan Pub.

Johnstone, G. (2011). *Restorative justice: ideas, values, debates.* Willan Publishing.

Joseph, A. A., Hnilica, R., & Hansen, M. (2021). Using restorative practices to reduce

racially disproportionate school suspensions: The barriers school leaders should

consider during the first year of implementation. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture & Education, 20*(2), 95–119.

Judkins, M., Bosworth, K., & Garcia, R. (2019). Leadership team components leading to implementation success: An exploratory study. *Journal of School Leadership, 29*(5), 409-426. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619858835

Kaplan, C. P. (2020). Restorative practices: Healing hurts, remediating wrongdoing as an alternative to traditional school discipline. *ReVision, 33*(2), 30–34.

Katic, B. (2017). *Restorative justice practices in education: A quantitative analysis of suspension rates at the middle school level* [Master's thesis, California State University, San Bernardino]. ProQuest.

Kehoe, M., Bourke-Taylor, H., & Broderick, D. (2018). Developing student social skills using restorative practices: a new framework called H.E.A.R.T. *Social Psychology of Education, 21*(1), 189–207. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-017-9402-1

Kervick, C. T., Moore, M., Ballysingh, T. A., Garnett, B. R., & Smith, L. C. (2019). The emerging promise of restorative practices to reduce discipline disparities affecting youth with disabilities and youth of color: Addressing access and equity. *Harvard Educational Review, 89*(4), 588–610. https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.4.588

Kidde, J. (2017). *Whole -school restorative approach resource guide: An orientation to a whole-school restorative approach and guide toward more in-depth resources and current research.* Vermont Agency of Education.

Kingston, B., Mattson, S. A., Dymnicki, A., Dymnicki, A., Spier, E., Fitzgerald, M,

Shipman, K.,Goodrum, S., Woodward, W., Witt, J., Hill, K. G., & Elliott, D.

(2018). Building schools' readiness to implement a comprehensive approach to

school safety. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 21(4), 433–449.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-018-0264-7

Kocon, A. (2018). Sparking a school discipline revolution. *Education Digest*, *83*(7), 16.

Kyere, E., Joseph, A., & Wei, K. (2020). Alternative to zero-tolerance policies and out-

of-school suspensions: A multitiered centered perspective. *Journal of Ethnic &*

Cultural Diversity in Social Work: Innovation in Theory, Research & Practice,

29(5), 421–436. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2018.1528914

Lee, T., Cornell, D., Gregory, A., & Fan, X. (2011). High suspension schools and dropout

rates for blacks and white students. *Education and Treatment of Children, 34(2)*,

167-192. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2011.0014

Lewis, S. (2009). Improving school climate: Findings from schools implementing

restorative practices. *International Institute for Restorative Practices.*

Liberman, K., & Katz, M. (2017). Implementing restorative justice in Rhode Island

schools: First-year implementation of case conferencing. Urban Institute.

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88936/implementing_restora

tive_justice_in_rho de_island_schools_0.pdf

Lustick H. A. (2017). Administering discipline differently: A Foucauldian lens on

restorative school discipline, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*,

20(3), 297-311.

Lustick, H., Norton, C., Lopez, S. R., & Greene-Rooks, J. H. (2020). Restorative practices for empowerment: A social work lens. *Children & Schools*, *42*(2), 89–97. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1093/cs/cdaa006

Makgato, M., & Mudzanani, N. N. (2019). Exploring school principals' leadership styles and learners' educational performance: A perspective from high-and low-performing schools. *Africa Education Review*, *16*(2), 90-108. https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2017.1411201

Manassah, T., Roderick, T., & Gregory, A. (2018). A promising path towards equity. *The Learning Professional*, 39(4), 36-40.

Mansfield, K. C., Fowler, B., & Rainbolt, S. (2018). The potential of restorative practices to ameliorate discipline gaps: The story of one high school's leadership team. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *54*(2), 303–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17751178

Manuel, L. T. A. (2016). *Lead with passion: Effective leadership characteristics as 128 perceived by school administrators and teachers.* [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Irvine]. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED577851

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed). Sage Publications.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching.* (Second ed.) Sage Publications Ltd.

Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*, *2*, 214-253.

Mayworm, A., Sharkey, J., Welsh, K., & Scheidel, K. (2016). Teacher consultation to

enhance implementation of school-based restorative justice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 26*(4), 385–412. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1196364

McCluskey, G., Lloyd, G., Kane, J., Riddell, S., Stead, J., & Weedon, E. (2008). Can restorative practices in schools make a difference? *Educational Review, 60*(4), 405–417. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910802393456

McCold, P. (1996). Restorative justice and the role of community. In B. Galaway & J. Hudson (Eds.), *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives* (pp. 85-102). Criminal Justice Press.

McCold, P. (2000). Toward a mid-range theory of restorative criminal justice: A reply to the Maximalist model. *Contemporary Justice Review, 3*(4), 357-414.

McCold, P., & Wachtel, T. (2002). Restorative justice theory validation. In E. Weitekamp and H-J. Kerner (Eds.), *Restorative Justice: Theoretical Foundations* (pp. 110-142). Willan Publishing.

Medhurst, A. R., & Albrecht, S. L. (2016). Salesperson work engagement and flow: A qualitative exploration of their antecedents and relationship. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 11*(1), 22-45. https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-04-2015-1281

Meek, S., & Gilliam, W. (2016). Expulsion and suspension in early education as matters of social justice and healthy equity. *NAM Perspectives*. National Academy of Medicine. http://doi.org/10.31478/201610e

Merriam. S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and*

analysis. Jossey-Bass.

Morse, J. M, Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification

strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research.

International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1(2), 13-22.

https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100202

Morse, R. J., & Wilson, R. F. (2016). Realizing informed consent in times of controversy:

Lessons from the support study. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 44*, 402-

418. https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110516667938

New York City Department of Education. (2019). Implementing cross-sector

collaboration through the district-charter collaborative: A case study of promising

practices. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598355.pdf

Nese, R. N. T., Bastable, E., Gion, C., Massar, M., Nese, J. F. T., & McCroskey, C.

(2020). Preliminary analysis of an instructional alternative to exclusionary

discipline. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 23*(1), 1–14.

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1253864.pdf

Nese, R. N. T., Nese, J. F. T., McCroskey, C., Meng, P., Triplett, D., & Bastable, E.

(2021). Moving away from disproportionate exclusionary discipline: developing

and utilizing a continuum of preventative and instructional supports. *Preventing

School Failure, 65*(4), 301–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2021.1937019

New Jersey Department of Education. (2019). *Commissioner's annual report to the*

education committees of the senate and general assembly on student safety and

discipline in New Jersey Public Schools. State of New Jersey Department of

Education. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED615459.pdf

O'Dwyer, L. M., & Bernauer, J. A. (2014). *Quantitative research for the qualitative*

researcher. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335674

O'Reilly, N. (2017). From performance to passionate utterance: Rethinking the purpose

of restorative conference scripts in schools. *Ethics and Education, 12*(2), 170–

183. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2017.1286763

O'Reilly, N. (2019). Tell me the story: Marginalisation, transformation, and school-based

restorative practice. *International Journal of Educational Research, 94,* 158-167.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.01.002

Office of Civil Rights. (2018, May). *2015–2016 Civil Rights Data Collection: School*

Climate and Safety [PDF File]. U.S. Department of Education. [Google Scholar]

Ortega, L., Lyubansky, M., Nettles, S., & Espelage, D. L. (2016). Outcomes of a

restorative circles program in a high school setting. *Psychology of Violence, 6(3),*

459–468. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1037/vio0000048

Parker, C. (2016). Pedagogical tools for peacebuilding education: Engaging and

empathizing with diverse perspectives in multicultural elementary classrooms.

Theory and Research in Social Education, 44(1), 104–140.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2015.1100150

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Sampling, qualitative (purposeful). *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of*

Sociology. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss012.pub2

Payne, A. A., & Welch, K. (2015). Restorative justice in schools: The influence of race on restorative discipline. *Youth & Society, 47*(4), 539–564. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X12473125

Payne, A., & Welch, K. (2018). The effects of school conditions on the use of restorative justice in schools. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 16*(2), 224–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016681414

Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes*. Good Books.

Raffo, C. & Gunter, H. (2008) Leading schools to promote social inclusion: developing a conceptual framework for analysing research, policy and practice, Journal of Education Policy, 23:4, 397-414. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930801923799

Rausch, M. K., Skiba, R. J., & Simmons, A. B. (2005). The academic cost of discipline: The relationship between suspension/expulsion and school achievement. *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.*

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage.

Reimer, K. E. (2019) Relationships of control and relationships of engagement: how educator intentions intersect with student experiences of restorative justice, *Journal of Peace Education, 16(1)*: 49-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2018.1472070

Reimer, K. E. (2020). "Here, it's like you don't have to leave the classroom to solve a problem": How restorative justice in schools contributes to students' individual and collective sense of coherence. *Social Justice Research, 33*(4), 406–427.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-020-00358-5

Roca, Inc. (n.d.). Peacemaking circles: A process for solving problems and building

community.

http://ocs.archchicago.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=YyvmyeF8KDg%3D&tabid
=996&language=en-US

Rockette, L. A. (2016). *Principals as instructional leaders as opposed to school*

managers. [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Scholar Works.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd

ed.). Sage Publications.

Rubio, R. (2018). *Effective implementation practices of restorative justice: A qualitative*

case study [Doctoral dissertation, LaFetra College of Education]. ProQuest.

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage

Publications.

Sandwick, T., Hahn, J. W., & Hassoun Ayoub, L. (2019). Fostering community, sharing

power: Lessons for building restorative justice school cultures. *Education Policy*

Analysis Archives, 27(145). https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.4296

Schiff, M. (2018). Can restorative justice disrupt the 'school-to-prison pipeline?'

Contemporary Justice Review, 21(2), 121–139.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2018.1455509

Schotland M., MacLean H., Junker K., Phinney J. (2016). *From punitive to restorative:*

One school's journey to transform its culture and discipline practices to reduce

disparities. In: Skiba R., Mediratta K., Rausch M. (eds) Inequality in school

discipline. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51257-4_13

Scott. D. & Usher, R. (2004). *Researching education: Data, methods, and theory in educational enquiry.* Continuum.

Sebastian, J., Huang, H., & Allensworth, E.(2017). Examining integrated leadership systems in high schools: connecting principal and teacher leadership to organizational processes and student outcomes, school effectiveness, and school improvement. *An International Journal of Research, Policy, and Practice 28(3),* 463-488. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2017.1319392

Seiden, M. (2016, November 14). *Girl suspended from middle school for cutting peach with child butter knife.* WPLG. Retrieved October 13, 2021, from https://www.local10.com/education/2016/11/14/girl-suspended-from-middle-school-for-cutting-peach-with-child-butter-knife/.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22(2),* 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/efi-2004-22201

Sheras, P. L., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2016). Fostering policies that enhance positive school environment. *Theory Into Practice, 55:2,* 129-135, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1156990

Short, R., Case, G., & McKenzie, K. (2018). The long-term impact of a whole school approach of restorative practice: The views of secondary school teachers. *Pastoral Care in Education,* 36(4), 313–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2018.1528625

Silverman, J., & Mee, M. (2018). Using restorative practices to prepare teachers to meet the needs of young adolescents. *Education Sciences, 8*(3), 131. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8030131

Skiba, R. Mediratta, K. & Rausch, M. (Eds.), *Inequality in school discipline: Research and practice to reduce disparities* (pp. 225– 242). Palgrave Macmillan.

Skiba, R. J. (2014). The failure of zero tolerance. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 22*(4), 27-33.

Skiba, R. J., Chung, C.-G., Trachok, M., Baker, T. L., Sheya, A., & Hughes, R. L. (2014). Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of infraction, student, and school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *American Educational Research Journal, 51*(4), 640–670. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214541670

Smith, J. A., Flower, P. and Larkin, M. (2009), *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.*, Qualitative Research in Psychology, 6:4, 346-347. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880903340091

Soini, T., Pietarinen, J., & Pyhältö, K. (2016). Leading a school through change-- Principals' hands-on leadership strategies in school reform. *School Leadership & Management, 36*(4), 452–469. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2016.1209179

Song, S. Y., & Swearer, S. M. (2016). The cart before the horse: The challenge and promise of restorative justice consultation in schools. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 26*(4), 313–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1246972

Sridhar, P. (2019). Lawmaker pushes restorative justice awareness to California. *KPBS.*

https://www.kpbs.org/news/2019/apr/16/lawmaker-pushes-restorative-justice-

awareness-cali/

Stahl, S. D. (2016) The evolution of zero-tolerance policies. *CrissCross, 4*(1), Article 7.

https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/crisscross/vol4/iss1/7

Stake, R. E. (2000). *The art of case study research: Perspective on practice* (2nd ed.).

Sage.

Stamm, M. E., Frick, W. C., & Mackey, H. J. (2016). An analysis of US student drug and

alcohol policies through the lens of a professional ethic for school leadership.

International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership, 11(1).

https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2016v11n1a631

Steinberg, M. P., Lacoe, J., Thomas B. Fordham Institute, & Thomas B. Fordham

Foundation. (2017). The academic and behavioral consequences of discipline

policy reform: Evidence from Philadelphia. In *Thomas B. Fordham Institute.*

Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Sumner, D., Silverman, C., & Frampton, M. (2010). *School-based restorative justice as*

an alternative to zero-tolerance policies: Lessons from West Oakland. University

of California, Berkeley, School of Law.

Terrill, S. (2018). *Discipline that restores: An examination of restorative justice in the*

school setting. Presentation at MidAmerica Nazarene University Colloquium,

Olathe, KS.

Thoonen, E. E., Sleegers, P. J., Oort, F. J., & Peetsma, T. T. (2012). Building school-

wide capacity for improvement: The role of leadership, school organizational conditions, and teacher factors. *School effectiveness and school improvement, 23*(4), 441-460. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2012.678867

Thorsborne, M. & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing restorative practice in schools: A practical guide to transforming school communities*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Thorsborne, M., Riestenberg, N., & McCluskey, G. (Eds.). (2019). *Getting more out of restorative practices in schools: Practical approaches to improve school wellbeing and strengthen community engagement*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Vanblaere, B., & Devos, G. (2016). Relating school leadership to perceived professional learning community characteristics: A multilevel analysis. *Teaching and teacher education, 57*, 26-38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.03.003

Varnham, S. A. L. L. Y., Evers, M., Booth, T., & Avgoustinos, C. (2014). Valuing their voices: Student participation in decision making in Australian schools. *International Journal of Law and Education, 19*(2), 23-40.

Vincent, C. G., Inglish, J., Girvan, E. J., Sprague, J. R., & McCabe, T. M. (2016). School-wide positive and restorative discipline (SWPRD): Integrating school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports and restorative discipline. In R. Skiba, K. Mediratta, & M. Rausch (Eds.), *Inequality in school discipline: Research and practice to reduce disparities* (pp. 115–134). Palgrave Macmillan.

Voelkel Jr, R. H., & Chrispeels, J. H. (2017). Within-school differences in professional learning community effectiveness: Implications for leadership. *Journal of School Leadership, 27*(3), 424-451.

Wachtel, T. (1997). *Real justice. How the revolutionize our response to wrongdoing.* Piper's Press.

Wachtel, T. (2000). Restorative practices with high-stakes youth. *Family Group Conferencing: New Direction in Community Centered Child & Family Practice.* Aldine de Gruyter.

Wachtel, T. (2013). Defining restorative. *International Institute for Restorative Practices, 12.*

Wachtel, T. (2016). Defining restorative. *International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP).* https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/Defining-Restorative_Nov-2016.pdf

Wachtel, T. (2018). Defining restorative. *International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP).* https://www.iirp.edu/pdf/Defining-Restorative.pdf

Wachtel, T. & McCold, P. (2000). Restorative justice in everyday life. *Restorative Justice in Civil Society.* Cambridge University Press.

Washburn, D., & Willis, D. (2018). *The rise of restorative justice in California schools brings promise, controversy.* EdSource. https://edsource.org/2018/the-riseof-restorative-justice-in-california-schools-brings-promise-controversy/597393

Webb, O. D. (2021). Enacting relational leadership through restorative practices. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 67*(2), 159–177. https://doi.org/10.11575/ajer.v67i2.68603

Welch, K. (2018). The effect of minority threat on risk management and the "new disciplinology" in schools. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 59*, 12–17. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.05.006

Welsh, R. O., & Little, S. (2018). The school discipline dilemma: A comprehensive

   review of disparities and alternative approaches. *Review of Educational Research,*

   88(5), 752–794. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318791582

Wethington, E., & McDarby, M. L. (2015). Interview methods (structured,

   semistructured, unstructured). The Encyclopedia of Adulthood and Aging, 1-5.

   https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118521373.wbeaa318

Wilcox, K. C., & Lawson, H. A. (2018). Teachers' agency, efficacy, engagement, and

   emotional resilience during policy innovation implementation. *Journal of*

   Educational Change, 19(2), 181–204. https://doi-

   org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s10833-017-9313-0

Wilson, R. F. (2016). *The promise of informed consent.* Oxford Handbooks Online.

   https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199366521.013.53

Winn, M. T., Martinez, D. C., & Caraballo, L. (2018). A Transformative justice approach

   to literacy education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 62*(2), 219.

   https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/jaal.887

Wood, J. L., Harris, F., III, & Howard, T. C. (2018). *Get out! Black male suspensions in*

   California public schools. Community College Equity Assessment Lab and the

   UCLA Black Male Institute.

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam,

   and Stake. *The Qualitative Report, 20(2)*, 134-152. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-

   3715/2015.2102

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.).

Sage Publications.

Zakszeski, B., & Rutherford, L. (2021). Mind the gap: A systematic review of research on restorative practices in schools. *School Psychology Review*, *50*(2/3), 371–387. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1852056

Zehr, H. (2019). *Restorative justice? What's that? The Zehr Institute.* http://www.http://zehr-institute.org/what-is-rj/