

Syracuse University

SURFACE at Syracuse University

Dissertations - ALL

SURFACE at Syracuse University

12-16-2022

Unpacking the Implementation of Restorative Practices: A Case Study of Race, Equity, and Change

Theresa Helyn Holtsbery

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/etd>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Holtsbery, Theresa Helyn, "Unpacking the Implementation of Restorative Practices: A Case Study of Race, Equity, and Change" (2022). *Dissertations - ALL*. 1585.

<https://surface.syr.edu/etd/1585>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the SURFACE at Syracuse University at SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Abstract

This research examined two types of change enacted by implementing Restorative Practices to address racially disproportionate disciplinary practices at an urban middle school. The first was change at a systemic, organizational level and the second as a paradigm shift in the negotiation of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices. The research explores essential change components in the planning, enactment, and sustainability of RP implementation and details the history and rationale for selecting RP. This study also explores the perspectives and actions of school staff as they negotiate the intersections of RP, race, equity, and authority.

Qualitative data was collected during a fifteen-month case study, including over two hundred hours of classroom and school observations, one-on-one shadowing, fourteen formal interviews and extensive document analysis. Data were analyzed through the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory and the correlated theories of Interest Convergence and Critical Whiteness. Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) provided the framework for the comparative systemic analysis of the implementation of Restorative Practices at this school in Year A and Year B of this study.

This study offers empirical evidence that Restorative Practices alone cannot deal with issues of race and inequity. To implement Restorative Practices successfully requires an intentional and thoroughly race-cognizant approach to break the silence about race and the insidiousness of Whiteness in a reform initiative chosen to dismantle racial disproportionality.

This research also shows how fragile systemic change can be without safeguards in place to ensure sustainability. It concludes with an analysis of the importance of self-reflexivity and on-going vigilance for White researchers studying race throughout the research process.

**Unpacking the Implementation of Restorative Practices:
A Case Study of Race, Equity, and Change**

by

Theresa H. Holtsbery

B.S. SUNY at Cortland, 1981
M.S. Syracuse University 1986

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Curriculum.

Syracuse University
December 2022

Copyright © Theresa Holtsbery, December 2022

All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

This journey began with a late-night text from a friend asking me to take a graduate course with her. When I demurred, she asked, “Why not?” I thought she is right; why not? Now here I am at the end of a ten-year journey that began with part time course work, extended into full time study when I retired after 35 years as an urban K-6 educator and ends with the completion of this dissertation. I am so grateful to the many people who have supported me along the way.

The School of Education at Syracuse University has been an exceptional place to learn and to grow in understanding the world of education that I had been so intensely involved in at the school I taught at for decades to a much more systemic and nuanced view of issues of social justice that are integral to truly meeting the needs of every student. The faculty I have been so blessed to learn from have created truly transformative opportunities to be able to critically assess where American education has been, where it is now and what it has the potential to be. It has provided me the opportunity to truly look at myself, my explicit and implicit belief systems, and my teaching career. It was humbling, yet so exhilarating and illuminating.

I would like to thank my research study participants who, despite their very busy schedules, allowed me to visit their classrooms for observations, to shadow them for the day, to talk with me about their experiences, their beliefs, their fears and their joys with an openness, a vulnerability and such a clear commitment to doing what is right for their students. I learned so much from each of you and hope that in this document, what you have shared with me can help others learn also.

To Mara: What a privilege it has been to have your support and mentorship, to have taken classes from you, taught undergraduates with you and to have seen the incredible impact you

leave on others as you so elegantly and performatively not only talk the talk but truly walk the walk of social justice in the way you run your classes and the causes you champion. I have learned so much from you and am forever grateful for all of your encouragement when I wanted to give up. Your feedback and suggestions have been invaluable to me.

To Barbara and George: Thank you so much for being on my committee and for all of your insights and knowledge. You both have pushed my thinking in critically important ways that have made me a better student, researcher, writer, teacher, and human being.

To my children: Liz and Jon: Being your mom has been the very best part of my life. Having you attend the school I taught at was incredibly eye opening as I navigated the school system as a teacher and as a parent. The quest for better schools that meet the needs of all students has always been integral with you and all you have taught me as you have grown into the impressive adults you are today.

To my family: Tom and Marybeth, Andy and Victoria, Chuck, and Laurie: You have been so unfailingly supportive of me in all things. I am so fortunate to have you all in my life.

To Mackenzie, Sophia, Grace and Maddy: What a great joy it has been to watch you grow into the beautiful, fabulous, intelligent young women you are. I hope perhaps this sets an example for the great sense of accomplishment one feels by working hard and striving high.

To Mark: Thank you for your endless patience as I rambled on about this work and waiting for me to finish just one more article, one more page of transcription, one more page of coding, one more page of writing for the past three years. Your encouragement means the world to me.

To Eryka, Christine and Meredith: How fortunate I have been to be in a cohort with three such brilliant, funny, caring, and wonderful women. I am so thankful you let me be part of our little group and I learned so much from each of you! I wish you all so much success and happiness as you go forward.

To my friends who have listened to all my “school talk” over the years and let me go on and on, knowing how querulous I was about the system and how much I wanted to be part of positive change. Special thanks to my exceptional friend, Mary, who proofread this document again and again, making it so much better and teaching me the importance of the Oxford comma.

To Amy, my incredible friend who went into hospice care as I worked through my final revisions. I am so glad for the times we have shared. Life is not fair, and cancer is a horrific thief. Thank you for believing in me and telling me not to give up. Your friendship has been one of life’s true blessings. I know you cannot be at my defense, but I will keep an empty seat there for you because I know even though you have passed on, you are always with me in spirit.

Finally, for my mother who wanted to go to SU so very much but was unable to. I have gotten to go in your stead for my masters and now my doctorate. I wish you were here to see this. All those books you read me, teaching me to read before I started school, all the ways you encouraged me to excel academically, to see it as a way in and a way out, a means and an end, I am forever in your debt. I know you are watching me from above and hope that

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	xii
List of Tables	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	4
Research Questions and their Rationale.....	6
Significance of Study	8
Additional Motivation for this Study	8
Organization of this Research Study	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	14
A History of Education Reforms, Interest Convergence and Social Justice	14
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	14
No Child Left Behind (NCLB).....	15
The Common Core State Standards.....	16
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	17
Education Reforms and Social Justice.....	18
What are Restorative Practices?	20
Definition and Origin of Restorative Practices.....	21
RP and Principles.....	23
Key Aspects of RP	26
RP and Change	26
RP and Authority	28
Restorative Practices, Race and Equity	31
Critique of Restorative Practices.....	32
Confusion and Lack of Clarity	33
Absence of Full Buy In.....	34
RP Needs to be Fully Embedded.....	35
Lack of Accountability	35
Teacher Belief Systems and Inconsistent Findings	36
Concerns about the Use of RP to counter Disproportionality and Re-edifying Whiteness...	37

Restorative Practices Research Overview	38
Descriptive Study Findings	39
Explanatory RP Research Findings	41
Further Findings about RP.....	42
Theories Used in this Research	43
Change Theory	44
Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform.....	51
Critical Race Theory.....	60
Interest Convergence Theory.....	65
Critical Whiteness Theory	70
Examples of the Use of These Theories in Literature	77
Chapter Summary.....	79
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	81
Research Study Design and Appropriateness.....	82
Yin’s Six-Stage Case Study Model	84
My Six-Stage Case Study Process.....	87
Positionality.....	90
Access to Research Site.....	91
Research Site	93
Participants	94
Consent.....	97
Data Sources and Collection	97
Observations	101
Shadowing	102
Interviews	103
Data Analysis	104
Race and Equity Coding	106
Authority Coding.....	106
Ethics.....	108
Chapter Summary.....	109
Chapter 4: A Systemic Analysis of RP Implementation at Emancipation Middle School. 111	
Analysis of Emancipation’s RP Implementation	111

Component 1: Direction and Sector Engagement	112
Component 2: Capacity Building and Leadership Development	126
Component 3: Development of Leaders at All Levels	131
Component 4: Failure to Manage Distractors.....	132
Component 5: Continuous Inquiry Regarding Results.....	142
Component 6: Two-Way Communication	144
Chapter Summary.....	151
Chapter 5: How the MCSD Came to Choose Restorative Practices	155
Identifying the Problem.....	155
Seeking a Solution.....	162
Multiple Perspectives	164
A Former MCSD Student	164
MCSD Board of Education Members	165
Meridian University School of Education Faculty	166
Meridian Teacher’s Union.....	166
A Journalist’s Perspective	167
Other Voices at the November 14, 2014, BOE Meeting.....	168
A White Parent	169
Former Members of the MCSD BOE.....	170
Coming to a Solution.....	171
The State Attorney General’s Report and Assurance of Discontinuance.....	172
The MCSD Code of Conduct	175
Restorative Practices: A Means to the Desired End.....	180
Mr. Herbson.....	180
MCSD RP Implementation: A Phase in Program	182
Best Practices Organization.....	187
Chapter Summary.....	192
Chapter 6: Findings on Race, Equity and Restorative Practices	194
Rejection.....	195
Denial: Doubting the Validity of Disproportionate Suspension Data	195
“I’m Colorblind”	197
What Behavior is “Consequencable”?.....	198

Deflection	200
Evaded Question.....	201
Poverty and Culture	201
Trauma, Refugees, Homelessness and Jail	203
Reflection	204
Being a White Teacher	204
Staff of Color and Those Who are Not.....	208
Too Loud: Teacher Bias toward Student Behavior	210
A More Systemic Look at Race, Equity, and Identity.....	212
Chapter Summary.....	216
Chapter 7: Findings on Authority and Restorative Practices	222
Shared Authority	223
Being Subjected to the Authority of Others	224
State Education Department/MCSD Central Office’s Authority over the Principal.....	224
The Principal’s Authority over the Staff	226
The Principal’s and MCSD’s Authority over Best Practices Organization.....	229
Having Authority Over Others.....	231
Teachers’ Authority over Students	231
Dean of Students’ Authority over Students and Teachers.....	235
Vice Principals’ Authority over Students and Staff	236
Principal’s Authority Over Staff and Students	237
Language Used by Staff and Students.....	239
A Paradox	241
Chapter Summary.....	242
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	245
The Story I Wished to Tell and the Conflict to Tell the Story I Saw	245
Discussion of Findings	248
Change and Restorative Practices.....	249
Race, Equity, and Restorative Practices	261
Authority and Restorative Practices	266
The Negotiation of the Intersection of Race, Equity, Authority, and RP	272
A Self-Reflexive Examination of Whiteness in this Study	276

My Racial Self-Location Before this Study	278
My Racial Self-location during my Study Design.....	279
My Racial Self-Location During my Case Study Research	280
My Racial Self-Location During Analysis	282
Strengths Of this Study	284
Further Limitations of this Study	286
Future Research Recommendations	287
Significance and Implications of this Study.....	288
Implications for School District Leadership.....	289
Implications for School Leaders.....	291
Implications about Race, Equity, and RP	293
Final Note.....	294
Appendix Observation Consent.....	297
Appendix B Interview Consent.....	299
Appendix C Classroom Observation Protocol	301
Appendix D School Leadership Observation Protocol.....	302
Appendix E Semi-Structured Interview Questions	303
References	304
Curriculum Vitae	333

List of Figures

Figure 1 Restorative Practices Continuum.....	24
Figure 2 Social Discipline Window.....	29
Figure 3 Kotter’s 8-Step Model	46
Figure 4 Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform.....	51
Figure 5 Yin’s Six-Stage Case Study Model	85
Figure 6 Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform.....	111

List of Tables

Table 1 Examples of Preventive and Interventive Restorative Practices	23
Table 2 Descriptive and Explanatory Research on RP	38
Table 3 A Comparison of Change Theories	47
Table 4 Emancipation Demographics	94
Table 5 Research Study Participants	95
Table 6 Data Types, Use, and Time of Collection	98
Table 7 Data Collection Timeline	99
Table 8 Classroom Observation Protocol	101
Table 9 Emancipation RP Goals and Action Plans	122
Table 10 MCSD RP Impementation Plan.....	146
Table 11 Disciplinary Data Shared with Staff.....	150
Table 12 Summary Table Comparing Change Components.....	151
Table 13 MCSD Code of Conduct Leveled Behaviors.....	177
Table 14 MCSD Code of Conduct Types of Restorative Conferences.....	179
Table 15 MCSD RP Implementation	182
Table 16 MCSD Contracts with Mr. Herbson	183
Table 17 MCSD Contracts with BPO	187
Table 18 Mr. Herbson vs. BPO Contractual Responsibilities	190
Table 19 Examples of Restorative and Non-restorative Language.....	240
Table 20 MCSD Suspension Data 2014-2018	259

Chapter 1: Introduction

During my second year of teaching, one of my third-grade students whispered to me “Ms., Venus has a knife. She was showing it to us in the breakfast room.” Concerned, I asked Venus to come up and talk with me. She readily admitted she had a knife and showed it to me. It was a small pocketknife with a very iridescent cover. I asked her why she brought it to school, and she shared that she thought the other students would think it was cool. I looked at this beautiful, shy ten-year-old with gorgeous caramel skin and big brown eyes and thought of how she had recently moved into the area and into our class. Making new friends is not always easy and she told me that when she took out the knife, all the kids wanted to see it.

Venus did not threaten anyone with her knife and had no plans to use it. We talked about why bringing a knife to school for any reason is a problem, then called her grandmother who said she would stop by after school to pick it up. I locked it away for the rest of the day. Problem solved, I thought. However, I still had one more thing to do which was to let my principal know what had happened and ensure that I had handled the situation appropriately.

Little did I know what a firestorm would erupt. Despite my explanation that Venus had no intention to use the knife to do any harm, my principal said his hands were tied with the zero-tolerance weapons policy our school district had. He removed Venus from my class, gave her five days of out of school suspension and then, if that was not enough, she was sent to a week of what was called “weapons school” as part of her consequence. She lost two weeks of academic instruction and worse, she and her grandmother lost trust in me, in my principal and in the school district. Despite my request and her grandmother’s request that in this situation, a much more reduced consequence was merited, we were told there were no exceptions because there was zero tolerance regardless of her age or the back story. When Venus returned to school, she rarely

made eye contact with me and barely participated in class. She had been such an engaged learner, but no more and her grandmother would no longer speak to me.

I look back and think how differently this situation could have and should have been handled. I found out years later that Venus had dropped out of high school at sixteen and was arrested the next year. I wonder about the message she received in third grade from the exceptionally harsh punishment and how that may have shaped her views on school. Zero tolerance meant no one cared what her story was or what was best for her. What could have been handled in a restorative circle where she could have been heard, a solution determined that was appropriate to the situation, the harm resolved within our classroom community and she could have remained with us, a valuable member of our classroom, versus her punitive, exclusionary consequence. It is a memory that still haunts me. It is a memory that helped lead me to this dissertation about Restorative Practices (RP).

Schools across the country and globally are turning to RP to stem the flow of the School to Prison pipeline (STPP) and as an alternative to zero tolerance, authoritarian, punitive and exclusionary discipline policies (González, 2015; Carter et al., 2016). The STPP is a grim reality that affects millions of young people (Mallet, 2017). Specifically, it disproportionately affects African American students who are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). These disciplinary responses result in hundreds of hours of lost class time and considerable lost promise and potential. The more students are removed from schools through either suspensions or expulsions, the more they disappear from graduations stages and fill the pipelines to prison (Carter, et al., 2016; Wald & Losen, 2003).

It is essential that the public-school systems find ways to keep young people in the school yards, and out of the prison yards (Weissman, et al., 2005). This effort to dismantle the STPP in

which harsh disciplinary practices push children, especially boys of color out of school and into the criminal justice system, is an important way to directly confront racial inequities in our educational system (Bahena et al., 2012). Darling-Hammond (2022) states that an important way to achieve this is to “replace zero-tolerance discipline policies with RP focused on strategies that enable students to develop empathy, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills, so they can take responsibility for themselves and their community” (p. 56).

RP provides an alternative to zero tolerance discipline that improves student behavior and self-esteem as well as safeguards student resilience by envisioning these youth as problem-solvers and assets to school communities (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). Developing such policies and practices that support the success of all students is not only critical, but it represents the moral higher ground that Fullan (2009b) says all educational reforms must aspire to.

RP, often used interchangeably with Restorative Justice, are a reform initiative that seeks to “affirm human dignity by recognizing each person as a valued member of the community who can make amends and be reintegrated with forgiveness, facilitating actions and response that foster healing rather than alienations or coercion” (Rideout et al., 2010, p. 39). It is an approach that confronts and disapproves of wrongdoing, not to punitively control human beings, but to encourage personal and institutional empowerment and integrity in a way that can lead to social transformation (Morrison, et al., 2005).

In the fullest sense of democracy, RP allow those who have been harmed and those who have harmed to speak, to listen and to build together reparations that address the harm that had been done in a manner that is respectful to each breaking down intolerance and limiting beliefs (Vaandering, 2014). As González (2012) explains, this reform initiative is a diverse and multi-layered concept requiring a philosophical shift away from punitive control mechanisms.

RP is considered most effective when it is a systemic philosophy, a culture changing enterprise that guides the way staff and students act in all their dealings, aware of how their actions affect others, believing in the innate goodness of everyone, and seeing wrongdoing as an opportunity to learn and grow in a way that truly accomplishes meaningful and lasting change (Garret & Franklin, 2017). A successful restorative approach requires a cultural and structural philosophy of engagement instead of social control. This change should result in a decrease in racial and ethnic disparities which in turn would likely diminish minority criminal stereotypes (Milner, 2017). Furthermore, RP in schools may “reduce student offending, increase perceptions of safety, enhance learning, promote positive school climate” Milner, 2017, p. 6).

Problem Statement

RP are a reform initiative often used as a means to solve the problem of racially disproportional disciplinary practices and to build relationships, student agency and a positive school culture. There has been significant research about RP over the past fifteen years that has explored whether RP can make a difference with student behavior (Gregory et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2018; McCluskey et al., 2008; Standing et al., 2012; Wadhwa, 2016), and if and how RP addresses racial disproportionality (Anyon et al., 2014, González, 2015; Knight & Wadhwa, 2010; Mansfield et al., 2018; Payne & Welch, 2015). Other studies have examined how RP affects school culture (Kane et al., 2009; DeWitt & Dewitt, 2012), what perspectives about RP are held by teachers, administrators, parents and/or staff (Cavanaugh, et al., 2014; Vaandering, 2013; Reimer, 2011) and the overall effectiveness of RP implementation (Kane et al., 2009; McCluskey et al., 2011; Reimer, 2011).

Results from these studies have shown that RP improves student behavior more than suspensions (Gregory et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2018; Wadhwa, 2007), that RP can play a

key role in addressing disproportionate discipline and also be correlated with increased academic outcomes (González, 2015) and the more that RP are used, the lower the use of disciplinary referrals for Latino and African American students (Gregory et al., 2016).

However, other studies have shown that RP have also had little effect on the suspension gaps between Black and non-Black students (Hashim et al., 2018) and that schools with higher Black student populations were less likely to use RP (Anyon et al., 2014; Payne & Welch, 2015). Further research has noted concerns over how RP works with serious issues (McCluskey et al., 2011), the difficulty of sustaining RP over time (Reimer, 2011) and holding students responsible and accountable for agreements made in circles (Wadhwa, 2015). Additional research has found that the effectiveness of RP implementation depended on school readiness, leadership, change in processes, and understanding of the nature of RP (Kane et al., 2009).

For all that has been studied about RP, there remains much to be learned. This dissertation responds to three different calls for further research on RP. The first call is for additional research on race and RP (Gavrielides, 2014; Gregory & Skiba, 2019; Hamer et al., 2013; Hurley et al., 2015; Wadhwa, 2007). The second call is for further research on teachers' perspectives about implementing RP (Hurley et al., 2015; Gregory et al., 2016), their personal core beliefs and how they align with RP (Vaandering, 2014). The third call for further research is to examine systemic change away authoritarian systems (Vaandering, 2014) and what components are critical for RP sustainability (Hurley et al., 2015).

The purpose of this research is to examine the two types of change that the implementation of RP requires. The first is a change on a systemic, organizational level and the second as a paradigm shift in the negotiation of race, equity, authority, and RP. It considers change components that need to take place in the planning, enactment, and sustainability of RP

implementation and explores the history and rationale for why RP was selected to be used at this school in the first place. This study also explores RP, race, equity, and authority from the perspectives of school staff, their belief systems, and actions in regard to how they align with RP, not only in the negotiation of each of these elements but also at their intersection.

This research looks at the inherent complexity of system change that can make the planning and implementation of meaningful change such a significant challenge, particularly in urban schools (Connell & Klem, 2000). It seeks to provide a more exacting view of the change that is required within this RP reform initiative at both a systemic level and regarding specific issues of authority, race, and equity.

Research Questions and their Rationale

Such a paradigm shift requires tremendous change. Thus, to understand RP implementation requires an examination of change. Although many studies have looked at different facets of RP, a search through five major educational databases yielded not a single study that used change theory to explore how RP implementation is enacted. This study proposes to do just that by using the framework found in Michael Fullan's (2009a) Theory of Action of System Reform. RP are intended, in part, to address systemic issues of inequity and so, a critical, systemic analysis is appropriate. Fullan (2009b) furthermore suggests that reform-based initiatives are put into action to achieve a higher moral purpose which he identifies as increased student achievement and success. It is this higher moral purpose that specifically applies to RP and the paradigm shift it requires. Thus, my first research question is:

- 1) How is change enacted in the implementation of Restorative Practices?

As important as it is to examine the mechanics of how change is enacted, it is also of value to explore why RP was enacted. This study explores the history and decision making that led to

the adoption of RP to understand the context and the intent of the implementation more fully. My second research questions is:

As important as how change is enacted in the implementation of RP on a systemic level, it is equally important to consider the impetus for such a potentially transformation change. Thus, my second research question is:

2) How does a school choose to implement Restorative Practices?

This question recognizes that schools do not operate in a vacuum or in a unitary context. An individual school is part of a larger school district which is often the deciding body concerning what new initiatives are chosen to be implemented and which are not. Often these decisions are made in response to state and federal guidance or mandates. This question allows for an examination of how one school district and one specific school came to implement RP. The research looks at both the broader historical lens of the community and the specific events that were the catalyst for this implementation.

How are issues of race, equity and authority dealt with in a reform intended to change the status quo and address racial disproportionality? One of the primary reasons the school district studied in this research-initiated RP was as a mandated requirement to address the alarming racial disparities in suspension rates. But how does the implementation of Restorative Justice accomplish such a goal?

Even though issues of race are always present and often at the surface of school related discourse, policies and practices, educators are often silent. Castagno (2008) cautions that eliminating disciplinary disparities requires an ongoing awareness of how those were produced and a commitment to eradicating them. If we are to successfully address racial disparities, we must both acknowledge and work through issues of race (Carter et al., 2016). This study

examines the perspectives of one school's teachers and staff about the issues of race and equity that RP are intended to address as well as how the necessary changes in authority are navigated.

My third research question is:

- 3) How does one school negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?

Significance of Study

This research responds to gaps in the literature that have resulted in calls for further research on race, teacher's perspectives and belief systems about RP, and the systemic change that RP requires. It provides insights into the perspectives of teachers on race, equity, authority and into their belief systems which Kennedy (2016) states are the basis by which teachers figure out whether, when and how to incorporate something new into their practice. It is these beliefs that can affect the interpretation of reforms (Gregoire, 2003). The results of this research can help schools understand how to implement RP more effectively. By using change theory to analyze the implementation of RP, this study provides a framework that other schools can use in the implementation of RP and identify potential pitfalls that preclude sustaining such a reform initiative on a systemic level.

Additional Motivation for this Study

I opened this dissertation with an anecdote about my third-grade student Venus, her small iridescent knife, and the negative impact of the zero-tolerance disciplinary consequence of weapon school on her and her grandmother which still haunts me. I would like to share two additional experiences that helped to shape my interest in this research study on RP.

The second experience that had a huge impact on me happened much later in my teaching career. For many years, I began each day in my classroom with a morning meeting where we gathered in a circle to do a group greeting and a sharing activity followed by a community/skill builder activity. It was my students' favorite part of the day. The relationships we built, from the personal stories we shared to the games we played, and the times we laughed like when Omar told us his latest knock-knock joke and sometimes cried together as when Asha shared her dog died were critical not only to the success of our classroom but also to our development as caring, empathetic, tolerant human beings. It was particularly helpful for my refugee students who were just learning English and the bonds we forged were strong. It was helpful for each and every one of us and set the tone for the rest of our day together. As a result of this relationship building, I had few, if any, management issues.

Then the State Education Department determined that we were a failing school and needed to be "turned around" which led to being externally monitored with tight mandates on our schedules. The freedom I had had to allot the first twenty-five minutes of our day to morning circles was removed because math had to start five minutes after the first bell rang. This was my first class in close to twenty years that started without a morning meeting. With the rest of the day tightly scheduled, I tried to have my students come up during lunch to incorporate a much shorter variation of morning meeting but that ended up only working out a few times a week, if that. Occasionally I was able to find time at the end of the day, but it was not the same. The camaraderie of past years was missing, the kindness and compassion reduced, and the opportunity to really get to know each other much more limited.

I struggled that year to build a classroom community which I had thought was a strength of mine. I had never fully realized how essential morning circles were, how being in a circle so

fully engaged with each other mattered so much. Students from past years stopped in and asked if I was still doing morning circles and the activities they had enjoyed so much. Sadly, I said not really, I tried to incorporate some of the games into my content instruction, which was helpful, but it was not the same. The relationship and skill building that morning circles facilitated was invaluable and to work under a schedule and level of “accountability” that disallowed it was detrimental for my students and for me. We got through the year, but without morning circles to start the day, something really important was missing.

Three years later, as I began my full-time doctoral studies, the Meridian City School District (MCSD) decided to implement RP district wide. When I learned that this initiative emphasized relationship building, problem solving and incorporated a daily morning meeting, I was intrigued. I knew from experience how important these were and was cautiously optimistic that the pendulum of change had swung back to more of student-centered, humanistic focus. For I knew well the power of circles to build, to heal, to learn and to grow and the incredible power of relationship and community building. Treating children as agential, using behavior issues to learn from in inclusionary ways, to both build and restore community through RP spoke to so much that I value and find to be important. I knew I wanted to learn more about RP and its implementation.

My third experience happened in the middle of my teaching career when at a faculty meeting, we were asked if anyone was interested in professional development called Courageous Conversations about Race. As a teacher of many students of color, I thought it would be helpful and signed up. The next six weeks were transformational for me. I found out so many things I did not know and did not know I did not know. I had never heard the term systemic racism and certainly did not understand the sweeping, alarming impact it has on our society. I had never

heard of Whiteness and struggled to get my head around such a concept. Wasn't I, a liberal, open-minded person who chose to teach in an inner city with the majority of students Black, Hispanic, and Asian a good person, a good teacher? I did not choose to be White or to be privileged or to be part of a system that was so unfair to those who did not look like me. Somehow, I thought the Civil Rights era had dealt with issues of racism. I struggled with these realities, wrestled with having my eyes opened to a world that was always there but I did not see what was right in front of me. I read the articles, participated in discussions and simulations and I listened to the experiences of others, in horror, in anguish and finally with a much deeper understanding of the issues of race and inequity that plague our world. These courageous conversations about race were difficult, talking about race is hard but not talking about it is even more problematic.

On the last day of class, I stopped to talk to the presenters and asked what I could do now that I understood so much more. They said that the best thing I could do is encourage more of my colleagues to take the class, to initiate conversations about race, to challenge others when I saw signs of racism and inequity, and to walk toward courageous conversations and not away. This research is an effort to do just that, to acknowledge the need for and provide the opportunity to talk about race, equity, and RP.

Beyond these experiences that provide me with such an interest in the potential of RP as an alternative to the damage of zero tolerance policies, the power of circles and community building and the desire to walk toward conversations about race and equity, I was motivated for this research by one more thing.

In the Fall of 2016, I conducted a preliminary research study about RP training in this school district via an online survey with teachers who had all received the same introductory

training. The first question asked each participant to define Restorative Justice/RP and resulted in a wide range of responses that surprised me because they all received the same training. These varying definitions of what RP meant made me think about how they might impact the quality of the implementation of RP each of these teachers chose to do and how their belief systems could affect how they interpreted the training and what RP meant or did not mean. These survey responses included multiple references to teachers' beliefs about authority, race, and equity which I have incorporated into my research questions.

Provocatively, one teacher discussed the importance of addressing what she called "the third rail" suggesting that "there is a strong need for deep conversations about race, ethnicity, one's attitudes about race and why the initiative was mandated in the first place." Thus, this study includes interview questions that specifically ask about why RP was initiated in this school district and if it achieves that goal. The lack of common definition and shared common goals and beliefs I found led me to Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) to help me understand what was happening on a systemic level in the implementation of RP.

Organization of this Research Study

In the following chapters, this study looks at how change was enacted in one school's implementation of RP through a systemic analysis using Fullan's (2009a) Theory of Action of System Reform and also explores the historical and contextual context in which it was enacted. It examines the ideological shifts that RP requires by exploring how one school negotiated the intersections of race, equity, authority within RP.

In my literature review in Chapter Two, I overview the history of education reforms in the US since the late 1950's and situate RP within the ongoing churn of reforms that have been

enacted through an interest convergence of different stakeholders. I then explain what RP are, case study research on RP done thus far, and examine the theories used for the design and analysis of this dissertation and its findings. In Chapter Three, I explain the methodology that I used for this research. My findings based on my research questions are in Chapters Four through Seven. In Chapter Four, I discuss my systemic analysis on how change was enacted at Emancipation Middle School and in Chapter Five why RP was implemented in this district and thus in this school is explained from a historic and community perspective that provides empirical evidence of interest convergence. My findings on RP, race and equity are in Chapter Six and on RP and authority in Chapter Seven, My final chapter provides a discussion of the story I wished to tell, an analysis of my findings and their implications, the significance, strengths and limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research study seeks to examine change; specifically, how change is enacted in the implementation of RP, a reform-based initiative that school districts across the country have embraced as a means to address racial disproportionality. This study also explores how race, equity, authority, and their intersection are negotiated within one school's implementation of RP.

This literature review begins with an overview of reforms in education since 1965 and then explains what RP are, their history, practice, and principles. This includes the integral relationship between authority and RP. Next, I describe how RP are operationalized with an exploration of RP and change followed by RP, race, and equity. Following that I provide a critique of RP and an overview of research that has been done on it. This chapter ends with an examination of the theories used within this study: Change theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT) with specific application of two corollaries of CRT; Interest Convergence Theory and Critical Whiteness Theory.

A History of Education Reforms, Interest Convergence and Social Justice

Educational reforms in US schools are often based on the interest convergence between different bodies of influence. In this section I describe four of the most notable school reforms of the past sixty years: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Common Core. I then discuss two of the major stances of reform, neoliberalism, and social reform, giving context to the growth of the Restorative Justice movement in education.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) set a rationale of access and equity as the cornerstone of federal education policy by providing supplemental funding to states in the hope of equalizing educational opportunity for minority and poor children. These funds were allotted with few stipulations and no accountability for student achievement (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). This was in direct response to the Civil Rights Movement (Capone & Hulett, n.d.).

In a convergence of interests, teacher unions, conservatives and liberals found common ground in this type of federal funding that allowed for the preservation of the old education policy regime. Conservatives wanted to keep federal influence on education minimized, teacher unions wanted to avoid funding for rigorous standards and tests, charter schools or vouchers and liberals wanted to ensure there was continued focus on providing more funding for minority and poor students. (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, the ESEA equity approach to improving schools was challenged and the more traditional education groups were forced to shift their policy positions as new groups rose in influence and power (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Leonardo, 2007). Attention was called to the problem of how low student achievement impacted economic development. Business leaders, trade groups, politicians and voters began to push for a stronger federal role in school reform to produce more qualified American workers. Again, there was a convergence of interest to create reform that included accountability measures, mandated standards and tests that was seconded by civil rights groups as a means to reduce racial achievement gaps. Republicans and Democrats listened to the growing public voice for these actions and by the end of the

1990's there was bipartisan support for reforms in standards, testing and accountability. This was a huge shift from the prior view that national standards would be a dangerous expansion of federal authority to now viewing national standards as a way to build the nation's competitiveness (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 as a sweeping federal law to replace the ESEA that mandated all schools who received Title I federal funding would be fully accountable for student outcomes. (Porter-Magee, 2004). It was a standards-based education reform that was intended to improve outcomes for individual students by setting high standards and establishing measurable goals for schools. States were required to develop their own standards, administer ELA and math standardized tests, and meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) to receive federal funding. Schools that did not show adequate progress were penalized.

In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was created to strengthen the NCLB act (Ametepee et al., 2014). This included the provision of \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top (RTTT) fund to facilitate plans to "improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of teaching so that students are adequately prepared for success in life, college education, and future careers "(U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The Common Core State Standards

The RTTT competitive grant program required states to pledge to accelerate student performance, adopt more rigorous academic standards and rate teachers and principals based in part on their students' achievement. To facilitate these "more rigorous academic standards," the National Governor's Association for Best Practices (NGABP) and the Council of Chief State

Officers (CCSO) joined together to produce what were called The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2009. This led to the assumption that these standards were state led, however their adoption and implementation were linked to the federally created RTTT funding. To get these funds, states were enticed and even coerced to adopt the CCSS. There were additional concerns because the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was the primary funding source for the development of the CCSS (Ametepe et al., 2014). The goal was to have all states follow the same CCSS Math and ELA standards which were considered relevant, rigorous, research-based preparing students for 21st century college and careers. Again, the convergence of interests from the NGABP, the CCSO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the US Department of Education propelled this reform forward.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced the NCLB and in response to negative public pressure, expressly forbid the Department of Education from pressuring or incentivizing states to adopt the CCSS or any other academic standards. This backlash was from the perception that the federal government was pushing a national curriculum which was seen as an encroachment on the American tradition of state's rights from conservatives. In another example of interest convergence, liberals were also concerned that CCSS was undermining teachers' efforts to tailor instruction to meet individual students' needs (Gewertz, 2015).

The ESSA included provisions to ensure success for students and schools by providing protections for disadvantaged and high-need students, required all students to be taught high academic standards to prepare them to succeed in college and careers, annual statewide assessments with results made public, expanding preschool, and accountability and action to

effect positive change in low performing schools as explained on the U.S. Department of Education website (www.ed.gov/essa).

These reforms have been at the forefront of American schools in both public perception and federal government involvement as the pendulum swung from funding to build equity for poor and minority students with little accounting with the ESEA to the NCLB with the focus on high accountability on schools and teachers for students with punitive measures and the CCSS with the intent of a national curriculum to the ESSA that was intended to temper both. In each of these reforms there was an interest convergence between different groups of stakeholders that facilitated the changes in policy and funding. These examples suggest that for a reform change in education to take hold, to garner federal government action, there must be pressure from some combination of groups such as the federal and/or state government, conservatives, liberals, teacher unions, business groups, political parties, influential think tanks, and civil rights groups.

Education Reforms and Social Justice

Over the past twenty years, these neoliberal education reforms have emphasized standardized testing, high stake evaluations, school choice, privatized management, and a market discipline (Sas Rubin, et al., 2020). In fact, in 2009, the federal government suggested punitively that five thousand of the nation's lowest performing schools be "turnaround" and by 2013 nearly 2000 of these schools had been closed in part due to this effort (Nuamah, 2020). Over this time period, rapid growth of charter schools was led by a group of no-excuses, high performing networks like Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Achievement First and Uncommon Schools. Their use of strict disciplinary methods has questionable influence on standardized test

scores and may undermine nonacademic outcomes such as the social and behavioral skills of students (Golann & Torres, 2020).

In his blog about the future of education equity policy, Cairney (2021) suggests that although there is often a voiced strident commitment to “education equity” by the government and different advocacy groups, this is often where the agreement ends. He identifies two competing approaches to the problems of inequity and their solutions. The first approach is the neoliberal approach that focuses on the role of education in the economy with the provision of market-based reforms and new public management reforms. The other approach, Cairney says, is a social justice approach which focuses on the role of education in ensuring students’ wellbeing and life opportunities as well as larger social determinants for education outcomes.

This neoliberal ideology has effectively shaped current educational reform in the US (Ramlacklan, 2020; Torres, 2005). It affects education polices and reforms in a manner that causes institutional and cultural change not for the primary purpose of public gains but instead for economic. Ramlackan (2020) states:

These reforms tend to undermine social justice efforts with an intense focus on efficiency and narrow measured outcomes in ways that can exacerbate structural and systemic inequities for marginalized groups. What are needed instead are social justice focused efforts to address the complexities of teaching and learning in public education and needs based on race, socioeconomic status, language, ability, gender and so forth. Otherwise, the advantage for the privilege only grows as the disparities continue to widen (p. 193).

Torres (2005) adds that this neoliberal agenda has driven the country toward privatization and decentralization of public forms of education. These reform movements have been

increasingly rooted in free-market models of individualism and high-stake competition. They have also provided fertile ground for business interests in the corporatization of schooling from testing companies to book publishers to for-profit charter schools. (Rector-Aranda, 2016). The NCLB model, from the perspective of social justice, was filled with “pitfalls and contradictions that might not only deeply damage the fabric of public education but also people and entire communities, particularly those that are marginalized” (Torres, 2005, par. 27). Social justice in education challenges neoliberal reforms such as NCLB, Grant & Gibson (2013) state, and instead support a framework of human rights: equality, justice, and human dignity. Indeed, these topics should be actively taught in schools, so students become advocates for social justice, for human rights, and for themselves.

It is this issue of human rights and social justice, and the ideals of equality, justice, and human dignity that the reform of RP, also referred to as Restorative Justice, was brought from the criminal justice field into the realm of education and schools. In the following section, I explain the origins of RP, the principles and procedures involved in its implementation.

What are Restorative Practices?

One of the most critical social justice issues in education has been the widespread use of zero tolerance policies in schools which not only have not improved student behavior, but more often have increased the School to Prison Pipeline (González, 2012). The American Civil Liberties Union webpage (<https://www.aclu.org>) defines the School to Prison Pipeline as a disturbing national trend where children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and

counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out by “zero-tolerance” policies that criminalize minor infractions of school rules, while police officers in schools lead to students being criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the school.

Paradoxically, these zero tolerance policies do not create the peaceful and orderly learning environment intended nor do they use these misbehaviors as opportunities to “educate in the broadest sense of the word” (Abregú, 2012, p. 10). Alarming, these policies have created significant racial disproportionality in disciplinary referral, suspension, and exclusion rates (Davison et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 2015; Payne & Welch, 2010; Wilson et al., 2020). In the 2011-12 school year, it was estimated that more than eighteen million days of instruction were lost due to exclusionary disciplinary practices with students of color three times more likely to be suspended than White students (Losen et al., 2015, Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). Not only does this result in a vast loss of instructional time, but also academic achievement, graduation rates, life outcomes, an increase in delinquency and juvenile crime that goes on to “cause voter disenfranchisement, degradation of health and culture and a shorter life expectancy” (Losen et al., 2015, p. 2).

With this alarming knowledge, many school districts are looking for ways to address these ills and develop a cultural change that addresses both the needs of students and the larger community in which they live (Harrison 2007; Normore, 2017). They are turning to RP as a means to this end (Winn, 2014). Morrison and Vaandering (2012) contrast the two approaches by saying zero tolerance is about social control and RP is about social engagement.

Definition and Origin of Restorative Practices

In contrast to zero tolerance policies, RP looks at inappropriate behavior as a violation of relationships, not rules (Reimer, 2011) and is not limited to any one specific practice but rather, is defined by an underlying set of principles (McCluskey et al., 2011). This reform initiative has roots in Indigenous cultures such as Native Americans, the Māori, and Judeo-Christian religious traditions (Gregory et al., 2016) as well as ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (Gaverielides, 2011). It was initially used in the criminal justice system and has since been implemented in schools in Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland, South Africa, Canada, and the U.S. (Anfara et al., 2013).

According to the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) website, (<http://www.iirp.edu/>) “the foundational premise of RP is that people are happier, more cooperative, productive and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them or for them”. It states that RP integrate developments from the fields of education, psychology, social work, criminology, organizational development, and leadership.

Defining RP has some inherent challenges. Throughout the literature, Restorative Justice and RP are often used interchangeably and at times also referred to as Restorative Discipline and Restorative Approaches. For clarity and consistency with how my research site refers to this social justice reform, I use RP as the umbrella phrase for all these terms.

According to the Chicago Public Schools *Restorative Justice Handbook*, RP are “an approach to conflict that focuses on repairing harm and creating space for open communication, relationship building, healing and understanding” (p. 2). Restorative school practices are based on relationships and seek to repair the school community by having students take responsibility for their behaviors, in a non-punitive fashion, by focusing on the development of a respectful

school culture that reinforces inclusivity and self-accountability (Anfara et al., 2013; Drewery, 2004; González, 2012; Haney et al., 2011).

Overall, researchers note that the principles of RP include the need to nurture relationships, identify and repair harm, give voice to all stakeholders, and make things right with support, accountability, and solutions. In addition, skills and beliefs needed are interpersonal communication effectiveness, viewing conflict as an opportunity to learn, inclusivity, accepting ambiguity, and separating the deed from the doer. (Anfara et al., 2013; Durbin, 2016; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; Pavelka, 2013; Vaandering, 2014).

RP and Principles

RP include the actual structures, procedures and protocols used in its implementation. As with the definition of RP, different researchers, and practitioners reference different practices. Often, it is just a different label but for others and at other times, the practice may have a different intent such as preventative versus interventive. What is universal to RP is “they are always antithetical to punitive systems and rely predominantly on structures that involve conferencing and circles” (Haney et al., 2011, p. 56). RP can be categorized as either preventive, which focuses on building relationships and developing community or interventive, which are intended to repair harm and restore community. Examples of each are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of Preventive and Interventive RP

Preventive Practices	Affective statements Affective questions Proactive circles Morning circles Classroom Meetings
----------------------	---

	Relationship building
Interventive Practices	Restorative questions Restorative chat/informal conference Restorative formal conference Responsive circles/group Healing/Peace Circles Mediation

The Chicago Public Schools Restorative Justice Pocketbook (2011) explains that there are virtually unlimited possibilities to RP that can vary in degree of formality, number of people involved, amount of planning, time, and comprehensiveness. Wachtel (2003) suggests that all RP fall somewhere along what he calls the RP Continuum as shown in Figure 1. This ranges from the informal such as affective statements, for example “when you called me ugly, I felt rejected and sad” to the formal restorative conference, which includes multiple members of the community, a facilitator, and scripted process.

Figure 1

Restorative Practices Continuum (Wachtel,2003, p.84)



In the following sections, I briefly discuss three of the most frequently cited RP: circles, restorative chats, and restorative group conferences.

Circles. Circles are one of the most universal and versatile RP. They can be led by an adult or student and are used proactively and preventively to develop relationships that build

community. They can also be used as an intervention to respond to problems in a non-hierarchical manner (Normore, 2017). Preventative circles that build community and develop relationships are also called morning circles, classroom meetings, talking and proactive circles. They are typically done at a classroom level and often include some form of greeting, sharing of personal information, and community building activities. They can additionally be used for the instruction and development of social competencies (Chicago Public Schools Restorative Justice Pocketbook, 2011). Interventive circles, also called responsive, restorative, healing, or peace circles are much more involved and are discussed in the section on formal group conferences.

Restorative chats/Informal conferences. Restorative chats fall in the middle of the continuum and occur as an intervention when a conflict or harm occurs between one or more students. These are most often led by an adult and if the issue is minor, can be held only with the offender. These are types of questions the adult asks of the offender (Restorative Justice Pocketbook, 2011, p. 10):

- 1) Tell me what happened?
- 2) What were you thinking at the time?
- 3) What do you think about it now?
- 4) Who is this going to affect?
- 5) What do you need to do to make things right?
- 6) How can we make sure this does not happen again?
- 7) What can I do to help you?

Restorative group/formal conference circle. A restorative group conference is used for the most serious offenses. These circles include the victim, the offender, their families and support systems, appropriate school staff, and are led by a trained facilitator (Normore, 2017).

The conference begins with the victim(s) describing the harm and its impact on them, followed by each participant describing the impact of the incident on them so the offender is faced with the effects of their behavior on the victim, those close to the victim, and the offender's own family and friends. The victim(s) expresses their feelings and may ask questions about the incident. After a full discussion, the victim is asked to identify the outcome they would like from the conference. All participants contribute to the problem-solving process of how the offender can repair the harm caused. The restorative conference ends with every participant signing an agreement outlining their expectations and commitment to the agreed upon solution (Restorative Justice Pocketbook, pp 8-9).

For this process to work, it is critical that the school makes sure the offender follows through on the co-created plan to repair the harm done (González, 2012). The student can then be re-integrated into the school community instead of being excluded, feeling separate, resentful, or unwanted. RP allow students to see that their voice matters and they have the capability to take responsibility for their behavior, problem-solve and develop solutions as part of the decision-making process (Rideout, et al., 2010). “Systemic use of RP has a cumulative effect and creates what can be called a restorative milieu; an environment that consistently fosters awareness, empathy and responsibility” (Normore, 2017, p. 11).

Key Aspects of RP

In this section, I examine three aspects of RP that are pertinent to this research study. The first is RP and change, the second, RP and authority and the third RP, race, and equity.

RP and Change

RP involves change at many different levels. Its primary goal is to change the dynamic from excluding the offender to one in which they are brought into the community and allowed to

repair the damage they did by the creation of a peaceful resolution which improves school culture (Pavelka, 2013; Ryan & Rudy, 2015). Instead of the punitive exclusion the School to Prison Pipeline zero tolerance policies create, RP create an “opportunity pipeline” allowing youths to function as problem solvers and assets to the community (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014)

RP affect the entire school culture with its attitude of advocacy and agency toward every student. It is often seen as a set of values that focus on the philosophical principles and ethos of being restorative. Thus, the practices should not be used without a deep understanding of the philosophy that guides them (Vaanderling, 2014). RP are rooted in the framework of social justice and offer best practices for students who are “at promise” of minimal academic success (versus “at risk” for underperforming) (Normore, 2017). It runs counter to theories of deficit theorizing, social exclusion, and marginalization of specific populations (Issa, 2017; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995).

Furthermore, RP are based on a philosophy of transparency to resolve conflict via collaborative problem solving that inclusively involves students, families, and staff in a way that meets the needs of both the individual and the community. This transparency includes engaging, explaining, and providing expectation clarity so all members are clear on what to do and why, a change from traditional school practice (Harrison, 2007; Terry, 2017).

The implementation of RP requires a fundamental paradigm shift that not only addresses discipline but the entire school community (Payne & Welch, 2013; Wachtel, 1999). To move from authoritarian and retributive policies to restorative and democratic ones, it is necessary to take into consideration the complex nature of education as an institution. Bazemore and Schiff (2010) recommend that RP philosophy and implementation be combined with a focus on communal school organization. “Describing education systems as ‘complex’ could be taken to

mean, in a more everyday sense, that they are complicated, convoluted, constituted by many policies and practices, by regulatory norms and by individuals, each with his or her own intentionality” (Mason, 2016, p. 437).

It is because education systems and the very nature of change are complex, that the change process in schools requires pushing through when it is difficult, frustrating, or slow. RP require purpose, coherence, capacity building, and leadership to ensure there are policies, strategies, resources, and actions to move the initiative forward as a collective phenomenon (Fullan et al., 2009). It is within this complexity that the implementation of RP occurs.

RP and Authority

RP are not a quick fix but are intended to transform schools from dealing with students as bodies to be manipulated to valuing them as competent, capable, redeemable human beings (Vaandering, 2014). By focusing on the relational development of how people should treat one another versus the adherence of rules, the impact can be profound as a vibrant, positive school culture is created (Terry, 2017). It addresses power imbalances and requires the school community to fully let go of any and all retributive, punitive ideals (Anfara, et al., 2013). This can often be best achieved by asking difficult questions such as: “1) How did these things come to be? 2) Whose interests are being served? and 3) What school and community structures are perpetuating injustice and harm?” (Vaandering, 2011, p. 316). It requires a commitment to disrupt traditional authoritarian practices and replace them with those that allow for equity, advocacy, and agency for all students.

Thus, it is essential, Garrett & Franklin (2017) suggest, to keep in mind that in any school setting, teachers’ and students’ relationships are defined by that institution’s social practices. If students do not feel they are part of the school community in the first place and have

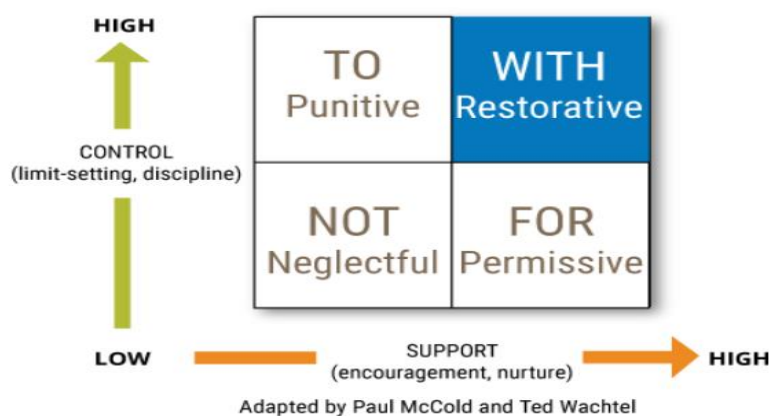
no desire to restore or re-integrate, then RP will fail (Haney et al., 2011). The messages that schools deliver on who belongs and who does not can turn pro-social to anti-social skills and good citizens to delinquent citizens. Positive relationships between and among students and teachers that honor and maintain individuals' dignity and self-worth are essential (Morrison et al., 2005).

As discussed earlier, RP require a full paradigm shift of how school staff thinks about the role of rules and the need to repair harm to allow for healing. It is far more effective to build empathy by allowing those who have been harmed to express their feelings to the offenders than any amount of lecturing, threatening, or punishment ever could (Wachtel, 2003). For many teachers, this is a significant change from their own school experiences and upbringing. This approach supports responsible citizenship as well as personal and institutional empowerment and integrity in a way that can lead to social transformation (Morrison et al., 2005). It is this desired social transformation that speaks to the moral purpose Fullan (2009b) professes as being essential to any reform-based initiative and requires total teacher and staff commitment.

RP provide the foundation to build social capital in a way the optimizes outcomes for its community members as well as its institutional goal of the development and education of all citizens (Morrison et al., 2005). This cannot occur through an authoritarian model but only through a restorative, reparative one. Figure 2 shows the Social Discipline Window (Wachtel, 2003, p. 83) which provides a graphic for how social capital, the connections among individuals (Putnam, 1995) and the trust, mutual understanding, shared values, and behaviors that bind us together and make cooperative actions possible (Cohen & Prusak, 2001) can be developed or hindered.

Figure 2

Social Discipline Window (Wachtel, 2003, p. 83)



Wachtel (2003) explains that this window describes four basic approaches for maintaining social norms and behavioral boundaries by varying degrees of support and control. These are different ways that authority can be exerted. The restorative domain, he says, combines high support with high control which is what happens when one does things WITH people, rather than TO them or FOR them. People are happier, more productive, and cooperative when those in authority positions do things with them and are thus more likely to be willing to make positive changes (Wachtel, 2005). Relying on punitive measures to provide social regulation shames wrong doers, stigmatizes them and most often does not change their behaviors (Glaser, 1964; Braithwaite, 1989). This shows how those in authority have choices for how they exert their power over others and the level of support they offer.

The use of restorative language by staff shapes the school culture and climate and is a sign the community has moved away from blaming, stigmatizing, excusing, rescuing, and move toward a more relational language which will influence practice and the necessary congruent behavior to “walk the talk” (Wachtel, 2003, p. 346). It is in that relational language that

respectful dialogue and social networks are established that build the social capital of all involved and change how equity and authority are expressed in response to misbehavior.

Restorative Practices, Race and Equity

Research and disaggregated data analysis have shown without exception that exclusionary disciplinary policies and procedures are inequitable. The likelihood of students of color being suspended is two to three times higher than for White students and is linked to lower achievement, reduced engagement, truancy, and dropping out (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2014).

Some experts have emphasized that the primary purpose for implementing RP in schools is to address the racial disparities found in suspensions and expulsion data (Hurley et al., 2015). Moreover, proponents of RP believe it to be an effective alternative to zero-tolerance, punitive, exclusionary discipline and see the impact as not just academic, but as a way to transform the community (González, 2015). Payne and Welch (2013) suggest that “the fundamental shift in orientation that Restorative Practices require is likely to be a great challenge for schools, however the transformative nature of the model renders it a promising and encouraging approach to school discipline” (p. 545).

Another way to look at the racial disparity found in exclusionary discipline practices is to consider that, in general, our schools and policies have been developed in a society where Whiteness has dominated political and education leadership. Wadwha (2010) refers to these practices and their results as an outcome of institutional racism. According to the 2016 United States Department of Education taskforce report on *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*, over 80% of US teachers and administrators are White in direct contrast to over 90% or more of students of color in urban areas and over 50% of all US students. For RP to address

issues of disproportionality, issues of race and Whiteness need to be on the table (Wadhwa, 2010). This issue is discussed more fully in the section below on Critical Whiteness.

A restorative approach is responsive to student diversity, considering each unique situation and engaging all stakeholders (Mayworm et al., 2016). The precept that RP “affirms human dignity by recognizing each person as a valued member of the community who can make amends and be reintegrated with forgiveness, facilitating actions, and responses that foster healing rather than alienation or coercion” (Rideout et al., 2010, p. 39) is an important aspect of the equity practices RP employ. These include the affirmation that the student is distinct from the problem (the doer is not the deed) (Drewery, 2004) and to see each as competent, capable, redeemable human beings.

By defining justice as honoring the worth of everyone: the victim(s), the community, and the offender, one moves from a retributive to restorative vantage which becomes more defined by asking these questions: 1) Am I honoring? 2) Am I measuring? 3) What message am I sending? (Vaandering, 2011, p. 316).

The transformative nature of RP, Wachtel (2003), is most effective when RP are considered as a systemic philosophy, a type of social movement, and a culture changing enterprise (Garrett & Franklin, 2017). This guides the way staff and students act in all their dealings, aware of how one’s actions affect others, believing in the innate goodness in everyone and seeing an opportunity to learn and grow from wrongdoing is to truly accomplish meaningful and lasting change. RP are not just a means to desired social outcomes, but more so, Bailie (2017) suggests as “a clear blueprint toward a model of social justice, making our communities more meaningful, respectful, dignified, and just” (p. xii).

Critique of Restorative Practices

This critique of RP includes a discussion on the confusion over terminology, the challenges of achieving full staff buy in for RP implementation and fully embedding RP into a school's culture. This section also provides an examination of issues of accountability, teacher beliefs, and unintended consequences such as re-inscribing Whiteness.

Confusion and Lack of Clarity

One of the criticisms of RP is the potential confusion with the terminology used to name this reform initiative, some of which is used synonymously, but not always. These include Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices, Restorative Approaches, Restorative Discipline, and Restorative Actions. For example, as I noted in Chapter 1, I have chosen to use RP as the name for this initiative to align with what the two organizations used in my research, MCSD and Best Practices Organization, utilize. Throughout the literature, I have found RP and Restorative Justice in education settings to be generally used interchangeably. In addition, there has been some confusion with the form of Restorative Justice that is used in judicial settings which is different from the much more supportive educational Restorative Justice/RP. This can lead to a lack of clarity between teachers seeing RP as a merely a way of handling behavior instead of a way of being (Vaandering, 2011). These issues have led to concerns of a lack of conceptual clarity. It is this lack of clarity that has led to tensions with traditional methods, contradictions in the management of incidents, and lack of staff awareness and understanding that often adversely affect the impact of the reform (Normore, 2017).

There can also be a lack of clarity about roles within an RP initiative. Who does RP and who does not? The use of dedicated RP school staff and consultants leaves a gray area about whether teachers should do RP or not. There are concerns that teachers do not have enough time to do RP and fulfill their instructional responsibilities and the emotional drain peace circles and

mediations can have on staff and students (Morgan, 2021). Some of this confusion can come from a lack of shared understanding about what RP actually are. Is it just the implementation of circles, mediations, and conferences done when a harm occurs? Or is it a culture building venture embedded in every classroom to build relationships, school community, skill building, and the use of restorative and affective language as a means to provide justice that heals? This calls to question what it means when a school or district says they are “doing RP” and the lack of clarity the term provides. It could be there is one person in each building who does mediation, or it could be an entire schoolwide endeavor, there is no universal operational meaning. This was particularly evident in the MCSD and at my research site.

Absence of Full Buy In

Abregu’ (2012) notes that it can be difficult to secure the full buy in from all school community members which is essential for successful RP implementation. To accomplish this, he adds, requires a thoroughly informed and motivated faculty and administration which is not easy to accomplish. “Without buy-in there is no investment, without investment, there is no community, and without community, there is nothing to restore.” (Navarro & Sesky, 2017, p. 155).

To ensure this buy in, the best scenario is that the schools themselves see a need for change and have the desire to improve the school ethos with positive and proactive relationships to build RP upon, but that is not what often happens. More often the schools most attracted to RP, at times due to court mandates due to disproportionate suspension data, may be the least likely to have this present (McCluskey et al., 2008). It cannot be emphasized enough that both the administration and faculty with informed support need to fully buy in to RP for the initiative to be successful (Abregu’, 2012). Even with full buy-in, it can be very difficult to sustain a

Restorative Justice program despite a personal commitment by teachers and administrators (Reimer, 2011).

It is important to remember that the very core of RP lies in the importance of every voice being listened to so top-down authoritative mandates to implement RP run counter to what RP is all about, shared power (Rideout et al., 2010). When RP programs are implemented in this way, there is likely to be resistance and resentment (Morgan, 2021). This has a lasting effect on staff buy in. In addition, there needs to be buy in from students who must feel they are part of the school community and want to restore what has been harmed. If the student has no desire to do so then the RP fail (Haney, et al., 2011).

RP Needs to be Fully Embedded

González (2012) suggests that to be successful and sustainable, RP must be fully embedded in the very fabric of the school. School administrators play an essential role in ensuring that RP is written into the school's code of conduct and have structures in place so RP can be utilized, supporting teachers with RP training, implementation, and positive modeling (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). These are "critical in moving along the RJ continuum as well as having everyone recognize that change takes time" (p. 259) and change takes effort. It is not enough to have RP relegated to one or two people rather, it needs to be upheld through a school-wide culture that is cultivated through shared values and practices (Winn, 2018).

Lack of Accountability

Much of the criticism of RP deals with the issue of students being held accountable (Winn, 2018). When agreements are made, they must be checked with follow-up to ensure they are carried out or if changes need to be made. If that does not happen, it is a sign of a poorly

implemented RP program (Morgan, 2021). Teachers may feel that their authority with students has been compromised (McCluskey et al., 2011) and trust lost in the integrity of RP.

Further criticism of RP occurs when this method is recommended for victims of violent offenses when the thought of meetings one's perpetrator could cause great stress and potential trauma to the victim leading to revictimization rather than healing (Morgan, 2021). Abregu' (2012) notes the importance of making sure there are steps in place for handling more serious offenses that some of the RP structures may not be equipped to handle. This has led to a common concern that RP causes a blurring of the boundaries of acceptable behavior (McCluskey et al., 2011). The result of these events can have unintended negative consequences despite the well intentions of adults (Leach & Lewis, 2013).

Teacher Belief Systems and Inconsistent Findings

Teachers' belief systems or ideologies are integral in their responses toward students and their behaviors. Often these are based upon their own upbringing, implicit biases, ideas about right and wrong, how children should act, and how consequences should be meted out. All these things can consciously and subconsciously affect how teachers implement RP and discipline in general. Cavanagh et al. (2014) found that deficit theorizing by teachers compromised the effectiveness of RP and often resulted in referrals, suspensions, and expulsions as kneejerk reactions to student misbehavior (Wadhwa, 2010). Teachers who had engaged in identical or similar Restorative Justice professional development experiences are often impacted in very different ways (Vaandering, 2014). This is thought to be based on their belief systems and fundamental ideological differences that can affect their implementation integrity and fidelity (McCluskey, et al., 2008). This lack of continuity from teacher to teacher negatively impacts the effectiveness and integrity of RP.

Teachers need not only strong training in RP but must also have a commitment to its ideals with the structural and cultural systems in place, so RP are implemented more consistently, effectively, and equitably (Reimer, 2011; Vaandering, 2013). Most successful training occurred when time was allowed for staff to reflect on their values and their interactions with students (McCluskey et al., 2008). When schools choose to implement a reform such as RP, they are most likely to be successful when educators at all levels share beliefs, goals, and work in concert (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). This training and these conversations about beliefs and biases do not always occur and thus the success of RP is compromised. This is a huge challenge to RP implementation.

An additional concern is that studies do not always show an improvement in behavior and disproportionality (Hashim et al., 2018; Holt et al., 2011; Okilwa et al., 2017; Reimer, 2013; Standing, et al., 2011). There are cases when there was a reduction in exclusionary discipline overall, but there was no significant reduction for students of color, which in at least one case, significantly increased the disproportionality (Davison et al., 2021).

Concerns about the Use of RP to counter Disproportionality and Re-edifying Whiteness

As discussed in the section on Critical Race Theory, there is a concern that although RP, as a well-intentioned measure, have been used as a means to address racial disproportionality, it is not able to fully challenge the systemic nature of racism that cause the problem. It becomes more of a band aid than a true solution. It covers the wound but does not actually heal it.

Of great concern, although RP are in part implemented to address injustice of the oppressed, it can normalize students of color as being the “other” and outside the normative population by requiring this initiative to be in place (Schiff, 2018). By putting the focus on RP to

address disproportionality, the actual root causes such as poverty, violence, incarceration, and systemic racism can be ignored (Cabrera et al., 2016, Daneshzadeh & Sirkakos, 2018).

In addition, the very structures that are used in RP can re-inscribe Whiteness. Bryzzheva (2018) shared how upon reflection, she found that regardless of her intention that in her class's circle space, a common RP tool, her participants were "invited to inhabit whiteness" through what was valued and what was not (p. 247).

Restorative Practices Research Overview

In this section I will provide an overview of both descriptive and explanatory research studies about RP and their significant findings. RP researchers have explored this reform initiative using a variety of research questions in an effort to both describe and explain aspects of RP. To remain true to the researchers' actual words, I will include Restorative Justice and RP as used in the studies which, as will be seen, are most often synonymous. Table 2 shows research studies that looked at describing children's experiences with circle time, the perceptions of teachers, administrators, students, and parents about the implementation of RP, their experiences and their roles within it, and the successes and challenges of restorative approaches. Additional researchers have looked to explain why so many students are suspended and the implications for RP, its value for changing student behavior, if RP can change school culture, and what RP program's challenges and successes are.

Table 2

Descriptive and Explanatory Research Studies on Restorative Practices

Descriptive Research Studies	Explanatory Research Studies
------------------------------	------------------------------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are children’s experiences during circle time and the meanings they ascribe to them? (Leach & Lewis, 2013) • How do teachers and RJ administrators perceive restorative and its implementation in their school and their roles in enacting RP? (Reimer, 2011) • What are the perceptions of Latino/Hispanic students, their parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the experiences of these students? (Cavanagh et al., 2014) • What are the experiences of educators committed to implementing RJ principles? (Vaandering, 2013) • What are the day-to-day challenges and successes of the restorative approach in schools? (McCluskey et al., 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are so many students suspended and what are the possible implications for RJ? (Wadhwa, 2010) • What is the value of RP and RJ for changing student behavior? (Standing et al., 2011) • How can RJ change the culture of a school to a new norm about hazing? (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012) • How do school boards and districts better use research and data to inform policy decisions about RJ? (Seager et al., 2015) • What are the strengths and limitations of the Safer Schools program? (Holt et al., 2011) • How are pilot schools developing their RP? (McCluskey et al., 2008) • What is the capacity of RP to transform school ethos and the conditions necessary for this to happen? Kane et al., 2009)
---	---

Descriptive Study Findings

Overall, each of the findings from these descriptive studies present significant concerns about RP that these researchers strongly suggest should be addressed. Cavanagh et al. (2014) found that based on the perspective of Latino/Hispanic students and parents, high schools need to change, particularly in classrooms due to the deficit theorizing by teachers. Even when changes

via RP are being implemented, this challenge remains. Researchers also voiced concerns about how restorative approach works with more serious issues, lack of time and space for RP, and the blurring of the boundaries of acceptable behavior (McCluskey et al., 2011).

Reimer (2011) found that without necessary structures and cultural systems in place, it is difficult to sustain the RP program despite personal commitment by teachers and administrators. She found that RP are not just a strategy to address behavioral concerns but a whole different way of thinking and being.

The introduction of RP in a school has implications for teacher pedagogy. In a study that examined teachers who had engaged in identical or similar RP professional development, their practice in actually implementing RP was impacted in very different ways (Vaandering, 2013). This finding suggests on top of the training teachers receive, the commitment, structural and cultural systems that Reimer (2011) found in her study, must also be in place so that RP are implemented more consistently and effectively.

Finally, Leach & Lewis (2013) found that giving students “voice” is not always an empowering procedure and such well-intentioned activities can have unintended negative consequences. Their work was with Pre-K students but the applicability through high school seems reasonable. There is no doubt that schools that are implementing RP are well-intentioned but are giving students “voice” an end in itself or can there be unintended negative consequences such as revictimizing the victim that must be thought through carefully.

This group of descriptive RP/RJ studies, although quite varied in their choice of subject and context, have all resulted in findings of caution and concern about what has happened in the implementation of RP.

Explanatory RP Research Findings

These researchers were most interested in explaining how RP could change school culture and behavior, how schools could develop RP, and what the strengths and limitations of an RP program were, all very practical and important to the justification of the development and continuation of the success of RP programs. Other researchers looked at student suspension rates and RP and how school boards and districts use research and data to inform RJ policy decisions.

These studies found that an effective strategy to implement RP district-wide is to develop a strategic plan, build analytic capacity, use multiple data sources, and provide professional development to all (Seager et al., 2015). Varying experiences of implementing RP effectively were due to differences in a school's readiness, change processes, leadership, multiple innovations, and understanding of the nature of RP (Kane et al., 2009). Organization learning in the context of a public school can and does occur through RP implementation that is able to result in positive outcomes (DeWitt & De Witt, 2012).

RP have the most impact when opportunities are provided for staff reflection about their personal value systems and the quality of their student interactions. It is most effective in addressing behavior issues when RP are seen as an occasion for active learning (McCluskey et al., 2008). RP programs were strengthened by broad and positive support from staff and weakened when they had not fully permeated into the practices of classroom-based staff. (Holt et al., 2011).

Finally, these explanatory studies showed that RP can improve student communication skills but does not always improve classroom behavior (Standing et al., 2011) though it improves

it more than suspension or expulsion, both of which are more kneejerk responses to misbehavior (Wadhwa, 2010).

Unlike the descriptive case studies, these case studies show more of an explanation of how to implement RP. There is not the cautionary focus on elements of Restorative Practice implementation that are problematic but more on what to consider before and during implementation in terms of developing a strategic plan, considering a school's readiness, leadership and understanding of RP, and the value of organization learning. These studies showed the importance of staff self-reflection, and their RP support and buy in. They also showed RP improves behavior more than suspensions or expulsions and can have corollary benefits such as improved communication.

Further Findings about RP

More Benefits. Research on the benefits of RP when it is implemented well includes behavior improvement (Wadhwa, 2010), and reduced referrals and suspensions (Harrison, 2007). Students and staff develop the communication and interpersonal skills needed to resolve conflict (Standing et al., 2011) and increase social and emotional intelligences (Abregu', 2012; Nguyen & Normore, 2017). Higher degrees of RP implementation are linked to the quality of teacher-student relationships and more equitable disciplinary practices (Gregory et al., 2016).

There is a positive change in the attitudes of students and families as they see schools as a caring place versus exclusionary and punitive (Harrison, 2007; Abregu', 2012), increased instructional time and learning, and improved school climate (Terry, 2017). What is most important for RP is that it is implemented consistently and with fidelity (Mayworm et al., 2016).

Systemic change. RP require systemic changes that not only include the training and apportionment of staff but also the use of time and space (McCluskey et al., 2011). There must be thought put into what needs to happen so that the necessary structures and cultural systems are in place (Reimer, 2011). Schools need a strategic plan for each of these areas and a system that builds analytic capacity (Seager et al., 2015). Organizational learning for RP must be carefully put into place with a systemic focus on how to implement RP in ways that are effective (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012; Gregory et al., 2015). The truth is that planning for and implementing change in urban schools is a huge challenge “due to the inherent complexity of system change, the cyclical nature of public attention and the divisive factors of race and class” (Connell & Klem, 2000, p. 93).

One of the biggest challenges for RP are that change takes time. Anfara et al. (2013) consider RP a long-term solution that can take three to five years as schools move along a continuum to build school-wide implementation with fidelity. In addition, there must be provision for the significant money that is needed for training and staffing. Ineffective implementation can occur from inadequate resources and training or from a lack of tools, structures, and the time it takes to do them well (Garrett & Franklin, 2017). RP requires systemic change to be implemented with fidelity and all these elements are essential in the planning and execution.

In the next section of this literature review, I explain the theoretical framework I used in this study to examine the systemic changes and the negotiation of race, equity, and authority that the successful implementation of RP require.

Theories Used in this Research

In this section, I provide an overview of the theories that this research is framed upon, their application in education and RP research and how I utilize them in my study's design, coding, and analysis. First, I examine change theory and Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) and then Critical Race Theory. To allow for a deeper examination of race, equity, and authority, I also discuss and apply two theories that are considered pillars of the larger Critical Race Theory: Interest Convergence Theory (Bell, 1980) and Critical Whiteness Theory.

Change Theory

In this section, I examine three seminal change theories from Lewin (1947), DiClemente and Prochaska (1982), and Kotter (1995). Next, I explain the history and premise of theory of change (TOC) and how Fullan's Theory of Action (2009a) is interrelated to both. The realm of change theory can be confusing as the terms change research, change knowledge, change theory, theory of change, and theory of action are used in ways that may seem synonymous but are often much more discrete.

Change research can be described as "any scholarship that focuses on how to make change happen... and can be theoretical, empirical or conjectural" (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020, p. 5). Change theory, they explain, is an important subset of change research that provides a framework of ideas that explain how some aspect of change works beyond a single project. Fullan (2007) calls this generalized knowledge about how change works "change knowledge". Change theory can also use existing theory about how change happens to provide a framework for an idea that is supported by evidence to explain an aspect of change (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020).

In his work in social psychology, Lewin's Three Stage Model (1947) is considered one of the first theories to look at change in an encompassing model. These stages are: 1) unfreeze, 2) move, and 3) refreeze. To "unfreeze", one must be driven by some kind of motivator that is often a sense of dissatisfaction related to such things as survival anxiety, learning anxiety or psychological safety. The actual "move" which is where change takes place can occur through the use of role models or trial and error and the "refreeze" takes place when the change, the new behavior, is fully established and entrenched. Lewin (1947) also notes that at each change level there is a "quasi-stationary equilibrium" of driving forces vs. restraining forces that can make human change all the more challenging.

A second seminal change theory is the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). It was initially a four-stage model that Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) developed in their work with addiction. These stages are: 1) precontemplation, 2) contemplation, 3) action, and 4) maintenance. However, in 1992, they extended the model to five stages adding preparation as the stage between contemplation and action. Here are brief descriptions of each stage (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1982, Prochaska, et al., 1992):

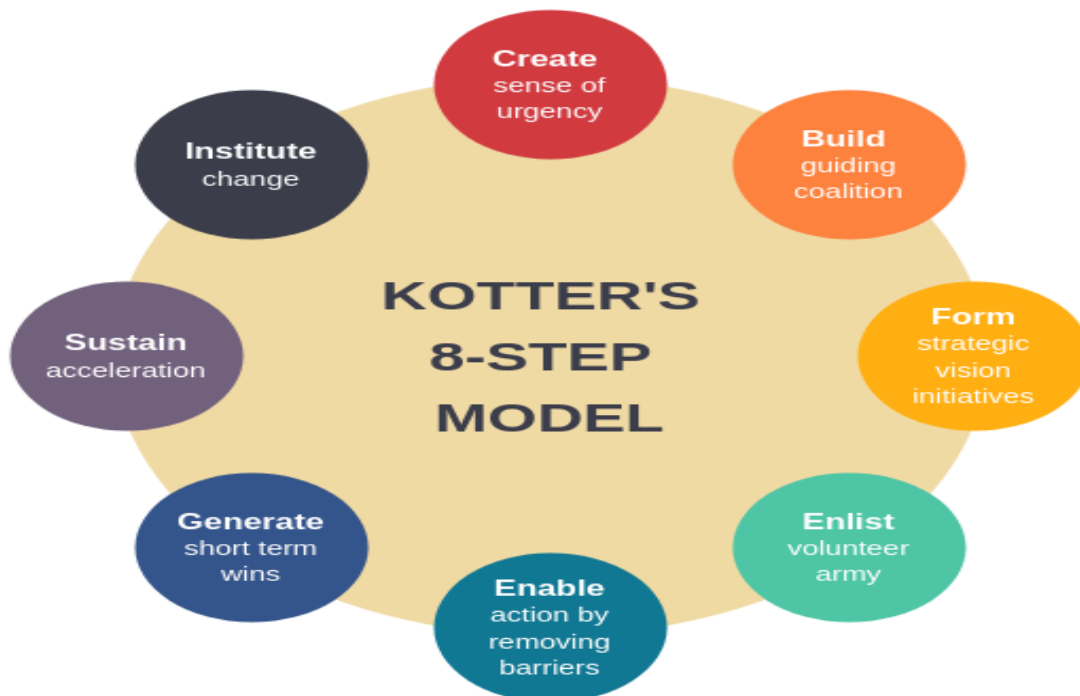
- 1) Precontemplation is when there is no intention to make any change and there is a lack of awareness of a problem. A resistance to recognizing a problem exists is considered a hallmark of precontemplation.
- 2) Contemplation is when there is an awareness that there is a problem and a desire to overcome it, but no commitment has been made to take action. One knows where they want to go but is not quite ready yet.

- 3) Preparation is the stage where one has the intention to take action in the very near future, however, has not yet established a given criteria for effective action. Some call this the early stirrings of the action stage and at one point it was called the decision-making stage.
- 4) Action is the stage where the most overt changes are made with considerable time and energy commitment. Although this is the stage that is most often equated with change, it is important not to overlook the requisite work needed before action can take place.
- 5) Maintenance is the stage where one works to maintain the gains made during the action stage and to prevent relapse. It is the continuation and stabilization of the change.

The third change theory described in this section is Kotter's 8 step model that he published in 1995 within his work on change in business environments as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Kotter's 8-Step Model from www.online.visual-paradigm.com



Kotter (1995) explains that the first step is to increase urgency by examining the market and competitive realities and identifying both real and potential crises and opportunities. The second step is to build a guiding team who has enough power to lead the change effort and the ability to work together collaboratively. The third step is to get the right vision to direct the change and develop the strategies needed to achieve it. The fourth step is to communicate the vision and get maximum buy-in. The fifth step is to empower with action by getting rid of obstacles to the change, encouraging risk taking and the use of new and often nontraditional ideas. The sixth step is to create short term wins by planning for and creating visible improvements. This step includes acknowledging and rewarding those who are part of the change. Step seven is not to let up by consolidating improvements to produce more change and reinvigorating the project with new themes, new change agents and eliminating all that does not support the change. Step eight is to institutionalize the new approaches, so the change is sustained by connecting them to corporate success and creating ongoing leadership development.

Connections and overlap can be found between Lewin's (1947) Three Stage model and Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982, 1992) Five Stage Transtheoretical Model (Galli, 2019). A case can be made that Kotter's Eight step model also has a level of similarity in its construction as shown in Table 3. Those who see the connection with Lewin's three step model suggest that the first three steps are the "unfreeze" where a climate is created for change. The next three steps are the "move" where the whole organization is engaged and enabled, and the last three steps are the "refreeze" where the change is implemented and sustained. (Galli, 2019). Table 3 shows correlations between these three seminal change theories.

Table 3

A Comparison of Lewin, Prochaska & DiClemente & Kotter's Change Theories

Kurt Lewin's 3-Step Model	Prochaska & DiClemente's Transtheoretical 5-Stage Model	Kotter's 8-Step Model
1. Unfreeze	1. Pre-contemplative 2. Contemplative	1. Increase Urgency 2. Build a team 3. Develop the vision/ strategies needed 4. Communicate the vision
2. Move	4. Preparation 5. Action	5. Empower the action 6. Build on short term wins, acknowledge/reward change agents 7. Consolidate and reinvigorate
3. Refreeze	6. Maintenance	8. Institutionalize

The history behind theory of change (TOC) is found in the field of theory-driven evaluation which became prominent in the 1990's. Unlike the previously discussed change theories which much more holistically address change, theory of change is specific to a given project. Reinholz and Andrews (2020) define a TOC as:

a series of hypotheses about how the change will occur and then these are investigated and revised as the project proceeds so a theory of change is constantly reconsidered and revised as data is gathered on how their efforts are working (p. 3).

TOC is an approach in a change project that makes underlying assumptions explicit and uses the desired outcomes as the mechanism to guide planning, implementation, and evaluation. This allows both the evaluator and practitioner to better understand what is being implemented

and why and allows for more systemic interrogation, assessment, and revision. (Cobb et al., 2003). A theory of change (TOC) is a useful tool that articulates how and why a specific intervention is needed. The problem is identified, causes are determined, and assets and preconditions are identified. The website www.theoryofchange.com describes it as a method that is specific to a given project or intervention that makes the underlying rationale explicit and is directly related to evaluation. It provides a comprehensive description of both how and why the desired change is expected to happen which supports planning, implementation, and assessment. Long term goals are identified, and the TOC works backward to identify the necessary conditions and how they are causally related for the goals to be met (“What is Theory of Change,” n.d.)

The term “theory of change” became more widely used through the work of the Aspen Institute and the Roundtable on Community Change (Weiss, 1995) and within the evaluation community in general which often capitalize it as “Theory of Change”. This can cause confusion among those scientists who do not believe an individual project’s theory of change is commensurate with how they use a more general change theory. Thus, a given change theory can

contribute to multiple aspects of a theory of change, or it can only contribute to one.

Similarly, a project may draw from multiple change theories to inform each part of a theory of change. Because each project is unique, it represents a synthesis of change theory and research that is relevant and unique to a given project” (Reinholtz & Andrews, 2020, p. 6).

To compound the potential for confusion, there are other related terms that are consistent with theory of change because they are also vehicles that articulate a program’s desired outcomes

and the rationale for accomplishing them. These include Theory of Cause, Theory of Action, Outcome Maps, and Program Roadmaps (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020).

Fullan (2007) states that change theory can be a very powerful tool in both shaping education reform strategies and getting results, though he cautions this is only the case when the people involved have a “deep knowledge of how the factors in question operate to get certain results” (p. 27). Subsequently, he implores, it is not enough to simply have a theory, but it is necessary to be much more explicit and create a theory of action that shows exactly “the specific assumptions and linkages which connect it to the desired outcomes” (p. 27). There are change theories that can seem impressive on the surface but when fully examined are often incomplete and do not include all that is needed for a given reform to work. In this matter, what Fullan is calling change theory is much more analogous to what has been described as theory of change in the preceding text. Thus, it is of note that “in the realm of educational change, there are relevant theories that deal with many different components and processes related to change.” (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020, p. 5).

Regarding change theory, Fullan (2006) says that his work over the previous decade had been focused on the use and refinement of change knowledge to create strategies that truly get results. Deliberately using change knowledge in both self and group reflection, he says has become part of a group of system thinkers in action and his theory of actions are made up of underlying premises that can be translated into concrete strategies and actions.

In this dissertation, Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) is used as the basis for a systemic analysis of the change that the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School and the Meridian City School District involved. Fullan’s change theory or as he

calls it, his theory of action which is, according to the parameters previously discussed, a theory of change (TOC).

Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform

The implementation of a reform initiative such as RP requires change at multiple levels. Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) offers a model for examining the success or lack thereof of such an endeavor. He notes that he has both used and refined change knowledge (theory) in its creation because it can "be very powerful in informing education reform strategies and in turn, getting results" (Fullan, 2006).

The six components of this model as seen in Figure 4 are direction and sector engagement, capacity building linked to results, development of leaders at all levels, manage distractors, continuous inquiry regarding results, and two-way communication. They are all interrelated and should be addressed simultaneously (Fullan, 2009a). Furthermore, these six are complex to manage and require a strong resolve to stay the course, which requires resilience, a combination of persistence and flexibility. "Being flexible, in fact, is built into the action theory because the theory is reflective and inquiry-based... and is an attempt to capture the underlying thinking of effective change strategies" (Fullan, 2009a, p. 11).

Figure 4

Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a)



This theory of action provides a template for both the implementation and the analysis of factors that contribute to successful system reform by delineating six components that are required for the success and fulfillment of what Fullan refers to as the moral purpose of reform. All school reform, he believes, should have the moral purpose and abiding commitment to close the achievement gap and increase student success (Fullan, 2009a).

Direction and sector engagement. The component direction and sector engagement refer to direction from the top along with partnership from the field and is a blended strategy, neither top-down nor bottom-up. It includes an inspirational overall vision, a small number of publicly stated ambitious goals, a leadership team, an investment of resources and a sense of partnership and flexibility in the field (Fullan et al., 2009).

The inspirational vision must include a well-articulated purpose that includes the nature and rationale of the reform as well as the means of getting there.

It taps into the moral imperative of educational reform – to raise the bar and close the gap of all children... it calls for and seeks public confidence in the public education system. It is invitational rather than narrowly prescriptive ... and its essence is nonnegotiable (Fullan et al., 2009, p.10).

Only a small number of ambitious and critical goals should be chosen and held firmly to with an umbrella target to give aspirational direction and accountability. Fullan gives the example of Ontario's three core priorities, literacy, numeracy, and high school graduation (Fullan et al., 2009).

A leadership team or guiding coalition is imperative, and they need to meet often enough to provide clean and consistent direction, not simply in a top-down manner but in partnership with the field. Also, an additional investment of resources is needed that includes increased funding, reallocation of resources, access to time and to further expertise. Fullan (2009b) adds that "In one sense it is a quid pro quo proposition – initial and recurring investment amplify greater commitment... as success evolves, resource investment comes to be seen as money well spent (p. 661)."

An essential part of this direction is to establish engagement with the schools, principals, the teachers, and the community for these ambitious goals in a way that they can buy into (Fullan, 2009b). It is a test of the theory of action at this point if there is agreement on the path chosen to be pursued jointly, the agenda is valued by all stakeholders and seen to benefit the best interests of all students.

Fullan (2009a) cautions that all of this requires a blended model of leadership that is simultaneously top down and bottom up with top-down direction and investment married with

bottom-up capacity building. He sees sector engagement as a critical component that requires a delicate balance of not being too authoritarian but also not too loose, with little direction. The ultimate goal is to create a sense of common purpose and interest, a sense of “we” who are committed to achieving our ambitious, student-centered goals.

Capacity building linked to results. Fullan (2009a) makes the case that the neglect of capacity building has caused many reform policies to fail with their focus instead on direct external accountability measures. He counters that the very nature of capacity building is motivational and empowering. In the quest for improvement, he says, it is new capacities that cause results. When people are empowered and competent within their new capacities, they feel a sense of ownership and voice within the reform initiative. Building capacity builds skills, builds motivation, and builds results.

Fullan (2009a) defines capacity as new knowledge, skills and competencies, additional resources such as time, ideas, money and expertise, plus new motivation by all to put in the effort to get results. It is “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). He specifies that there are two related dimensions of capacity: the pedagogical core of the change and the management of the change. This can include such things as the development of professional learning communities, linking parts of the infrastructure, and achieving focus.

Although the actual capacity building in terms of training and resources is provided generally from the federal, state, or district level, Fullan (2009a) says the most powerful form of training is found within “indirect training where peers learn from each other which creates lateral capacity building” (p. 278). In addition, one of the most important competencies to build is the deep and frequent use of data. In this framework instruction and assessment become synergized

and seamless so capacity building with a focus on results also serves as a strategy for improvement as well as accountability. One of the outcomes of focusing on results is what Fallon (2006) calls the evolution of positive pressure that motivates, that is both fair and reasonable, and is used to further additional capacity building.

Fullan (2009a) makes that case that when one focuses fairly on results such as comparing like schools or looking at growth over time, the focus should be on capacity building first and judgment second which is far more motivational. Continuous attention should be paid to the data on student results using these questions about whether all students in all demographics are making progress and what changes are needed and what capacities need to be built to get better results (Levin & Fullan, 2008).

“Capacity building is not about one way transmission of knowledge ... but many opportunities to learn in context” (Fullan, 2006, p. 11). Moreover, large-scale improvement requires a change in culture that does not change by mandate but a change in norms, structures, new values, new behaviors, and new capacities. Contexts do improve and sustainable change requires capacity building (Levin & Fullan, 2008). The point of building capacity is to increase people’s collective power to move a system forward through the development and implementation of policies, strategies, resources, and actions that improves not only individual capacity but also the organization’s capacity to grow and change. (Fullan, 2009a)

It is essential to see capacity building as a collective phenomenon that requires people to work together in new ways. Front-end training is not enough, it must be evident in daily practice, and it must be ongoing. A culture for learning must be developed that includes a set of strategies for people to learn from each other and a collective commitment for improvement which enhances a “we-we” identity (Fullan, 2005).

Development of leaders at all levels. In the development of leaders, it is integral that school districts build the capacity to lead in two directions. One is to provide an effective infrastructure to its schools using the prior mentioned top-down/bottom-up strategies and also to be a proactive agent with state and federal mandates. Schools, through principal and teacher leadership, must develop the collaborative culture needed to implement the reform initiative. Leaders must be able to both “drill down and be plugged into the bigger picture simultaneously.” (Fullan, 2009a). There needs to be both formal and informal leadership programs developed at all levels (government, district, and school) to help create a “critical mass of change agent leaders focusing individually and collectively on capacity building linked to results” which results in a powerful change force (Fullan, 2009a). Capacity building is an enormous and never-ending enterprise that requires strong leadership to accomplish.

Although high-flying and charismatic leaders may look like powerful change agents, often they are not because “too much revolves around the individuals themselves, instead for leadership to be effective, it must be spread throughout the organization” (Fullan et al., 2009, p. 14). The impact of a school principal is not just student achievement growth but even more so, the number of leaders who are left behind carry the work on and go even further. Collins (2001) found that the strongest leaders were those that showed both humility and a strong sense of professionalism with a focus on “building enduring greatness” rather than short term results. There is nothing that is as essential for sustainable reform than the development of strong leadership at all levels. This encourages present leaders to develop leadership in others to move the reform initiative forward. It is not just the knowing that is critical but the “knowing-by-doing, reflecting and redoing that moves us forward” (Fullan, et al., 2009, p.16).

Manage the distractors. Although a “relentless focus on capacity building” (Fullan, 2009a, p. 280) is critical, there will be the inevitable distractors that must be addressed. Some can be preempted, and others dealt with in a way that minimizes the impact on the reform initiative. Fullan (et al., 2009) suggests limiting managerial tasks and other initiatives so that focus is maintained on teaching, learning, and the implementation of the reform initiative being used. Any distractor should be examined carefully for ways to make it less time and energy consuming, and less of a negative diversion from the chosen priorities being worked on (Fullan, 2009a).

It can be “extraordinarily difficult to keep real, focused attention on the same set of priorities over a three-year or four-year period” (p 297) particularly where there are leadership changes and other competing interests from other stakeholder groups. It is a huge challenge in education reform to be able to pay attention to the wide array of competing agendas and interests while maintaining focus on the chosen reform initiative. This requires strong leadership and continuous attention to communication to maintain the support for the key priorities to stay the course. It is a kind of balancing act and indeed a fine art (Levin & Fullan, 2008).

Continuous inquiry regarding results. In the implementation of any initiative, there must be a mindset of continuous inquiry and evaluation to discover if the strategy is being implemented effectively, if it is working, when, where, and how it is working and if any changes are needed. This inquiry needs to happen within the system and across the broader spectrum of other systems and research about this strategy or reform initiative. Third-party evaluators can be helpful to provide informative feedback on the strengths, the impact, and the areas in which to grow. The data should not only be examined by the practitioners and local leadership but also on a larger state and national level as appropriate. When ongoing inquiry is modeled, it shows the

importance of analyzing data that is essential to improvement, to the testing and refining of one's theory of action and "you learn to get better." (Fullan, 2009a, p. 281).

It is in this engagement of continuous evaluation and inquiry into what are effective practices, what can be learned from successes, and how to spread best practices to all that true growth and improvement can occur. Creating a culture of evaluation is proving to be one of the highest-yield strategies for educational change by focusing on assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning. Data needs to be gathered, disaggregated, and analyzed so that action plans can be developed for improvement and progress can be communicated to others. (Fullan, 2008).

Two-way communication. It is not only important to have a solid strategy or theory of action in the components already discussed, there also needs to be ongoing clear, consistent communication. At every possible opportunity, the strategy should be stated and restated as this helps to "clarify it in the mind of the communicator which clarifies it in the minds of others and will provide ample opportunity for feedback and refinement" (Fullan, 2009a, p. 281). Integrated with capacity building, leaders at all levels should be able to explain the strategy with both consistency and agreement as well as evidence of its success with their staff, families, and with the public in general which builds confidence and trust.

Specifically, there should be "communication about vision and strategy, opportunity to disseminate and receive feedback, grounded in capacity building and therefore highly meaningful and commitment generating, evidence-based and related to societal prosperity and well-being" (Fullan, 2009a, p. 281). This will help ensure that people are more likely to see the big picture and decrease the inevitable misunderstanding and misinterpretation that is often due to a lack of understanding, different points of views and priorities (Levin & Fullan, 2008). Fullan

(2009a) cautions that one should count on the need to communicate strategies along with progress “many more times the communication than you might rationally feel is sufficient” (p. 281).

To have effective communication is not about spin or propaganda, it is about having two-way communication both within and outside of the system that is frequent and honest about what is being attempted, and what the challenges and successes are (Levin & Fullan, 2008). They note that it occurs far too frequently that teachers are not clearly informed about the priorities and strategies of their state or district or given an opportunity to have input. This is also true for support staff, parents, or students. In short, “the three secrets of effective communication—repetition, repetition, repetition” are valuable to follow (Levin & Fullan, 2008, p. 299).

Continuous two-way communication allows for simultaneous communication of the vision, the ability to detect and respond to areas that need improvement, and to acknowledge and celebrate success (Fullan, 2009b). The goal is to “establish a system of not only greater alignment across the three levels (government, districts, and schools) but even more important, greater permeable connectivity, which is more two-way interaction, communication, and mutual influence” (p. 5).

How is it used in this study?

Throughout my examination of how change was enacted in the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School, I used change theory or theory of change to inform my systemic analysis. Specifically, I used Michael Fullan’s (2009a) Theory of Action for System Reform to frame my data collection and analysis in Year A and in Year B, and how change occurred in each of its six components: direction and sector engagement, capacity building, leadership development, communication, and managing distractors as described above.

I used these six components to create a School Leadership Observation Protocol sheet (Appendix D) as a guide to help target what I observed for and how I wrote up my observations of school leaders. By focusing on these components of change specific to system reform which RP was within the MCSD, I was able to frame what had been in place in Year A and use that as a basis for comparison with Year B. This framework offered a systemic means to both gather and to analyze my data allowing me to zero in on these change components as they applied to the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School.

Critical Race Theory

What is it? Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a useful theoretical lens to examine the power relationships that have shaped the history and current experiences of people of color in the United States. (Romano & Almengor, 2021; Vaandering, 2010). It focuses primarily on racial dynamics, social inequities, and the political process as a means to understand the beliefs and practices that inundate the daily reality of society in a manner that supports and extends the dominant position of White people (Gillborn, 2013, Leonardo, 2007).

CRT works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. A tenet of CRT is the recognition that racism is endemic to American life and has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage (Matsuda, 1993). CRT perspective is framed on race relations and White dominance

rejecting the typical discourses of meritocracy, colorblindness, equality under the law, and neutrality. It unmask the reality that racism truly does exist and to choose not to recognize it is to perpetuate it. CRT identifies race and Whiteness as socially constructed

and highly fluctuating in the ways that people are identified and then treated (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p. 2)

The history of Critical Race Theory. The origins of CRT can be traced to the mid-1970's early work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman who were concerned about the slow pace of racial reform in the US and frustrated with traditional civil rights strategies (Delgado, 1995). CRT, which emerged in the 1970's, is an outgrowth of Critical Legal Study that critiqued mainstream legal ideology for portraying the U.S. as a meritocracy but failing to include racism.

CRT is based on the notion that racism is normal in American society and is a permanent fixture in American life (Bell, 1980; Delgado, 1995) and acknowledges the primacy of race in determining life outcomes for many people of color (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Wadhwa, 2010). Crenshaw et al. (1995) says that as conceived

Critical Race Theory originates from a movement of left law school scholars, most of them Black, whose work challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and American society as in general. Critical Race scholarship is unified by two common interests; the first to understand how White supremacy has been created and maintained in America and the second to not merely understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to change it (p. xiii).

CRT first rose to national prominence, Ladson Billings (2019) explains, when during the Clinton administration, a University of Pennsylvania law professor, Lani Guinier's legal writings became the focus of media scrutiny. Ignorant of the nature of legal academic writing, Guinier was vilified in the press for her un-American idea about proportional representation for minority

racial groups to address the ongoing lack of representation. The backlash was furious as this view was seen as counter to “one person, one vote” and CRT and its advocates were thrown into controversy.

The controversy over CRT continues today as a flashpoint in the Republican party and evangelical Christian groups. This has resulted in a series of laws across the United States that are banning books, preventing teachers from talking freely about race or anything that might make White children uncomfortable, policing, and eliminating diversity training sessions. This backlash was in part engineered by Chris Rufo, a writer, filmmaker, and senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute. In an interview with Benjamin Wallace-Wells in *The New Yorker* on June 18, 2021, Rufo explained that conservatives had been fighting against the same progressive racial ideology since the Obama years but were not able to describe it effectively. “We have needed a new language for these issues. Political correctness is dated... cancel culture too vacuous... woke is too broad. Critical Race Theory is the perfect villain.” He thought the phrase was a promising political weapon because it connotes “hostile, academic, divisive, race-obsessed, poisonous, elitist, Anti-American.” Most perfect of all, he added, it was not a pejorative created externally but “it’s the label the critical race theorists chose themselves.” These views got the attention of Fox News and then he Mark Meadows called him to speak to Donald Trump. The rest is history.

Although CRT scholars have tried to correct the misappropriation of a theory used at the graduate and law school level to examine issues of race and systems, it now is used for exactly what Rufo intended. Critical Race Theory is currently a weaponized term to call out whatever the conservatives do not like as they write laws that forbid CRT to be taught in schools, censor books, outlaw diversity training and a host of other perceived ills.

How is CRT used in education research? CRT can be used as an “an epistemological and methodological tool” (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 206) and is increasingly utilized by education researchers seeking to critically examine issues involving race in education. It was first applied to examine racism in educational institutions in the 1990’s (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT provides a means to understand the complexities of racism and provides a framework “required for a deep understanding of the educational system that can illuminate our thinking about schools and inequity” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p 14). CRT is often used to locate how race and racism manifest themselves throughout the K-12 pipeline (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

The framework of CRT can be used to understand the problem of racial disproportionality that has continued despite state sanctions. Using one of CRT’s most basic premises that racism is endemic, school systems operate with a power continuum that systemically provides advantages to White people while at the same time providing disadvantages to people of color (Rector-Aranda, 2016). CRT centralizes race as an analytic strategy for understanding how institutions such as American schools’ function where race inequality is normalized (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Schiff, 2018).

Ladson-Billings (2009) helped introduce the application to CRT to educational studies and reminds researchers using CRT of the importance of acknowledging and grounding their work within CRT’s legal roots and its commitment to eliminate all forms of oppression. CRT should always be in conversation with itself and in this dialogical process, researchers can better understand how CRT has developed over time (Ladson-Billings, 2005). In addition, it is not only important to expose racism in education but to also propose radical solutions for addressing it (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

CRT and RP. When used to address racial disproportionality, RP address what CRT characterizes as the liberal agenda of civil rights: integration, affirmative action, and other well-intentioned measures that have not been sufficient to fully change the systemic impact of racism. Such actions put the focus to address injustice on the oppressed, normalizing them as being “other” and outside the normative population (Schiff, 2018).

Using a CRT lens to examine RP programs, the focus can be maintained on issues of race that belie being addressed by “colorblind, post-racial, liberal, or White paternalistic notions of need” (Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018, p.2). It is essential that using such a critical approach to examining RP includes an understanding of critical Whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2016).

One significant RP researcher who uses Critical Race Theory, Wadhwa (2007), describes how Critical Race theorists favor systemic structural explanations for the inequitable treatment of people of color (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and allows for a critical view of those discriminatory social practices that limit both students’ educational and life opportunities (Villenas et al., 1999). CRT is an “important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1998. P. 10). This is exactly what RP are intended to do, aligning well with CRT premises.

How is it used in this study?

To understand the context of racial inequity more fully in the MCSD, I used CRT to gain a more historical understanding about how the city of Meridian and the MCSD had handled matters of race. I examined racial dynamics and social inequities going back from the early days

of abolitionists to the redlining and destruction of Black neighborhoods and from the early days of school integration up to the community outrage at the racially disproportional disciplinary practices in the MCSD that led to the implementation of RP. This history is found in Chapter Three.

My interest in this research on RP comes from what Ladson Billings (1968) notes is a need for solutions that result in radical transformation. CRT helped form the basis for my research question about how one school in the MCSD negotiated the intersection of race, equity, authority, and RP. I use CRT to critically examine the issue of racial inequity and the idea that race is endemic within our schools to guide my observations, my focus, my interview questions, and my data analysis process as I wrote memos, coded, categorized, and analyzed my findings. Throughout this research, I listened and observed carefully what my participants said and did about race in Morning circles, in classroom instruction, in shadowing experiences, within the culture of the building, in formal interviews, and in more informal conversations.

In addition to using CRT as an overarching theoretical umbrella in this study, I also employed two theories that are considered pillars of the larger CRT. I explain in the following sections, Interest Convergence Theory (Bell, 1980) and Critical Whiteness Theory.

Interest Convergence Theory

What is it? Derrick Bell (1980) proposed the concept of interest convergence to explain why after a hundred years of Black protest against segregation, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 suddenly conceded in *Brown v. Board of Education*. His principle of "interest convergence" states that "the interest of Black people in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites" (Bell, 1980, p. 523). He notes three points of

convergence with White interests at that time. The first was that in the Cold War struggles, this decision helped earn the allyship with third world countries, providing the reassurance that in America “all men are created equal”, the second that it provided additional reassurance that as WWII Black veterans returned home, there was a commitment to the precepts of equality and freedom, and third that segregation was proving to be a carrier to further industrialization in the South and for economic growth, it needed to be addressed (Bell, 1980). The pragmatism of each point gives credence to Bell’s contention that interest convergence is not solely based on a moral high ground.

In the case of Brown, White power holders were motivated to push for school desegregation for their own economic and political agendas in the United States and abroad (Bell, 1980; Gillborn, 2013; Wilson et al., 2020). These were all factors that affected the perspective of those in power including those that believed segregation was morally wrong. This supports Bell’s main premise is that “racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, benefits, and ideologies of White people.” (Milner, et al., 2013, p. 342). Whatever solution to racial injustice that is sought, Bell (1980) states cannot

threaten the superior societal status of middle- and upper-class Whites and must secure, advance, or at least not harm societal interests deemed important by middle- and upper-class Whites. Racial justice - or its appearance - may, from time to time, be counted among the interests deemed important by the courts and by society's policymakers (p. 523).

Thus, it is important, he cautions, to remember that these moments when it appears that racial progress has been won, not to forget that it is the self-interest of White powerholders that allows

for their accommodation of the demands of minority groups and that these gains are often atypical and often do not last long (Bell, 1980).

While this landmark decision was lauded for ending segregated education, it left intact additional means of economic, residential, and other educational segregation. However, it allowed the United States to present itself globally as the home of democracy during the Cold War (Bell, 1980; Gillborn, 2013). It is important to avoid the common misunderstanding that in interest convergence, there is rational and balanced negotiation between White power holders and minority groups. Often “such convergence only happens when there is public protest and mobilization so taking some action against racism is the lesser of two evils” (Gillborn, 2013, p. 487).

Interest divergence. Gillborn (2013) notes there is a reverse of interest convergence which is interest divergence. This occurs when White people instead see an advantage to additional exclusion and oppression of Black people. The concept of interest divergence (Bell, 1980) considers the failure of the Brown decision to lead to lasting change. When the well-being of White people is perceived as threatened, policies that address racial inequities and their ability to make long term substantive change are affected, which Gillborn (2013) hypothesizes as present in current educational policy making.

Gillborn (2013) points out that for all the rhetoric about improving education standards and reducing achievement gaps, the reality is that the reforms being used can actually to the disadvantage of Black students and widen instead of narrowing inequalities in the education system. Bell (1980) presented a framework of what he called “racial realism” that interest convergence is often short-lived and superficial and often leads to interest divergence. Racial

realism, interest convergence, and interest divergence allow us to understand “the world as it is rather than how we might want it to be” (Bell, 1980, p. 523).

How is Interest Convergence Theory used in research? Interest convergence is part of the larger CRT that provides a framework to expose the systemic nature of oppression faced by African Americans. This theory, Gillborn (2013) contends, is one of the most influential concepts in CRT as it addresses “the means by which policy is re/made through a process that balances the interests of White elites against the dangers of pushing minoritized groups to the point of rebellion” (p. 479). He explains it allows for the consideration of both the political and power dimensions involved in racial justice as those who are in power who are White determine how much racial inequity is sustainable.

There is acknowledgment within the field that “the theory of interest convergence is an important and useful tool for understanding historical progress toward racial and educational equity” (Garces, et al., 2017, p. 291). Interest Convergence Theory offers a framework to advance the fight for racial justice (Warren, 2017). It is of value to seek new ways to think about what motivates change toward racial equity and the notion of “interest” (Garces, et al., 2017).

“Our fundamental democratic values are threatened when there are stark educational inequities for historically marginalized students” (Garces et al., 2017, p 291). Thus, the Theory of Interest Convergence offers a valuable lens to examining issues of race in schools and other social institutions.

Restorative Practices and Interest Convergence Theory. Racial equity has been pursued through the legal system with desegregation and affirmative action and through federal initiatives such as NCLB and CCSS that promoted national education standards and accountability measures, however they “fail to address the dynamic and embedded nature of

racism in our country. Education continues to emerge as a key issue in these struggles” (Garces et al., 2017, p 291).

Gillborn (2013) suggests that school reforms in this current era are examples of interest convergence in action as political reformers and entrepreneurs have capitalized on the perceived failures of our schools. They have done so by standardizing curriculum, fostering competition, high stakes testing, accountability measures, vouchers, and school choice while “additionally pushing the privatization of education public goods which created a wealth of opportunities for businesses, politicians, and philanthropists to exploit the misfortune of others” (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p. 10).

This interest convergence has played out again within the issue of disproportionate disciplining of students of color. The movement to dismantle STPP has led to the acknowledgment that racial inequities that have led to the disproportionality of Black children being three times more likely to be suspended than White children (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; Welch and Payne, 2012). In response to a wave of public outcry, the federal government had issued guidelines on school discipline that included the threat of, under high stakes accountability measures, district takeover or funding loss. This moved the focus on school discipline from zero tolerance policies to more positive and restorative approaches (Mediratta, 2012).

How is it used in this research? I used Interest Convergence Theory (Bell, 1980) to help me understand how it came to be that RP were implemented in the Meridian City School District. Derrick Bell developed the concept of interest convergence to expose the systemic nature of oppression faced by people of color by offering a framework to advance the fight for racial justice (Warren, 2017). He suggested that any assumption that America has become a

“post-racial” society is false and racism is a permanent feature in American society (Bell, 1993). Interest convergence theory proposes that the only times when Black demands for racial justice have been addressed are when it just so happens that the dominant White society saw these demands to be in their own interest (Bell, 1980).

The Meridian City School District did not choose to implement restorative justice on its own predilection but instead chose it as a mandated response to the State Attorney General’s report that its suspension rate for students of color was far above the national average and needed to be addressed. The State Attorney only acted after there was parent and community outrage at this racial inequity and the NAACP, NAN and the ACLU got involved. This certainly supported Warren’s (2017) supposition that there is a growing movement to confront the racial inequities in school discipline and demand change with federal and state government support. It is within this context and convergence of the interests of African American parents for their children, community members and social justice advocacy groups that the MCSD chose to implement RP. This is presented in detail in Chapter 3, and I consider this theory in my analysis in my concluding chapter whether this convergence held or not and if not, why.

Critical Whiteness Theory

What is it? Critical Whiteness is far from a recent field of study as scholars of color have been writing about the influence of White people on their lives going back more than two hundred years to Frederick Douglass (Roediger, 2001; Warren, 2003). W.E.B. Dubois first used the term “Whiteness” as an academic term in 1935, noting it had substantive material value in terms of public deference, which he labeled a type of psychological wage. Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and bell hooks have also explored the concept of “Whiteness” in the public forum (Giroux, 1997; Howard, 2004). Inspired by Critical Race Theory, interest in

critically examining Whiteness continued to grow in the late 1980's as scholars of color including George Yancy, Cheryl Harris, Sarah Ahmed, and Gloria Anzaldua' and White scholars including David Roediger, Noel Ignatiev and Ruth Frankenberg delved deeper and expanded the field of knowledge.

Critical Whiteness Theory (CWT) which is correlated Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) provides a radically different way to think about race and challenge Whiteness as the universal norm. If, additionally, we think of Whiteness as a social construct that includes White culture, ideology, racialization, experiences, and emotions, we can understand that CWT/CWS "focuses on problematizing the normality of hegemonic whiteness which has allowed whites to deflect, ignore or dismiss their role, racialization and privilege in race dynamics" (Matias et al., 2014, p.290). It is in this problematizing and challenging that CWT makes visible what has been the invisible center of cultural power occupied by Whiteness and provides a means to deconstruct its power with critical analysis (Howard 2004; Warren, 2003). To understand Whiteness is to recognize that it cannot be separated from hegemony, always shifting through changes in economics and politics in a manner that maintains its dominance (Kincheloe et al., 2000).

CWT is useful in creating a framework to study race, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, White privilege, and White supremacy with a focus on the group in domination versus the group oppressed. Warren (2003) suggests the best way to understand race is as a relation by naming and renaming difference. Without difference, there is no race. Whiteness exists only in relation to nonwhiteness. Although White people may try to say they are nonracial, neutral, or colorblind, Warren (2003) contends, they are not, as race is present regardless of an individual's words or desires which can be a form of denial. Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, privilege, and cultural practices often unnamed and unmarked (Frankenberg, 1993).

Ahmed (2011) makes it clear that Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it. For those who do not, Whiteness is always visible. This failure to understand is the result of White ignorance.

An essential part of understanding CWT is to understand what Whiteness is, how it is expressed, and its effect on society that includes White privilege and White supremacy. Forms of White response include White ignorance, colorblindness, White talk, and White guilt (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

White ignorance is a refusal to believe that racism exists, “that race no longer matters in the United States and that racism will just disappear if we just stop referring to race” and is often considered a moral virtue by White people (Applebaum, 2015, p.4). It considers any recognition of race a sign of prejudice; so, the act of not naming or noticing is considered fair, neutral, and non-racist (Bailey, 2007). There are different types of White ignorance which is a multilayered barrier to knowledge. These include to maintain White supremacy based on mistaken beliefs, ignorance of history, moral ignorance of what’s right and wrong, collective amnesia that the past can be erased, and the belief that colorblindness is the solution (Lebens, 2015).

Colorblindness, a form of active ignoring by the dominant group that considers any recognition of difference a sign of prejudice; so, the act of not naming or noticing is considered fair, neutral, and non-racist (Bailey, 2007). It is a distancing strategy often shown by statements like I do not see color; I just see people; race does not matter to me.

White talk, McIntyre (1997) says, allows for the illusion of niceness, where injustice is not acknowledged and any responsibility for racism or addressing issues of equity is denied. “It is an expression of willful ignorance that dismisses racism, genocide, historic atrocities and privileges our own desire not to talk about it (Bailey, 2007, p. 49). She explains the goal of

White talk is to re-inscribe our goodness while shutting down any chance of seeing our plurality or recognizing our “goodness-arrogance-ignorance” (p. 46).

Examples of White talk include “derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counter arguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics and colluding with each other” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 46). It has the intention to minimize the consequences of racism for people of color and maximize or privileging the good intentions and emotions of White people (McIntosh, 1988).

A different type of response occurs when some White people feel a sense of guilt as they gain an understanding of their racialized White identity and how Whiteness has perpetuated racial oppression. Although the action of acknowledgement and taking responsibility has great merit, White guilt can interfere with the development of a sense of White identity and affect the ability to be an anti-racist activist (Kincheloe et al., 1998). Whites may use anger, defensiveness, and denial to redirect this guilt (Matias et al., 2014).

CWT suggests that Whiteness can be reinvented and recreated so that an emancipatory White identity could be developed. This could provide new ways of knowing and being that could be instrumental in changing the current reality of social inequality to a true democracy for all (Kincheloe et al., 1998). This theory calls for an ongoing awareness and vigilance of how Whiteness produces and reproduces dominance, normativity, and privilege as essential, if one truly wants to disrupt the ways of living in Whiteness and not re-inscribe it (Frankenberg, 1993).

CWT/CWS and the White researcher. For White scholars, there is a tension that in CWT/CWS, the very issues being studied can be problematic in their research. Ahmed (2011) cautions that the “critical” in CWS means that one must be vigilantly aware when trying to

unlearn privilege in a culture shaped by privilege, of one's own positionality and power, in a field meant to disrupt both. Critical thinking means "to think with complexity, to go below the surface, and explore multiple dimensions and nuances" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p.1) and in CWT/CWS, the critical thinking includes a deeply self-reflexive examination, understanding, and vigilance of one's own Whiteness and privilege as Ahmed advises.

Sensoy & DiAngelo (2014) also suggest ongoing conscious, continual self-reflection to decenter and deconstruct one's own Whiteness. When dealing with the complexity of Whiteness and overcoming White ignorance, it is ok to own one's mistakes and learn from them (Bailey, 2007). It is important to live with the ambiguity of not always knowing, of feeling discomfort, and find knowledge in both through a process of actively listening to actively learn (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Remaining aware and vigilant of how Whiteness produces and reproduces dominance, normativity, and privilege is essential, if one truly wants to disrupt the ways of living in Whiteness. Frankenberg (1993) states that White scholars have a responsibility to operate with awareness of the ways Whiteness functions within the research process. Foste (2020) cautions of, regardless of one's intentions, being complicit in benefiting and sustaining White supremacy. He suggests White researchers consider how their interactions with White participants might normalize and perpetuate Whiteness, how findings are interpreted and represented and the ongoing need for self-critique and vigilance.

How CWT applies to RP. The goal of eliminating disciplinary disparities that RP is expected to help address requires an ongoing awareness of how those disparities are produced and a commitment to finally bringing them to an end (Castagno, 2008). However, she notes, even though issues of race are always present and often at the surface of school related discourse, policies and practice, educators are all too often silent. These silences around race allow many

White educators to maintain the illusion that race either does not matter or does not really exist and that to talk about race is “simply too conflict laden, tense, and hurtful and perhaps, more importantly, implies one is racist” (Castagno, 2008, p. 317). The answer here is not to avoid talking about race but all the more why such talk is essential and needs to occur before, during and after training on RP. Gregoire (2003) called for a greater understanding of the mechanisms of beliefs and change to understand how they affect the interpretation of reforms. This includes beliefs about race.

CWT/CWS provides a way to examine the silence and lack of understanding White teachers have about race in schools. This includes how being White can affect their roles as teachers despite the silences and belief that “such a racial marker does not have any influence on a racialized society like education” (Matias et al., 2014, p 297). Discussing how disciplinary inequities occur and race in schools is essential for RP to truly be successful in this endeavor. The persistence of racial disproportionality points to the need for emphasizing the equity components of RP to prevent the possibility that the racial equity intentions of RP could be diluted if schools integrate it into colorblind logics that govern their operations (Davison et al., 2021). Thus, the need for a critical examination and discussion of race, disproportionality and its causes are imperative.

Circles are an essential component of RP. I end this section with an example of how self-reflection and vigilance can lead to an insightful understanding of the endemic nature of Whiteness even in RP circles for it is within discovery, acknowledgement, and discussion, that change becomes possible.

Bryzzheva (2018) shared how upon reflection, she discovered that regardless of her intention that in her class’s circle space, a common RP tool, her participants were “invited to

inhabit whiteness” (p. 247). She found that upon examination whose stories and what stories were most welcome, whose emotional safety would be guarded, whose expressions would be legitimized and how deviations from the norms were monitored in verbal and non-verbal ways was problematic. In these ways, Bryzzheva (2018) found that Whiteness was enabled as “imposed meanings, imposed order, imposed outcomes and in short, it sought to control” (p. 256).

How is CWT used in this research? For White scholars such as myself, there is a tension that in researching about race as a member of the racially dominant, the very issues being studied can be problematic. I took to heart what Ahmed (2011) cautions for the “critical” in CWT meant that I must be vigilantly aware that as I am continuing to try to unlearn privilege in a culture shaped by privilege, of my own positionality and power as well as my participants to understand more fully what I saw.

Critical thinking means that there is a need “to think with complexity, to go below the surface and explore multiple dimensions and nuances” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014, p.1) and in CWT, the critical thinking includes a deeply self-reflexive examination, understanding and vigilance of one’s own Whiteness and privilege. This was an important premise I used to guide my thinking of myself as a White researcher and in my work with White teachers.

This type of critical thinking and perspective proved invaluable as I examined the responses of White teachers to my questions about race and RP. CWT helped me understand the types of responses these teachers gave me as they sidestepped the conversation I intended to have on a more systemic level about RP and inequitable disciplinary practices. Instead, many shared with me their perspectives about being a White teacher in what one called “a minority school.”

Race was addressed both directly and indirectly in my interviews, in my conversations with stakeholders, as part of my observation protocol, in my memos and in my analysis. Both CRT and CWT were instrumental in how I thought about race, how I structured the study, and how I framed my analysis based on the findings I received which were not the findings I expected.

I was constantly aware of, questioning, and reflecting on how Whiteness, which is a known factor of inequitable suspension rates, might be enacted in the school in the implementation of RP. I looked for signs of White talk that dismissed racism and hid White fear and anxiety (Bailey, 2007) when participants were “derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counter arguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics and colluding with each other” (McIntyre, 1997 p. 46).

In schools, as in other social institutions, race must remain on the front burner of all decision-making processes and daily practice to be mindful of whether they re-inscribe or disrupt whiteness. This makes it even more essential that the resistance and lack of understanding White teachers can have about how being White can affect their roles as teachers as well as denial that “such a racial marker does not have any influence on a racialized society like education” (Matias et al., 2014, p 297) be addressed firmly and fully in school district professional development programs. I watched for this in faculty and team meetings, as well as more formal professional development settings and any other related contexts.

Examples of the Use of These Theories in Literature

Through an extensive search through the literature, I was unable to find any other studies that looked at RP through the lens of Fullan’s (2009a) Theory of Action of System Reform or any change theory for that matter. I also was unable to find other research on RP that used

Interest Convergence Theory. However, there have been studies about RP that specifically reference Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Theory in regard to social justice and teachers.

Critical Race Theory has been used by researchers in their studies about RP. Wadhwa used Critical Race Theory in two of her studies (Wadhwa, 2010; Wadhwa, 2015) to explore in the first how discipline reform committee members used race and non-race-based explanations to explain why so many students were suspended. She found that community representatives framed the racial disproportionality of suspended students as part of a larger institutional issue of racism, and district representatives framed the rise in suspensions as being linked to increased crime and the lack of family involvement. In Wadhwa's second study, she examined whether or not race was explicitly addressed during RP implementation and found that with leadership support, teachers were more likely to bring race into the content of their courses. Payne and Welch (2015) used CRT in their study on whether a greater composition of Black students in school was negatively related to the use of different forms of RP. They found that schools with more Black students were less likely to use RP when responding to student behavior.

Some researchers have also used Critical Whiteness Theory in studies about social justice and teachers. McMahon (2007) looked at educational administrators' conceptions of Whiteness, anti-racism, and social justice. He found that Whiteness was a difficult subject for White administrators who tended to view Whiteness and racism at the level of the individuals and individual acts and multiculturalism as preferable to anti-racism. They looked at social justice from non-critical perspectives that were more organizational issues than anything that might challenge hegemony. Taylor (2017) examined how teachers make sense of the role of race in their practice and suggested that White teachers construct interpretive tools

she called “racial touchstones” that shapes whether and how they respond to race in their practice. For example, a teacher might see an African American student storm out of class and using their individual level touchstone or belief system, think it is merely a disruptive child acting out and missing the fact that it actually was the unwelcoming racial climate that was the actual cause. Taylor suggests that these racial touchstones can allow even well-intentioned teachers to rationalize away the self-reflection and growth to respond to the structural dimensions of race and racism.

Bell (2019) studied White teachers who worked in predominantly Black schools and found their privileged illusion of White racelessness was shattered when their students looked at them racially. He noted that for these teachers “feeling white” was much more difficult than “seeing white” and led to feelings of dread, sadness, frustration, and anger. They performed their racial identities in compensatory and protectionary ways. Bell (2019) found that adopting a meaningful racial identity only occurred in nonwhite racialized spaces where the overtly racialized interactions, the elevated racial awareness, and the amplified sense of racial victimization existed in a way they did not when in White spaces.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a historical context of the reforms in education since ESEA that have preceded and led to the emergence of RP as a reform initiative, not only describing the elements of each reform but also the interest convergence that led to the implementation of each. This literature review shows that RP came into the churn of reform movements in U.S. education after a series of neoliberal initiatives that were followed by an increased focus on social justice reforms. RP has been specifically cited by the federal government as a response to the alarming issue of racially inequitable disciplinary practices.

A definition of what RP are with their history, principles, and practices have been discussed. I have explored the benefits and strengths of RP and a critique as well as an overview of the existing research on RP and significant findings.

Finally, I have described the theoretical lenses I use to frame this research study: Change Theory with the specific application of Fullan's (2009a) Theory of Action of System Reform and Critical Race Theory with an additional focus on two correlated theories, Interest Convergence Theory and Critical Whiteness Theory. Besides explaining their history and meaning, I have also presented how each has been used in research and their specific application to RP as well as in my research design and analysis.

RP require a great deal of change at both a systemic level and in how race, equity, and authority are negotiated within its implementation. This literature review has established that there have been multiple calls for further research about race and RP, specifically on the equity issues of disproportionality and Whiteness. Each of these also lend themselves to an examination of whether RP provides for a change in how authority is wielded. Thus, this study examines how race, equity, and authority are negotiated in the implementation of RP at one school and their intersection. In addition, this literature review has shown that there is a gap in the literature about RP and change using the lens of Change Theory. This study uses a theory of change, also called a theory of action to systemically analyze RP implementation at one school over a fifteen-month case study.

In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology that I used in this study. This will be followed by my findings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

What is research? Bassey (1983) says research “entails a sustained enquiry which is systemic, coherent, critical and self-critical, and which ...contributes to the advancement of knowledge” (p. 111). In this chapter, I explain why I chose qualitative research methodology for this study, my research design, and the appropriateness of using case study methods. I define my research questions and share my positionality statement. A description of my access to this research, the research site, and my participants is provided along with an overview of my data collection, analysis processes, procedures, and ethics.

Once I chose RP as the topic I wanted to research, I determined that a qualitative study would be my best course of action as I wanted to both understand and advance the knowledge of human behavior, experience, and the processes by which meaning is constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) through the use of rich, descriptive data of people, places, and things that were a part of the implementation of RP “in all their complexity in context” (p. 2). Qualitative procedures helped me understand the social actions I observed at a much deeper level and to record them in a more complex, nuanced, and subtle set of interpretive categories (Faegin et al.,1991). The implementation of RP are a complex process which must be studied in context.

This qualitative research is an emergent, longitudinal single-case study on how change is affected in the implementation of RP at one school whose district turned to RP as a means to address racial disproportionate suspension data. It is an empirical inquiry that looks at change from three perspectives: one a systemic analysis of change using Fullan’s Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) of Emancipation’s implementation, a historical analysis on why RP was implemented and how the school negotiated change at the intersection of race, equity, authority, and RP.

Research Study Design and Appropriateness

When choosing which qualitative methodology to use, a case study approach is best suited to researching complex practices in their actual contexts using multiple data sources in a holistic manner (Yin, 2014; Pearson & Hubball, 2015). This methodology provides for an in-depth understanding of a phenomena, in this case the implementation of RP, by an investigation of day-to-day experiences, perspectives, and knowledge (Miles, 2015). Simons (2009) notes that case studies are useful for exploring and understanding the process of change. It enables the experience and complexity of programs and policies, he adds, to be studied in depth in their sociopolitical context. Case study also has the ability to provide detailed accounts of complex settings and an intensive in-depth analysis that is congruent with the critical theory paradigm (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2006). In addition, case study research is particularly suited to enabling the researcher to answer “how” and “why” types of questions and allows for taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context in which it is situated (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014). Thus, I found that case study methodology was well suited for my research on how within the context of RP implementation at one school, the complexity of how and why this change was enacted and the how race, equity, authority, and RP were negotiated.

Case studies allow for a wide array of data sources and extensive data collection that are often far beyond what other research methodologies permit so significant aspects of the case can be explored (Bassey, 1991; Yin, 2014). The combination of both qualitative and quantitative sources can often best accomplish a given task (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This study includes a wide array of qualitative data sources: three kinds of observations, formal and informal interviews, document analysis, and archival records.

One of the foremost strengths of a case study is it allows a researcher to study a single unit in great depth that includes social networks, actions, and meanings (Feagin et al., 1995), and to capture multiple realities, and different views of what is happening (Stake, 1995) with attention to detail, richness, and wholeness (Gerring, 2004). This allows the case study researcher to determine the reality behind appearances, the contradictions and dialectical nature of people, and a whole that is more than the sum of its parts (Feagin et al., 1995). These elements of case study methodology are particularly helpful to this research study because there are many different vantage points at a school that affect RP implementation which include administrators, teachers, support, and consultation staff as well as impact from the State Education Department and school district central office personnel and policies. Understanding these multiple realities and views from an in-depth examination allowed me to understand more fully the complexity and contradictions that I observed.

Case study methodology has been used by many other researchers to study Restorative Justice and RP. Wadhwa (2015) explored how race was addressed during the implementation of RJ in a case study of two different sites that included observations and interviews. She found that there was a need for a critical RJ to create agents of change to address injustice and leadership to support conversations about race. Cavanaugh et al. (2014) looked at the perspectives of Latino/Hispanic students, their parents, teachers, and administrators regarding the experiences of these students in creating a RJ response to wrongdoing. Through a series of individual and focus group interviews, they found that there was tension in the school based on deficit theorizing by teachers. McMahon (2007) explored educational administrators' conceptions of whiteness, anti-racism, and social justice through interviews of ten administrators and found that whiteness is a much more difficult topic to discuss than antiracism on an organizational level. González (2015)

did a case study using observations, interviews, and disciplinary data analysis on the implementation of RJP at the school and district level and found that systemic implementation of RJ with reform of discipline policies can not only address disproportionality but also show a correlation with increased academic achievement.

Lustick (2017) used interviews and observations of a group of Black teachers who worked at schools using RP to determine that these teachers saw potential within RP for community and trust building but also felt the policy ultimately replicated traditional racial inequality and was a way to restore obedience for students. McCluskey et al. (2011) used surveys and interviews to determine the challenges and successes of using RP in two secondary schools entitled “Teachers are afraid we are stealing their strength”. They found that the staff had concerns about how RP works with more serious issues, the lack of time and space, and blurring of the boundaries of acceptable behavior.

In each of these studies, case study methodology provided the means for an emphasis on a thorough understanding of the context, the flexibility it allows to address one’s research question, and the range of data collection methods possible (Pearson et al., 2015). Similarly, to these researchers, I chose to use case study methodology to study the implementation of RP within the context of one middle school to examine change within a system analysis, why it occurred, and within the change of school culture and teacher perspectives in the negotiation of race, equity, authority, and RP.

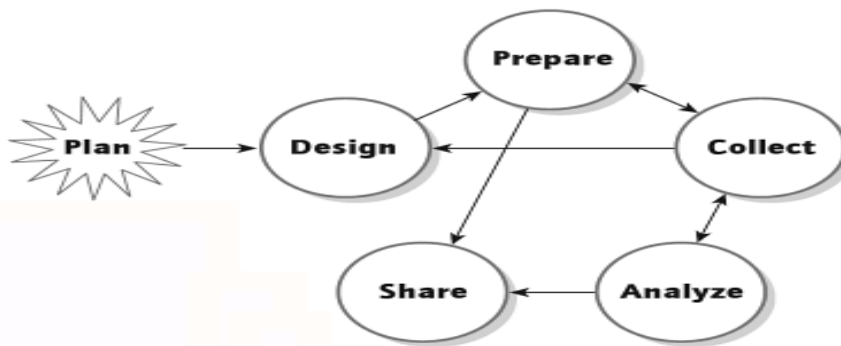
Yin’s Six-Stage Case Study Model

In the design and implementation of this research, I used Yin’s (2014) six-stage case study model as depicted in figure 5 in a manner that was both linear and iterative. Following this

graphic, I provide a brief description of each of Yin's stages and explain how I applied them to this study.

Figure 5

Six-Stage Case Study Model (Yin, 2014)



Stage 1: Plan. In this stage, Yin (2014) suggests that a prospective researcher consider carefully which research methodology best fits the nature of the study being conducted. He notes that case study research is often the preferred method when: “1) The main research questions are “how” or “why” questions, 2) a researcher has little to no control over behavioral events, and 3) the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon” (p. 2). In addition, the case study should take place within the real-world context of the case, include the collection of multiple sources of data, and address concerns over the use of case study methodology.

Stage 2: Design. Now that the researcher has determined that case study methodology is appropriate, the next stage is to design the study. First the unit of analysis or “case” to be studied needs to be defined and limits or bounds established. Next, it is important to develop the theory, propositions, and related issues to both guide the case study, assist in generalizing its findings,

and identify if the case study design will be single, multiple, holistic, embedded, or used in a mixed methods study. Finally, the quality of the design should be examined for construct, internal, and external validity as well as for reliability (Yin, 2014, p. 26). This stage can be returned to throughout the case study process to redesign or tweak as needed.

Stage 3: Prepare. To prepare for conducting a case study, Yin (2014) recommends that one hones the skills of a good case study researcher. These include the ability to “ask good questions, listen, be adaptive, have a firm grasp of the issue being studied, know how to avoid bias, and bring high ethical standards to the research” (p. 70). In addition, the researcher needs to develop case study protocol, screen then select candidates and the research site(s), as well as get all needed approvals. A pilot case study is also suggested. An awareness of who and how the results of the case study will be shared with is a helpful consideration at this stage.

Stage 4: Collect. There are six primary sources of case study evidence that may be used: interviews, direct observations, participant observations, documents, archival records, and physical artifacts that each require mastering different collection procedures. They also can be used for triangulation. Yin (2014) also notes that there are four critical principles to follow in any data collection effort. These include “the use of multiple sources of evidence, the creation of a comprehensive database, maintaining a clear chain of evidence, and exercising care when using data from electronic sources” (p. 102).

Stage 5: Analyze. Yin (2014) describes data analysis as consisting of “examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings” (p. 133). One way of beginning analysis is to “play” with the data to look for promising patterns, concepts, or insights. Other strategies include relying on theoretical propositions, working with data from the ground up, developing a case description, and

examining rival explanations. Yin (2014) further delineates five specific analysis techniques: pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case analysis. Finally, he suggests that to meet the challenge of producing high quality analysis, researchers are required to attend to “all the evidence that is collected, displaying, and presenting the evidence apart from any interpretation and to consider alternative interpretations” (p. 132).

Stage 6: Share. In this stage of preparing to share the results of one’s case study, it is important to determine the audience for the report, define how it will be composed and work through a drafting process that includes review by others and recomposing until it is done well. Yin (2014) additionally suggests six compositional structures to consider: linear-analytic, comparative, chronological, theory-building, “suspense”, and unsequenced structures. He recommends that one start composing both textual and visual materials early and be sure to show enough evidence for the readers to reach their own conclusions. It is his view that “creating a case study report is one of the most rewarding parts of doing a case study, so enjoy” (Yin, 2014, p. 176).

My Six-Stage Case Study Process

Having already completed Stage 1 of Yin’s Case Study Model, I began Stage 2 of my case study design by defining my unit of analysis as the implementation of RP and conducted a thorough review of the literature. I then determined that I was interested in the proposition of change and crafted my research questions:

- 1) How is change enacted in the implementation of Restorative Practices?
- 2) How does a school choose to implement Restorative Practices?
- 3) How does one school negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?

Next, I bounded my case by choosing my unit of analysis, the implementation of RP at a school (Emancipation) in the MCSD that showed a strong commitment toward implementing RP and was willing to collaborate with me

Administrators, teachers, support staff, and consultants who were actively involved in the use of RP would be my participants during a fifteen-month period from April 2018 – June 2019. I developed several theoretical propositions as I explored change theory models to use for analysis of how change was enacted at this school and if and how concerns about race and equity were being addressed or negotiated within the restructuring of authority that RP requires. I realized the importance of context and determined to research how this school came to implement RP in the first place.

I also considered the case study tactics I would use to ensure the quality of my research design in the four design tests of construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Yin, 2014). To ensure construct validity, I defined my operational measures, used multiple sources of evidence, established a chain of evidence, and used member checking of written transcripts. For internal validity in my data analysis, I employed explanation building and for external validity I used Interest Convergence Theory, Change Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Whiteness Theory in the design and analysis to address issues of generalizability of this study. For reliability, I used Yin's six-stage model to design this study as described in this section, created observation protocols (Appendices C and D), a set of semi structured interview questions (Appendix E), and established a case study database.

To prepare for this case study which is Yin's (2014) Stage 3, I began with my research apprenticeship where I conducted an online survey of teachers in the MCSD to learn about their perceptions about their RP training and how the initial implementation was going. This was

given in what was considered Year 1 of the MCS D RP implementation plan. From my findings, I theorized about change, teacher belief systems, and the efficacy of their RP implementation. One of my participants stated that until there were substantive conversations about why RP was being implemented as a means to address racial inequity and what teachers' beliefs and implicit biases were about such third rail issues, real change could not occur. I had never heard of third rail issues before and was intrigued. I completed my research apprenticeship with more skills as a researcher and with a clearer sense of what I wanted to learn about for my dissertation work.

In addition, I worked to develop the skills Yin (2014) notes as essential for being a good case study researcher. I focused on asking good questions before, during, and after each element of this study. I strove to be a good listener by noting the exact words of my participants, their mood and affective components, the context, and inferred meanings. This applied not only to my observations and interviews but also to my analysis of documents and other sources of information. I also did my best to stay adaptive particularly when there was a series of unexpected change between Year A and Year B that resulted in a change of methodology from portraiture which I explain more extensively in my final chapter.

While I was at my research site what I planned to observe often needed to change and "in the moment" opportunities arose that I was able to take advantage of. Finally, I did my best to avoid bias and to conduct this research to the highest ethical standards possible. I was transparent about my positionality, had multiple readers check my writing for bias, considered rival explanations, and followed confidentiality measures. I utilized informed consent procedures that included a letter that overviewed my case study purpose, what was being asked of my participants, potential harms, the right to rescind permission, and contact information (see Appendices A and B).

To collect data following Yin's (2014) Stage 4, I chose to use multiple sources of evidence which are described more thoroughly in my section on data collection. This included all six of the sources Yin (2014) suggests, observations, interviews, documents, participant observations, archival records, and physical artifacts. Throughout my analysis and coding, I used triangulation between my data sources to find points of convergence which allowed for additional emergent themes and for points that lacked consensus in my search for any underlying patterns. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Yin, 2013).

To ensure the organization of my data, I kept a database of what data I collected, when I collected it, and where it was stored, a file for my written field notes and consent forms and a folder for hard copy documents that I kept in a locked cabinet. I used NVivo which was password protected for my transcriptions, data analysis themes, coding, and memos. I also kept all drafts of this case study written up with each version carefully noted on a password protected computer hard drive. This database also provided for a chain of evidence that allowed me to go back and forth during my study from research questions to my protocols from my citations to my database to my multiple draft versions of this dissertation which I kept in part and whole, so I was able to move easily from one part of my case study process to another.

As this process was not only linear but also iterative, I moved back and forth between stages as I modified my design, tweaked my collection procedures, and shared my findings, my thoughts, and my writing with trusted colleagues and my committee members. This continued throughout my Stage 5 analysis which is described in detail in the data analysis section of this chapter and throughout the writing of this dissertation which follows Yin's (2014) guidelines for Stage 6.

Positionality

As all researchers do, I came to this study with my own history and belief systems which were instrumental in how I chose this topic and this research site purposefully. Prior to my doctoral work, I taught grades 3-6 in the MCSD for more than three decades. It was a wonderful place to work, and I treasure the incredible students I was so fortunate to teach: the challenges, the joys, the diversity, and the promise of always working to do better, to be better. I wanted to do my research in the MCSD in hopes it might be of help to this district specifically and to all others who like it generally. I purposefully selected a middle school where I would not know the staff and could work within an insider/outsider status. I knew the inner workings of the school district, the procedures, and policies but unlike my own school where I knew everyone and everything, at Emancipation, much of the middle school structure was new to me. I was still teaching when RP was first introduced in the MCSD and was struck by its potential to not only address racial disproportionality but also the very culture and climate of schools.

I am not neutral in this study though I did my best to be objective. As a former teacher in the MCSD, as a White, middle-class privileged female in my sixties, I come to this research with limitations and strengths, both of which can stem from the same characteristic. I discovered that my participants were often hungry to be heard, aching to be valued, and incredibly generous with their time and insights. Knowing I had taught in the MCSD, and had dealt with the same challenges, frustrations, and joys helped to build a sense of rapport I am not sure I would have enjoyed otherwise.

Access to Research Site

It took me more than a year to gain access to my research site. I used a purposive selection process (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016) for my case by asking people I knew with knowledge of RP in the MCSD for their suggestions. To accomplish this, I met with a Central Office staff member,

a building administrator, two instructional coaches, three teachers, and the professional development (PD) director for insight into what was possible.

Initially, I had a tentative case study framed out with the MCSD Professional Development (PD) director to follow a focus group through RP summer training and into the following school year as they implemented the initiative. Two months later, she told me she had been given different priorities by her director and could only help me if I wanted to do research on PreK or literacy. This was unexpected and disappointing as neither was an option. I then tried to connect with the MCSD Director of School Culture in charge of RP. However, there were multiple canceled meetings due to her last-minute conflicts. When I finally met with her three months later, she said she was interested in collaborating with me, however, after several more canceled meetings, I decided to try another path forward.

In the interim, I met with the local community-based organization (CBO) consultant group Best Practices Organization (BPO), that was providing the MCSD with RP coaches and data analysis. They allowed me to observe their RP coach training and we discussed a possible case study of the role of consultants in RP implementation if I could not get MCSD approval for my research. Still waiting for the School Culture director to reschedule our last canceled meeting, I followed their suggestion to meet with a middle school principal in this district who had made a significant commitment to RP. Ms. James met with me in late December and said she would be supportive of me doing a case study in her building, Emancipation Middle School. Both of us spoke with excitement about the possibilities. Emancipation Middle School was in the third year of its RP implementation and funding had been procured for five RP coaches, more than any other MCSD school. Professional development was provided, daily morning circles required in homerooms, with circles and mediations used regularly. It seemed like an optimal site

to do my research and would provide what Flyvbjerg (2006) calls a critical case because it has “strategic importance in relation to the general problem” (p. 14). He advises this selection is best done by choosing the most or least likely case to support one’s proposition. It was my intention to find a school that was most likely to be successful in their implementation of RP and where I could get the most information. Emancipation Middle School met all of my criteria and I could not wait to start.

Without the support and partnership with the MCSD Central Office personnel I had hoped to do more of an in-house research study with, I was required to submit an extensive external research proposal to this district in February of 2018. It was approved in March with the contingency that I needed a letter of support from Ms. James. This took an additional month to procure. Finally in April of 2018, I was able to get the required principal approval letter and received full consent to do a case study at Emancipation Middle School from April 2018-June 2019. Fellow researchers and faculty have told me that the difficulty of my experience getting permission in this school district is not unique.

Research Site

The MCSD is located in a mid-sized city school district in the Northeast serving approximately 25,000 students. It is a vibrant district, filled with students from all over the world, a joyous diversity of races, languages, and cultures, served by a dedicated staff. However, it had struggled, as many urban districts across the country, with rising poverty, decreased test scores, poor graduation rates, and had been identified by the state for inequitable suspension rates for students of color which led to the adoption of RP.

The primary location for my research was Emancipation Middle School. At the time of this study, it served four hundred ninety-nine sixth-eighth graders and had eighty-eight staff members, one principal, and three vice principals. The school's location was on a busy street on the northeast side of Meridian. Table 4 delineates the school's demographics as found on the state education website <https://data.nysed.gov/>. Of note is the racial makeup of the students with 52% Black, 24% White, 10% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 2% Native American and 2% mixed race. The racial makeup of the staff was close to the opposite with approximately 75% of the staff White and the rest Black, Asian or Hispanic.

Table 4

Emancipation Demographics 2017-18

Demographic	Number of Students	Percent of Student Population
All Students	499	100%
Male	256	51%
Female	243	49%
American Indian or Alaska Native	7	1%
Black or African American	259	52%
Hispanic or Latino	48	10%
Asian or Pacific Islander	51	10%
White	122	24%
Multiracial	12	2%
English Language Learners	120	24%
Students with Disabilities	104	21%
Economically Disadvantaged	465	93%

Participants

The participants for this research included members of the Emancipation Middle School staff, the Best Practices Organization (BPO) RP coaches, Lauren, the BPO RP supervisor and Mr. Herbson, the national RP consultant that the MCSD had hired to help design, train, and

implement RP throughout the MCSD. Although students were present during many of the observations, I did not have permission to speak with them due to MCSD policy, but their interactions with adults were carefully observed.

I used a process of snowball sampling to select my participants based on the recommendation of others (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). My preliminary meeting with Lauren, the BPO RP supervisor resulted in the recommendation of Ms. James who then recommended members of her staff she felt were also committed to RP. Lauren also recommended her RP coaches at Emancipation. In addition, staff members and the RP coaches suggested potential participants. It was immensely helpful to approach someone I did not know by telling them that they had been recommended to me by a colleague for their commitment to RP. Their response was almost always a warm smile and agreement to be a participant.

This process provided me with teachers from each grade level, all the RP coaches, and the Emancipation administrative team. I also directly approached key staff members such as the BIC and ISS facilitators, the art teacher who coordinated the We Belong student leadership group and Mr. Herbson, the MCSD RP consultant. As Table 5 shows, I had twenty-nine participants who I observed; nine were Black, two were Asian, two were Hispanic and sixteen were White. I formally interviewed fourteen staff members, RP coaches and Mr. Herbson. For these interviews, two were Black, two were Asian, and eleven were White. I also had extensive conversations that I have noted as informal interviews that provided additional information about six additional participants' perspectives on equity, race, authority, and RP. Three of these were Black and three were White. Note that I have used the symbol X to represent time so eight times means eight times.

Table 5

Research Study Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	School Role	Race/ Ethnicity	Shadow	Observe Instruction	Morning Meeting	Interview Type
Ms. James	Principal	Black	8X			Informal
Mr. Roberts	VP Year A	White	1X			Informal
Ms. Livingston	VP	White	2X			Formal
Ms. Darlington	VP	White	1X			Formal
Mr. Mattice	VP Year B	Black	1X			Informal
Mr. Z	Dean of students Year B	White	4X			Formal
Ms. M	BIC Facilitator	White	2X			Formal
Ms. K	ISS Facilitator	Black	1X			
Ms. V	8 th gr teacher Year B 7 th gr teacher Year A	White		3X	4X	Formal
Ms. C	8 th gr teacher Year B 7 th gr teacher Year B	White		2X	3X	Formal
Ms. T	8 th gr teacher	Asian		1X	1X	Formal
Ms. Y	8 th gr teacher	White		1X		
Mr. B	7 th gr teacher	Black		1X	1X	
Mr. X	7 th gr teacher	White		1X	1X	
Mr. O	Sp. Ed teacher	Asian		1X	2X	Formal
Ms. G	Sp. Ed teacher	White		1X	2X	Formal
Ms. L	6 th gr teacher	White		1X	2X	Formal
Ms. A	6 th gr teacher	Black		2X	1X	
Ms. I	Sp. Ed teacher	Hispanic		1X		
Ms. W	6 th gr teacher	Hispanic		1X	2X	
Mr. N	Art teacher	White		1X	2X	Formal
Ms. H	Psychologist	Black		1X		
Gregory	BPO RP coach	Black	3X			Formal
Malik	BPO RP coach Year A	Black	3X			Informal

Rachel	BPO RP Coach Year A Community Coordinator Year B	White	1X			Formal
Paula	BPO RP Coach Year A	White	1X			Informal
Victoria	BPO RP coach	White	5X			Formal
Lauren	BPO RP Supervisor	White	1X		2X	Informal
Mr. Herbson	MCSD RP Consultant	Black			1X	Formal

Consent

Prior to observing, shadowing, or interviewing my participants, I had each sign a consent form. I went over exactly what I was asking them to do, the risks and benefits, how I would protect their anonymity, and the confidentiality of our conversations. I clarified that they could rescind their permission at any time and provided an opportunity for questions. Each participant was given a copy of the consent form with my contact information. In addition, I offered each a copy of the transcript of our interaction (interview or observation) notes to check for accuracy (see Appendices A and B).

Data Sources and Collection

One of the strengths of a case study is the multiple sources of data it allows (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Pearson et al., 2015; Yin, 2014). Within this study, I used three kinds of observations: participant observations of morning and community circles, short term observations of one class period of classroom instruction to see how teachers were integrating RP into their practice, and longer-term observations of three to seven hours at one sitting which I

called shadowing of RP coaches and school administrators. I also did document analysis of training materials, the MCS D Code of Conduct, the Emancipation Prevention Plan, the Emancipation Weekly Update, and other relevant materials. I completed an archival search through the Board of Education minutes about RP and newspaper articles to learn about the history of how RP came to be implemented in this school, consultant contracts, and board presentations.. I examined school artifacts including display cases, posted student work, posters, and other indicators of school climate and culture. Tables 6 and 7 show the type of data I collected, an explanation of each, how I used it and when it was collected.

Table 6

Data Collection Types, Use and Time of Collection

Data Type	Explanation	Use	Time Collected
Participant Observations	Morning Circles	To observe RP in action and meet teachers	20 in Year A 3 in Sept. of Year B
Classroom Observations	Observed for one class period	To observe for evidence of RP, race, equity, and authority	18 in Year B
Informal Observations	Observing in common areas, change of classes, entry and dismissal, cafeteria, library	To see school culture and to observe for evidence of RP, race, equity, and authority	Throughout Year A and Year B
Shadowing (extended observations)	Observed participant for 3 or more hours in a given day	To learn how the administration ran the school and to observe for evidence of RP, race, equity, and authority	12 in Year A 22 in Year B
Informal Conversations	Before, during and after observations and shadowing, in the halls, in passing, in the cafe	Information about teacher's perspectives about RP, race, equity, authority, change and other topics	Throughout Year A and Year B
Interviews	Formal semi-structured	Answers to the 5 semi-structured interview questions to determine teacher perspectives on	11 in May-June in Year B

Shadowing										
Informal Conversations										
Interviews										
Document Analysis										
Physical Artifacts										

I observed Emancipation staff in the common areas, at faculty meetings, and throughout the school. Eleven teachers allowed me to observe their morning circles and classes during my study, some multiple times for a total of twenty-three circles. The RP coaches allowed me to spend multiple full and half days with them, as I followed them throughout the course of their daily responsibilities. I also shadowed the school principal, the Dean of students and each of the other administrators. I observed the Behavior Intervention Center (BIC), In School Suspension (ISS) room, and the teaching assistants who ran them. In total, I shadowed participants thirty-four times. I observed support staff and had numerous informal conversations with many of the school staff. I formally interviewed fourteen staff members and Mr. Herbson. In total, I spent 214 hours at Emancipation.

Data was collected by taking observation notes, audio recording of interviews, pictures of the school and artifacts, surveyance of Emancipation Middle School and Meridian City School District, and state websites. I also looked at the BPO RP training materials, their mid and end of year reports, MCSD Board of Education records, state government reports, and a wider array of Emancipation School documents that included the Code of Conduct, the School Prevention Plan, and other related materials.

There was intentionality in when I collected my data. In Year A, I primarily attended morning circles with the RP coaches which allowed me to meet teachers and begin to develop of level of trust with them. In the first half of Year B, I drew on that trust to ask teachers if I could

observe them as they taught, which generally led to a series of informal conversations and more relationship building. This was then the basis for asking teachers at the end of Year B, as this study reached its termination, if I could interview them. In addition, during Year A, I primarily shadowed the school principal, the RP coaches and observed in common areas as I worked to understand more about things such as the school culture, how RP was being implemented, and what authority structures were in place. This was invaluable and allowed me to start Year B with a much clearer and more comprehensive understanding of how this school operated and a foundation of relationships with staff to build from.

Observations

In my participant observations of morning circles and my observations of teachers during their instructional blocks, I used a classroom observation protocol form that included spaces for the following “look-fors” as shown in Table 8:

Table 8

Classroom Observation Protocol

Look for	Significant Characteristics and Notes
Classroom Space	Presence of student work, positive messaging, room arrangement, etc.
Teacher Behaviors and Language Use	Interactions with students, how activities are introduced and ended, word use, response to student behaviors, use of student names, etc.
Level of Student Engagement/Examples	Were students engaged? How were they engaged? To what extent were they engaged and how?
Restorative Practice(s) Utilized	Morning circles, mediations, peace circles, conflict resolution circles, relationship building, etc.
Opportunities for Student Voice/Empowerment	In what ways were students allowed to speak? How did they use those opportunities? Were their voices used in agential or empowering ways, if so how and if not how.
Sequence of Events and scripting of interactions	Write out what was said and done during the observation.

Prebrief/debrief with teacher when possible	What did the teacher share before the observation and after? As possible, ask clarifying question about any RP that were used.
---	--

During morning circles also called morning circles, I sat in the circle as a participant observer and was welcomed to join in the greeting, community building activity and debrief so I completed the protocol directly after the observation. For classroom instructional observations, I took copious field notes and then filled in the protocol sheet later that day.

Shadowing

Shadowing happened when I spent three or more hours following a participant through the course of their day. This allowed me a much wider view of how these fourteen people spent their days, how they interacted with others and rich opportunities to engage in informal conversations throughout my time with them about what they were doing and why, their personal history, and views on things that were happening in the school including R. I shadowed the Emancipation administration team, the Dean of students, the RP coaches, and the BIC and ISS facilitators. For the administration, I used a School Leadership Observation Protocol that I created using each of Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) components of change (see Appendix C) and for the RP coaches I took general chronological field notes as there was such a variety of interactions during their day.

During these times, I was able to observe how student misbehavior was handled by the school administrators, the dean of students, and in the BIC and ISS rooms. I saw the RP coaches interact with a wide array of adults in the building and students as they helped to lead morning circles, provided one on one support for students, facilitated mediations, supported individual teachers, met with administrators about students, and coordinated with BIC and ISS. I was able

to observe school administrators dealing with students who were in crisis (staff too), parents, transitions, school walk-throughs, and much of the daily operations of running the school. The conversations we had in the moments between events were rich with their observations of what they were doing and why and about schooling, society, and RP in general. My appreciation of the complexity of school leadership and the work of the RP coaches grew daily. I shadowed the Emancipation administration including the Dean of students seventeen times and the RP coaches sixteen times for a total of 123 hours.

Interviews

I used both formal and informal interview structures to learn what my participants thought about RP, race, equity, authority, and change. I formally interviewed fourteen staff members and Mr. Herbson, the MCSD RP consultant. For these I used a semi-structured interview format to provide comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Here are the questions I asked while providing space within each question for the interviewee to answer in whatever way they chose and to follow up with clarifying and extending questions. These were audio recorded then transcribed.

- 1) How would you define Restorative Practices? Why is the SCSD implementing it and how?
- 2) How has Emancipation changed because of RP? Please include any changes in structures, belief systems, relationships, and school culture. Are there staff and student buy in? What has been the impact of RP on students? on teachers? Etc.
- 3) Do RP address the issue of racial disproportionality as it is intended? How do they impact issues of race and inequity? Could they? How and when does race play a role in disciplinary practices/RP?

- 4) How do RP and the authority of school staff intersect? Can there be both restorative and punitive responses to behavior?
- 5) Is there anything else you would like me to know about the RP implementation at your school?

I also had extensive informal conversations that led to a type of open-ended interview with different staff members at Emancipation and the RP coaches. As noted earlier, the extended time I spent with those that I shadowed provided space for some very illuminating conversations. This also occurred before and after observations, in the hallways, walking in and out of school, and the like. Again, I was struck by how much the people I had these conversations with just wanted to be heard, to have their thoughts respected, and valued. Generally, the conversations came up spontaneously as people shared their thoughts with me about what I had observed and what they thought about their instructional practice, about their students, about RP, about their school, and society at large. These were open ended, and I added the insights they provided to my observation notes and to my daily memos.

Data Analysis

I followed Stake's (1995) explanation that the role of the case study researcher is to be an "interpreter who is placed in a context to observe and to record what is occurring as objectively as possible while concurrently looking for meaning and redirecting one's observations as needed to explore, refine, and substantiate those meanings" (p.8). I had more than seven hundred pages of data from what I had observed, interviewed, wrote memos, and recorded as I looked for meaning, exploring and reexploring my data to refine and substantiate what those meanings were. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) describes this process as

iterative: data collection, interpretation, and analysis where each day in the field is followed by reflections and critique. Following her guidance, I created a series of memos that included how what I was observing connected to my research questions and theoretical framework, and my emerging hypotheses. This set up an ongoing interpretive and analytic process that I used to sort and analyze my data and was integral to my synthesis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

NVivo proved to be an invaluable tool as I went through my data and identified possible themes and codes through a series of memos that allowed me to conceptualize my data (Lempert, 2011).

My initial coding cycle was to categorize my data into four sections: change, race, equity, and authority. For my first research question, about the intersection of race, equity, authority, and RP, I used the inductive strategy of grounding up (Yin, 2014) and began by following his suggestion of “playing with the data and searching for promising patterns, insights or concepts” (p. 133). As I worked further with my data, I used the constant comparative analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1999) that called this “playing” a form of open coding where data is broken into snippets that are compared to create codes. From these initial codes, I began my second round of coding, comparing my initial codes and combining them to form categories. My final round of coding was to compare each of my categories to look for connections and identify larger themes.

The coding that I used for my second research question on how change was enacted was to structure my systemic analysis of RP implementation at Emancipation Middle School was based on Fullan’s (2009a) Theory of Action for System Reform components of change. These six components include direction and sector engagement, capacity building, development of strong leaders and infrastructure, staying focused on goals, evaluation and inquiry, and two-way communication. After I had my data coded within those six categories of change components, I

was able to move to a second round of coding looking for common patterns and examples of how each component was in operation during the implementation of RP at Emancipation in Year A and Year B.

Race and Equity Coding

My initial analysis of race and equity related data began by coding my data into who was speaking as I looked for patterns within the administrators, teachers, and RP coaches/consultants comparing what was said within each group. As I examined each, I began to see themes emerge that spanned within and without the roles people had in the school, so I recorded the types of responses my participants gave. I saw that the responses I received seemed to fall into three main themes: rejection that race was an issue, deflection away from race as an issue, and reflection that race was an issue. This allowed me to initially use a constant comparative analysis model and then move into more of an explanation building model (Yin, 2014) where identifying themes or explanations preceded my second round of coding categories. Within each of those themes, I identified a number of sub-categories. Within the category of rejection, I identified three sub-categories: denial, I am colorblind, and what behavior is “consequencable”? Deflection also had three sub-categories: evaded question, poverty, culture, and trauma, and homelessness and jail. The category of reflection included the sub-categories of being a White teacher, staff of color and those who are not, being too loud, teacher bias toward student behavior, and finally a more systemic look at race, equity, and identity.

Authority Coding

The coding for the second part of my initial research question was of an emergent nature. I divided my data into race and equity as one category and authority as the other. In my initial

coding, I saw connections between my data snippets and coded authority in this first round as more finite codes such as proactive and reactive, one on one, and male gym teachers. In the next round of coding, I began to see how these codes could be categorized into the ways staff speak to/about students, the role of administration, suspensions/referrals, code of conduct, and responses to misbehavior.

I continued to examine my data and did further analysis looking for patterns and utilizing a more selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this third round of coding, I made an additional revision as I considered how RP are relationship driven. I began to conceptualize authority in three separate spheres of influence. Authority was experienced at Emancipation in one of three relational ways. A person or entity could be the *source of authority*, such as Ms. James in her role as principal or one could be the *subject of another's authority* as the students were to their teachers. A third possibility was *shared authority* which is one of the foundations of RP and one of the goals of changing school culture. This third cycle of coding allowed me to look at how being subjected to top-down authority from the State Education Department and MCSD Central Office was experienced by the principal and the school, how the principal's authority was experienced by the staff, and how the principal's and MCSD's authority was experienced by Best Practices Organization (BPO). I then looked at how being in the role of authority was experienced by teachers in their authority over students, and the administration, the principal, the vice principals, and Dean of students in their authority over staff and students. I also looked at the shared authority that was present at Emancipation during this study in school committees, RP, and in part by the Dean of students. Finally, I examined the use of language as a means of both imposed and shared authority by staff and students.

This revised manner of coding and the sub-coding within each category allowed me to see more clearly the complexity and entrenchment of how authority was wielded in this school environment. Thus, even when an initiative such as RP is implemented which includes shared authority as foundational, the traditional hallmarks of authority within the relationships that make up school systems remain ever present and insidious so whatever gains Emancipation had made toward more of a shared authority were quickly and sadly scaled back.

Ethics

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that “ethics in research are the principles of right and wrong” and that two dominant issues an ethical researcher should follow are to ensure that participants “enter research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved” and that they are not “exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive” (p. 48). To ensure that this study met ethical standards, I submitted an IRB application with my research plan following all requested guidelines and was approved to conduct this study. In addition, I completed an external research request application for the MCSD to ensure that my research study met this school district’s standards for meaningful, appropriate, and ethical research and it was approved.

To ensure that my participants entered my study voluntarily, I met with each prior to my observations and interviews to overview my informed consent documents (Appendices A and B). These included the nature of my research, exactly what would be asked of them, possible risks, and benefits, contact information, and the right to rescind their permission at any time. Many asked very cogent questions before signing and I gave each a hard copy of the form when they left, so we both had signed copies dated for later reference if needed. In addition, I offered my

typed transcripts from the audiotapes for interviews and typed field notes taken from my handwritten notes for my participants to use to check for accuracy.

To guard against any possible harm, I used pseudonyms for the district, the school, and for each of my participants. As explained more fully in my last chapter, I decided not to use portraiture because I did not want to portray the school or its staff in a negative manner. I did my best to be as respectful as possible in honoring my participants' many time commitments. I met with them for interviews at the time and place of their choosing and during the school day, whenever it was best for them. When anything occurred that seemed inappropriate or confidential, I removed myself from the setting and in addition removed any content that seemed the same from my notes. I took the trust my participants placed in me very seriously and did my best to honor their voices, their integrity, and their perspectives.

Although I have followed standard procedures for confidentiality and anonymity with my use of pseudonyms, a conflict remained about how to maintain the anonymity of the school district in which this research took place. In my positionality statement, I appropriately noted that I have taught at the district for most of my teaching career and am aware that an internet search of my name would quickly reveal where I worked. There is also, in Chapter 4, a history of the journey this school took toward the implementation of RP that includes references that identify the city and school district. They are not identified in the text of this dissertation, however. Ethics are about right and wrong and as a researcher, I have taken that call to heart and tried to inform, honor, and protect my participants to the best of my ability.

Chapter Summary

What is research? Bassey (1983) says research “entails a sustained enquiry which is systemic, coherent, critical and self-critical, and which ... contributes to the advancement of knowledge” (p. 111). I began this chapter with this quote from Bassey about what research is. It has been my intent in this chapter to explain my methodology as I did my research in a systemic, coherent, and critical manner and throughout my study to remain self-critical. It is my hope that this work will contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

Case study can be defined simply as research that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). The flexibility it allows and range of data collection methods possible (Miles, 2015) were well suited to this study and allowed me to see how a phenomenon, in this case RP implementation, was influenced by its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in terms of change as a system and change in race, equity, authority practices, and belief systems or ideologies. It was my goal that my abilities as a researcher have risen to the challenge that “the process of conducting a case study is perhaps more art than skill, the success of which is somewhat dependent upon the sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility of the investigator” (Merriam, 1985, p. 214).

This chapter delineated the methodology of this study: my research design, the appropriateness of using case study methods, my research questions, and positionality. It articulated the path taken to gain access to my research site and the particulars of my research site, my participants, my data collection and analysis procedures, process, and ethics. In the next three chapters, I present my findings. In Chapter 4, I discuss how change was enacted using Fullan’s Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) and in Chapter 5, a historical analysis of how and why RP came to be implemented in the MCSD and thus Emancipation is described.

Chapter 4: A Systemic Analysis of RP Implementation at Emancipation Middle School

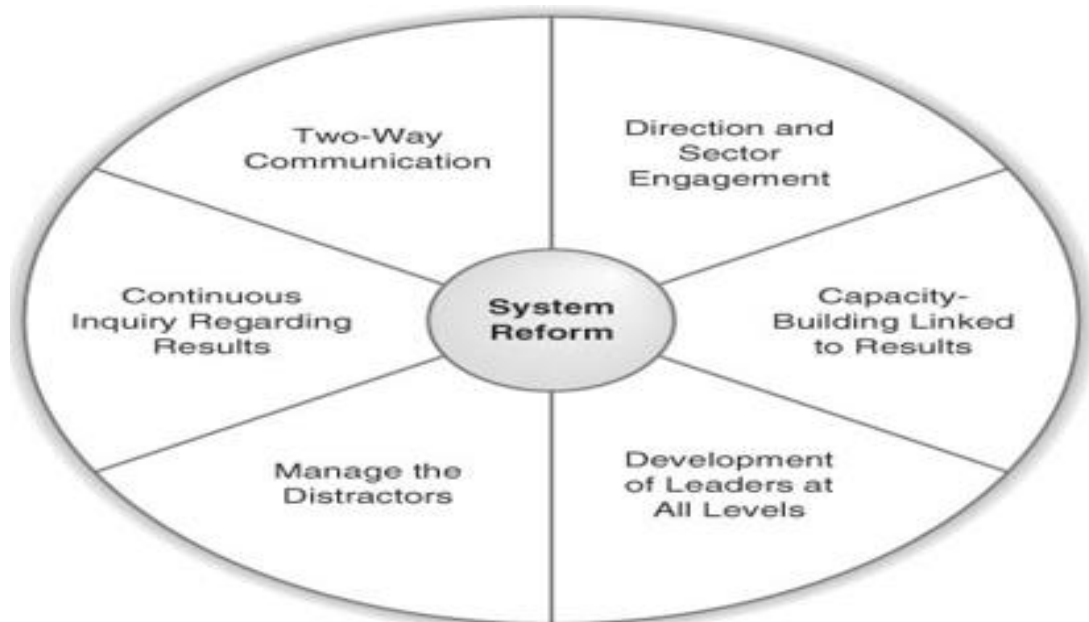
In this chapter, I provide this study's findings that answer my first research question, "How is change enacted in the implementation of Restorative Practices?" To accomplish this, I use Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) to do a systemic analysis of the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School and how it changed from the Spring of 2018 (Year A) to the following school year, 2018-19 (Year B).

Analysis of Emancipation's RP Implementation

Fullan's Theory of Action (2009a) identifies six components as being integral to the success of system reform: Direction and Sector Engagement, Capacity Building, Leadership Development, Manage Distractors, Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry, and Two-way Communication. These are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a)



Component 1: Direction and Sector Engagement

Fullan (2009a) describes Direction and Sector Engagement as an essential component for reform-based initiative success. It is best envisioned as a blended strategy with direction from the top as well as partnership with the field. This direction includes an inspirational vision, a small number of achievable goals, a leadership team, resources, and flexibility.

The reform's vision should include the purpose, the nature, and rationale of the reform along with a clear action plan that shows how it will benefit students and increase achievement, its moral purpose. Goals should be small in number but also ambitious and firmly held to. The leadership team, in partnership with the field, should meet often enough to provide clear and consistent direction. Resource investment can include such supports as increased funding, resource allocation, and additional expertise (Fullan, 2009a)

It is critical, Fullan (2009b) says, that there be engagement at all levels (the district, the schools, the principals, the teachers, students, parents, and the community) so that all see the value of the reform and its moral purpose to help improve student success. In this way, they can all buy into the given ambitious goals, the agenda, and the path to be pursued. Fullan (2008) describes this model of blended leadership as both top-down in direction and investment and bottom up from capacity building. The goal is to have a sense of common purpose and commitment.

I examine how five of these elements that Fullan identifies within his description of Direction and Sector Engagement: having a clear vision, a leadership team in place, a small number of ambitious and achievable goals, resources, and flexibility were enacted at Emancipation over the course of this study.

Clear vision. As discussed in Chapter 2, the MCSD brought in RP as a districtwide initiative in 2015 as a direct response to the state mandate that the school district take significant steps to address racially disparate suspension rates (this will be discussed much more extensively in the next chapter). The moral purpose was evident from the parent and community group outrage at the disparity, the state's report, and the action steps the MCSD took to address these concerns. The primary directive was that suspension rates were to be reduced so students were in class thus able to learn, to increase academic achievement, and ultimately to graduate. RP was brought in as an alternative to punitive disciplinary practices, the Code of Conduct rewritten, Behavior Intervention Centers set up in each school, and Educator's Handbook, a new tracking system for referrals and suspensions put in place. Both external and internal monitors were utilized.

The vision in 2015 was that every school would implement RP, all staff would be trained, supports would be put into place and a whole new system of behavior management developed. This included the revamping of how behaviors were to be handled, who could write referrals and suspensions, and for what. National and local consultants were hired, and extensive summer training occurred with the goal of turnkey training to reach all staff. A five-year phase in plan was developed that was described in Chapter 3.

At the district level, the School Culture and Climate Department would take the lead in the RP implementation and each building would have a School Climate and Discipline Committee to support the initiative and analyze data. RP language was included in all pertinent MCSD documents. In these initial stages, RP in the MCSD district had all the elements of the clear vision that Fullan (2009b) sees as critical. There was a stated purpose, a rationale, and an action plan with the goal of benefiting students and increasing achievement.

This study began in the Spring of 2018, the third year of the MCSD RP implementation. Emancipation Middle School was considered one of the MCSD schools most committed to using RP according to MCSD and BPO RP leadership. In my initial meetings with Mr. Roberts, the Emancipation Vice Principal (VP) in charge of the RP implementation in the school, he told me that the vision of the school was to integrate RP into the fabric of the school so that everyone in the school was on board and increase capacity. He said, “RP is embedded in everything we do; it’s all part of being proactive and developing a strong student support system”. The Emancipation vision statement that was posted throughout the building reinforced this:

At Emancipation, all stakeholders are engaged in creating, implementing, and monitoring best practices to ensure a safe learning environment that develops our scholars and supports social and academic growth toward college and career readiness.

Rachel, one of the RP coaches added, “As a whole, our building really just understands that the culture of our building is restorative.” Another coach enthused, “So really this is groundbreaking work for Emancipation to be piloting this (RP) for the past three or so years to show its effectiveness.” Mr. O., one of the special education teachers said, “I got familiar with it (RP) when I got here in 2016. It is giving the students the opportunity to grow and move forward from their mistakes. Restore, it is to restore relationships, it is to restore emotions, and ultimately at the end of the day it’s about accepting one another. These staff members gave voice to the passion and motivation that RP seemed to invoke from the majority of those I spoke with. Ms. James, the school principal told me:

The work with the restorative coaches has been pivotal because we have a system here in supporting, monitoring, and being attentive to the needs of the students in the building which helps to create an environment where the learning can actually happen because in

middle school, they are so tied up with all kinds of things that can interfere with that. It gives us time to come together.... each year it just gets better and better. Like the tone of the building just gets better ... so I value it, I definitely value it. I see a side of how this restorative work that has humbled me even in my work and how I deal with the students and even how I deal with the adults.

In Year B of my study, the vision of RP implementation became clouded. Instead of integration into the fabric of the school, RP was more along the fringes. Ms. James said that the building was still doing RP and she continued to believe in its value, but things had definitely changed. No longer were there mandatory morning circles that all staff and students attended. PD time that had included RP training was now focused on content areas which the principal told me was at the staff's request. Teachers were bombarded with a series of new initiatives and RP coaches no longer worked in classrooms, instead focusing on students returning from out of school suspensions (OSS) or in crisis.

The 6th grade VP, Ms. Livingston explained that while it remained the schoolwide focus to keep students in class and raise student achievement now the goal had moved from RP as the primary focus to “have all hands-on deck with clear structures and expectations to provide students with wrap around supports from the school psychologist, social workers, guidance counselors, nurse, dean of students, Best Practices Organization and four other CBO's, the Family Engagement and Community Coordinator, BIC and ISS.” RP went from being a school-wide initiative that “was embedded in all we do at Emancipation” to one of many of the supports offered to students, losing its separate identity, focus, and momentum. Building staff capacity was no longer part of the vision and RP was done nearly exclusively by the coaches in a pull-out manner as students returned from OSS, or when in crisis. Mediations were only done when time

allowed and the integral community and relationship building the mandatory morning circles provided vanished.

Leadership team. In Year A, Emancipation Middle School's administration team consisted of Ms. James, the principal, and three vice principals, one assigned to each grade level and other school-wide responsibilities. In the first year of my study, Mr. Roberts, the eighth grade VP was delegated with facilitating the RP implementation and led the School Climate and Discipline Committee. This committee, which met weekly, was comprised of staff members who became a kind of teacher leader representing each grade level, special area teams (Art, Music, Gym, ENL, Special Education) and support staff (social worker, nurse, psychologist, guidance counselor) as well as Community Based Organization CBO members.

The committee was charged with creating a positive and proactive school climate which they did by planning school-wide events, supporting RP and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiatives, providing input into the ongoing monitoring and adjusting school policies and procedures as needed. One of the ways they did this was by analyzing data on student behavior that included Behavior Intervention Center (BIC), in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS) referrals, and the number of RP being utilized, noting trends and patterns, and creating plans to address needs as they arose.

Mr. Roberts also met bi-weekly to collaborate with Lauren, the Best Practices Organization (BPO) RP director. In these meetings, they "got on the same page" as Mr. Roberts explained by reviewing data, monitoring progress, discussing goals and action plans, and coordination between the BPO RP coaches and the school. In addition to the data the school collected, Lauren created extensive data reports based

on the work the RP coaches were doing to use in analysis and action planning. Both told me in separate interviews that they found these meetings very productive and an important part of their collaboration.

Mr. Roberts reported about the committee work and BPO collaboration on the RP implementation to Ms. James and the other two vice principals (VPS) at weekly administration meetings and in return received feedback and input for future actions. Each VP had at least one of the RP coaches in their office with their own desk and table to meet with students and staff. This allowed the RP coaches and administrators to collaborate throughout the day and form a leadership team per grade level. Each coach was charged with building capacity for RP throughout the building and did so in their work with administrators through daily morning circles, daily teacher consults, committee work, and their ongoing restorative work with students.

Each grade level VP was responsible for ensuring daily morning circles were happening, using RP practices themselves, supporting their teachers and students in their use of RP, and utilizing the RP coaches effectively. For example, the sixth grade VP, Ms. Livingston would meet with Mary, the sixth grade RP coach each morning to review the prior day and any follow-up RP work that needed to be done. Both shared information throughout the day about students and discussed how to best handle a given situation. Ms. Livingston would direct Mary to work with certain students and teachers to assist in meetings with parents, staff, and students, to create skill groups, to help with transitions, and to provide capacity-building support for staff as needed. This ongoing dialogue was often much more proactive than reactive and the two worked well together based on my observations.

In addition, student leadership was developed in WEB (We All Belong), a national program led by Mr. E., the art teacher. Student leaders were selected from those who applied at

the end of their seventh-grade year with a focus on diversity. These trained eighth graders went into sixth grade homerooms to lead community building activities, skill building groups, and RP circle leader training. This occurred at least monthly and the enthusiasm for being a student leader was high.

In Year B, the second year of this study, the leadership team changed significantly. Mr. Roberts, the VP who had been delegated the lead role in facilitating the RP implementation, was promoted and became principal of another middle school in the MCSD. He was replaced by an administrative intern who was responsible only for his grade level team, composed of all new teachers to Emancipation and of note, none of whom said they had been trained in RP. This meant that none of the VP's had been assigned to take on the RP responsibilities that Mr. Roberts had.

By the end of September, Ms. James was able to get approval for a new position called the dean of students who would primarily work on student behavior and school discipline. Mr. Z., a highly regarded science teacher and RP practitioner, was taken out of the classroom for this. He described the role as

a position that the principal and I designed. It has different meanings in different buildings but what we were looking for was for someone to deal specifically with students in need, behaviorally and to try to coordinate with all of our CBOs and the school to create a more restorative response to negative behavior rather than the more punitive response that the district has had over the years. So, it used to be that the dean of students was looked at as more punitive, the purveyor of punishments but we wanted the position to be more proactive and more restorative and get more effect out of our CBOs.

He added that they hoped to phase in him modeling strategies for dealing with students to build teacher capacity to better handle and de-escalate behavior issues.

It appeared that Mr. Z. was supposed to take on much of what Mr. Roberts had done. He was intended to lead the School Climate and Discipline Committee and actually met twice with Lauren which both told me was not productive. He could not find any time for the committee to meet with the reduced school day and in this quasi-leadership role, did not have the power to make changes. The two meetings with Lauren ended up being more on what could not happen with all the changes than on what could, she told me. When she tried to set up a third meeting, Mr. Z. told her that he did not have time.

It is also of interest that part of the design of his position was to build teacher capacity by pushing into classrooms to model effective best practices, a role that the RP coaches no longer had due to the restructuring of their contract with the MCSD.

Although Mr. Z. was considered a strong proponent of RP and used them extensively in his classroom as he and others told me, as dean of students, he dealt primarily with referrals, BIC, ISS, OSS, and buses. He spent a great deal of time in the hallway corralling students back to class, mediating conflicts, and responding to teachers requests to remove students. There were constant requests for his presence on his walkie talkie. If he was not in the hall, he was in meetings with parents and students over behavior or he was completing the lengthy paperwork demands of his position. Occasionally he was able to do restorative student mediations but more often, he asked the CBOs to do them. Though he did a wonderful job using humor and was very effective at de-escalating situations, the bulk of his time was spent dealing with student misbehavior that resulted in punitive consequences. Only administrators and he could write ISS or OSS referrals or give suspensions, teachers could only write BIC referrals. In later interviews,

Mr. Z. voiced his frustration with the punitive nature of his role and that it was not what he had envisioned when he accepted the position.

Ms. James moved out of the school office suite and into the guidance office to allow the rest of the administrators and staff to develop more autonomy and more leadership, which she monitored and provided guidance. Toward this effort, she utilized two large computer monitors that allowed her to view the school from the multiple cameras set up throughout the building and a series of walkie talkies held by the other administrators, the Dean of students, security guards, RP coaches, BIC and OSS staff members and teachers who were on hall duty. Her very hands-on presence throughout the building halls and classrooms was reduced to being a more distanced monitor and coach. Ms. James explained:

The first three years, I think I may have enabled more than I empowered so I need to let people do the work too. I am not going to be here forever, so I want people to be able to continue this work. Teachers may say I wasn't supported enough, and I ask, "Well what does the support you're looking for look like?," because supporting to me, when I think of it, is like I'm almost carrying you as opposed to coaching you which allows you to do it on your own. But if I'm supporting you, I'm aiding you in a way that doesn't allow you to do it on your own.

This shift made many staff members uncomfortable which they viewed as more of a "Big Brother" authoritarian style of leadership, being watched and often reprimanded, rather than the more collaborative "we're all in this together" style Ms. James previously used and was much more aligned with RP principles. As one teacher put it,

There are a lot of people in this building who hate her, and I don't get that, but I really haven't seen that side of her. I don't really get in trouble, but I am sure for people who do get in trouble it sucks, it really sucks because I have seen her freak out before. I definitely don't want that to happen to me.

Without Mr. Roberts as a buffer, and with this new focus from Ms. James, staff morale according to multiple staff and CBO members continued to decrease as year B went on. It was a very different style of leadership than in years past.

Due to budgetary constraints on the district level, the five RP coaches were reduced to two and their role as RP leaders building capacity in the school staff was redefined as facilitating the return of students from OSS and working with students in need. No longer were they able to help facilitate RP as a whole school, a Tier 1 initiative. Lauren explained, "So this year's contract, the word capacity building was taken out of the contract because so many administrators said I don't need you to take so much time from my teachers who need to be focused on academics... so now we are back to being direct service providers."

Gregory and Victoria were moved out of the administrative offices and housed in a large room outside the cafeteria with two other CBO's taking on two grade levels each. They responded to walkie talkie calls to assist students in crisis, helped with transitions, did some mediations, and engaged in small group and one-on-one work with students. Victoria explained that now the bulk of her work was with Tier 2 and 3 students, which was closer to 20 % of the school population when in Year A, the RP coaches worked with 100% of the students. No longer were they seen as part of the leadership team, working hand in hand with the administration, sharing space, and collaborating throughout the day but now were more isolated and more limited in their roles.

Achievable goals. Table 9 below depicts the five achievable school-wide RP goals that were in place when I began my study in Year A: building-wide morning circles, effective use of RP coaches, accountable facilitation of the RP implementation, ongoing RP PD, and the role of teachers. These goals were shared with me in conversations with Ms. James, Mr. Roberts, and Lauren and in the MCSD contract with BPO found in the Board of Education minutes August of 2017 and 2018.

Table 9

Emancipation RP Goals and Action Plans for Year A and Year B

Goals	Year A	Year B
Building-wide Morning Circles	Mandatory and attended by all staff and students	Encouraged but optional
Effective Use of RP coaches	Five coaches providing individual grade level support, building teacher capacity, working with all students	Two coaches each taking half of school, working primarily with tier 3 and 4 students in crisis or returning from OSS
Accountable Facilitation of RP Implementation	Led by Mr. Roberts, 8 th grade VP, monitored by the School Climate and Discipline Committee, collaboration meetings with BPO RP director and other Emancipation administrators, data shared weekly with staff and discussed at team meetings	Data shared with staff weekly by the Dean of students with no discussion No administrator assigned to RP School Climate and Discipline Committee disbanded because there was no time to meet No collaboration meetings with BPO
Ongoing RP PD	Summer training including new teacher orientation Building level PD at least monthly by BPO RP director Lauren Modeling, co-teaching and consult with individual teachers by RP coaches to build capacity	Focus moved to other topics such as CRE, personalized and project-based learning RP coaches now only pull-out students
Role of Teachers	Hold daily morning circles, build relationships with students, use RP in	Build relationships with students

	classroom with RP coach support and grow capacity to do so Attend RP training and apply to practice	
--	--	--

In Year A, these goals appeared achievable and significant progress was made in all areas. Daily morning circles were held that involved all staff (all building staff were assigned to homerooms with 2-3 adults per room) sending a powerful message to everyone in the school community of the importance of RP. Structures were in place for accountability: a designated administrator in charge of the implementation, a committee of teachers and staff to give input, monitor and evaluate RP at Emancipation by analyzing and disseminating the data on discipline and use of RP, a robust plan for ongoing RP PD, a plan for the effective use of the RP coaches, and clear expectations of the role of teachers.

In Year B, these goals were dramatically modified as the structure, systems, and leadership became unmoored. Morning circles were now optional, the accountability structure was dismantled when Mr. Roberts left, and there was no time available for the School Climate and Discipline committee to meet. The RP coaches were reduced to two and they were no longer contracted to build teacher capacity or work with the entire student body. RP PD was replaced with other initiatives, and the role of teachers was no longer seen as building their own RP capacity. However, there remained the expectation that they build relationships with their students.

Unfortunately, without the morning circles and focus on RP, this became more difficult. Although teachers were asked to document what “restorative actions” they used with students when writing a referral (phone calls, proximity, use of support staff, conferences, apology, etc.),

it was in a much more passive sense, far from the expectations of the prior year. There was no longer a push to build capacity or to do restorative conferences themselves, RP was now done out of the classroom and if a teacher checked off that they had used proximity or called home, then they were using a “restorative action.” This changed teachers into a much less active conduit of RP. New expectations were now on teachers that shifted the building focus and goals from RP to a host of other initiatives which are more fully in the section on managing distractions.

Resources. In Year A of this study, Emancipation Middle School had a wealth of resources to assist in the implementation of RP. All of the more experienced staff and all the administrators had been either formally trained in RP in a week-long training by Mr. Herbson, a national RP consultant, by staff members who had received the training and then trained others, or by the BPO RJ director. The five RP coaches provided expertise, modeling, co-teaching, and consult support to teachers. The five CBO groups that worked at Emancipation MS gave tremendous support to students and to families. Mr. Roberts led by example and enthusiasm with the principal’s full support. Time, staff, and support were provided within the daily morning circles. Time was built into the daily schedule for ongoing PD and team and committee meetings. Vehicles for sharing data and for staff voice were in place.

The School Climate and Discipline Committee reviewed school disciplinary data by type, location, and time of day of behaviors and the number and types of RP being used. The Student Services Team reviewed individual student data for types of behaviors and what services were being used to support each child and the administrators overviewed all of these data points as well as individual teachers who may need further support and training. In addition, Lauren disseminated a quarterly report that broke down the numbers and types of RP used by grade

level, by RP coach, and by student and related it to school suspension numbers, how many students and teachers were being served, and what the level of recidivism was. Lauren also provided ongoing expertise and collaboration. There was time in the day for student leadership and skill development which occurred during the daily enrichment block, morning circles and during lunch. The WEB 8th graders met at least every other week and planned monthly events, seventh graders were trained to be circle keepers in the month of February, RP coaches and other support staff held daily lunch groups to do skill building and leadership activities.

In Year B, the resources were greatly diminished. Significant staff turnover caused a loss of those originally trained in RP and brought in staff with little training or experience with RP. Mr. Roberts was a huge resource loss with his expertise, leadership and passion for RP and a number of staff left to follow him to his new school. Time for site-based PD and meetings was lost with the enrichment block which had provided an available period each day outside of the mandatory unencumbered planning time for both as the students worked with a local theater organization on enrichment activities. The general schedule was one day for committee meetings, one for team meetings, one for a faculty meeting and two for PD and PLC. With the shortened school day in Year B, there was no longer an enrichment block in the schedule. Thus, there is no time for PD, team, faculty, or committee meetings during the school day. Faculty meetings were once a month, Thursday after-school PD was focused on content areas and teams had no designated meeting times though some met during their planning times.

The two remaining RP coaches no longer provided modeling or co-teaching for teachers although they would consult if requested. Generally, the few requests made were not by the teachers themselves but by administration concerned with behavior management issues. Time for morning circles was shortened to ten minutes and made optional which most teachers chose to

opt out of either because the time was too short, and it cut into their precious content area instructional time, or because it was optional.

Flexibility. In Year A, there was flexibility to meet the needs of teachers and students. Having at least one RP coach per grade level housed in the administrative office led to great flexibility for the coaches to be available “in real time” to address issues with students and staff and to build deep, enduring, and proactive relationships with both. The daily enrichment block meant that there was time every day, outside teacher planning time, for the building to use as they decided. Emancipation Middle School chose to use this open block for team and committee meetings as well as building-wide PD. During this block, student leadership opportunities were also offered. The extra block also provided more room in the schedule which was used for the schoolwide morning circles.

In Year B, the loss of the enrichment block and three of the RP coaches reduced flexibility significantly. There was no time for teacher-attended committee and team meetings, student leadership development, or PD that could be planned to meet the needs of staff and students including ongoing RP PD. Instead, the weekly afterschool PD was determined by grade level department heads. This loss of PD time and its impact will be more fully examined in the section on capacity building. RP coaches now served more than double the number of students and worked almost primarily with students in crisis, Tier 3 and 4. Gone were the social skill groups or leadership building for students who were in Tier 1 or 2.

Component 2: Capacity Building and Leadership Development

To build capacity, Fullan (2009a) says that there should be strategies and actions in place to both provide and mobilize the required new knowledge, skills, and competencies a reform

initiative requires and that there should be provisions for the development of leaders at all levels. He notes that it is often the neglect of capacity that leads to the downfall of many reforms. It is in capacity building that people are empowered and their skill level and motivation builds. This is what, he believes, causes positive results.

In Fullan's theory of action, capacity building has two related dimensions, the increase of pedagogical knowledge and the ability and infrastructure to manage the change. He has found that the most powerful form of capacity building is lateral where peers learn from one another and in context (Fullan, 2005). Another very important competency is the ability to be able to frequently look at data deeply to inform and to guide. Instruction and assessment should be seen as both seamless and synergized so capacity building with a focus on results and improvement. It is not mandates that change culture but capacity building that changes the norms, the structures and builds new values, new behaviors, and new capacities (Levin & Fullan, 2008). The goal of capacity building and leadership development is a collective phenomenon to move a system forward, to grow, to change, and to improve through reform measures that include policies, strategies, resources, and actions (Fullan, 2005).

Leadership development at all levels needs to include the ability to be a change agent who sees the big and little picture. Leaders who can provide an effective infrastructure and develop a collaborative culture based on capacity building linked to results are needed. In addition, these leaders need to be able to develop other leaders who are spread throughout an organization. The strongest leaders are not the most charismatic but those who embody humility and professionalism with a goal of building enduring greatness by developing others who can carry the work forward and go even further (Collins, 2001). It is not just the knowledge that

matters but more the knowing by doing, reflecting, and redoing that moves us forward (Fullan et al., 2009).

I will now detail how these elements were in place in Year A and how that changed by discussing Emancipation's capacity and leadership development through its professional development, School Climate and Discipline Committee, and morning circles.

Professional development (PD). Prior to Year A, PD had been provided for RP in a variety of ways. All administrators, social workers, guidance counselors, and a select group of teachers received a week-long training from a national RP consultant. These teachers were asked to return to their schools and train the remaining staff. In addition, Lauren, who was now the BPO RP director, had been assigned to Emancipation the prior two years to do RP work with students and PD work with staff. She worked extensively with both the BIC and ISS teaching assistants on how to apply RP to their settings as well as other teachers.

During Year A, many of the staff had participated in either the summer week-long training or site-based RP training from other teachers who had been trained in RP and from Lauren during the PD time that was provided during the enrichment block. In addition, part of the job of the five RP coaches was to build teacher capacity so they were in classes daily modeling the use of RP, co-teaching, co-planning, and collaborating with both teachers and support staff. Mr. Roberts said at this time that there was still a lot of work to do, but that RP were being woven into what he had called the fabric of the school. He was a charismatic leader who led by example with great passion and enthusiasm for RP and kept the focus on the building-wide goals for RP implementation.

During Year B, more than 25% of the Emancipation staff left. Some followed Mr. Roberts to his new school, others left for new opportunities, and some were asked not to return. Many of the new staff who were hired received little to no RP training. For example, the entire seventh grade team were all new hires. Due to budget cutbacks, the typical site-based week-long PD sessions before school began were shortened to two days and RP was not on the agenda. The enrichment block that allowed for PD to be embedded in the school day was no longer in place and the Thursday afterschool PD was focused on department level content topics. Building teacher capacity was no longer part of the RP coaches' responsibility and they worked almost entirely with students out of the classroom. What was a robust foundation of RP training and ongoing skill development that included all staff had crumbled with nothing in place to initiate new staff or to maintain, enrich, and sustain returning staff. This was an essential means to build staff capacity and maintain the momentum of the RP implementation and its loss was devastating.

School Climate and Discipline Committee. The implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School was overseen by The School Climate and Discipline committee, led by the charismatic and passionate Mr. Roberts, included representatives from each team, support staff, special areas, and at least one of the RP coaches. The committee was tasked with all things that pertained to and were supportive of a positive school climate. They planned things such as school-wide events like Spirit Week, behavior incentives, parent, and community outreach, and had input into morning circles, the use of RP coaches, PD and other areas that were part of the RP implementation. This committee also looked at student behavior and analyzed data from BIC, ISS, and OSS as well as the use of RP in the school. They noted areas of concern and made action plans to address these. This group also allowed for staff to have input, overview, and

guidance into the implementation of RP, to bring issues back to their teams for discussion and to be a very active part of it. Each of the members became teacher leaders of the RP implementation and school climate. These weekly meetings kept RP in the mainstream discussion and thus part of the language, the actions, and the goals within the school dynamics.

In Year A, the committee met weekly and had a strong impact on the implementation of RP at Emancipation. Under Mr. Roberts' leadership, RP stayed front and center for both groups and staff was intricately involved in helping to shape RP at their school. Communication occurred as representatives brought back information to and from their teams, at faculty meetings, and in the weekly school-wide emails.

In Year B, Mr. Z., the new dean of students, became nominally in charge of the School Climate and Discipline Committee but without the enrichment block was unable to find a time for them to meet during the school day. Staff were unwilling to meet unless they were being paid for their time so with no block available during the school day and no funds for additional compensation, the committee did not meet. He reviewed the disciplinary data with the administrators and sent out a weekly email to all staff that included disciplinary data and RP incidents that perhaps some read but were not used to monitor RP or make action plans for improvement by teacher leaders. The School Improvement Team, which met monthly, picked up some of the School Climate and Discipline Committee charges for planning school-wide events however the robust discussions, and continued spotlight on RP as a school priority from the staff who had been on the committee was no longer present.

Morning circles. In Year A, morning circles were mandatory in every homeroom every day throughout the school. In addition, all other staff members were assigned a homeroom to build relationships and support this element of RP implementation; this meant there were 2-3

adults in every room. RP coaches moved in between the morning circles at their grade levels to assist, model, and collaborate as needed. This built both teacher and student capacity. Homeroom teachers were provided with a variety of community building activities to use to allow students to get to know each other and staff better, to practice pro-social skills and to generate a sense of belonging, empathy, and compassion. Both staff and students reported how much they enjoyed this time of connection and what a positive way it was to start the day.

In Year B, morning circles were still on the school schedule as the first thing in the day but had been shortened from twenty to fifteen minutes and by the time students were settled and ready the meeting slot was closer to ten minutes. Within the first week of September, it became clear that there was not enough time allotted for dismissal so five additional minutes were taken from the morning meeting time. The ten-minute morning meeting time remained in the official schedule, but Ms. James told the staff it was optional although encouraged. A few eighth grade and self-contained special education teachers tried their best to make it work but the majority of homerooms let it slide as reported by the RP coaches and my observations.

Component 3: Development of Leaders at All Levels

In Year A, there were a variety of ways that leadership was developed at both staff and student levels. Mr. Roberts was the overall leader of the RP implementation; the way he ran the School Climate and Discipline Committees, empowered each team representative to take a leadership role in bringing information to and from their teams about RP and included them as part of a decision-making body. Each of the RP coaches was a leader in RP in their work with administrators and with teachers. Lauren, the BPO RP supervisor, provided them with extensive training and on-site support to help them in this role.

Individual teachers were identified who were particularly restorative in their dealings with students and their use of RP to provide informal support to their colleagues by allowing their peers to observe their classrooms and providing valuable hands-on knowledge and support for RP in team and school meetings.

Student leadership was developed in WEB (We ALL Belong), a group that the art teacher, Mr. E., facilitated with three other teachers. This diverse group of eighth graders did a series of activities with sixth graders that included the Welcome to Emancipation Greeting Ceremony, the Gingerbread Building Extravaganza and monthly team building in individual homerooms. Student circle keepers were trained at each grade level to lead restorative circles and efforts were made to begin a peer mediation program.

In Year B, Mr. Roberts was gone, the committee disbanded, and RP coaches no longer worked directly with teachers nor set up observation or collaboration times. Team planning time was reduced to monthly and teacher leadership, input, and collaboration opportunities were minimal. Without the enrichment block, there was no time to train students to be circle keepers. Mr. E. tried to keep WEB alive meeting once a month with the eighth graders and planned fewer events than in the past. The enrichment block had been an open time to pull students for special groups without affecting their content areas was not available anymore.

Component 4: Failure to Manage Distractors

A successful implementation occurs when a school is able to stay focused on their set goals, ad hoc initiatives are minimized, and time is made for professional development (Fullan, 2009b). Distractors in education are inevitable and must be addressed in ways that minimize the impact on the reform initiative and keep the focus on the implementation's goals. This can be

particularly hard when there are leadership changes and a wide array of competing agendas. Levin and Fullan (2008) note that it is a balancing act that requires strong leadership and continuous two-way communication to stay the course on the reform's key priorities. This section examines how Emancipation did and did not stay focused on the RP implementation goals and minimizing ad hoc initiatives, and continuing to provide time for RP PD.

Staying focused on set goals. In Year A, as previously discussed, the following goals were reported to me by Ms. James, Mr. Roberts, and Lauren, the BPO RP director,

- a) to institute daily morning circles that involved all staff and all students with twenty minutes dedicated in the schedule
- b) to place the five RP coaches into the grade level VP offices to enhance collaboration and relationship building
- c) to build teacher RP capacity through PD, and modeling, co-teaching, and consultant work with the RP coaches
- d) to provide oversight and input into the RP implementation through school committees and bi-weekly collaboration meetings with Lauren.

The five RP coaches also did extensive work with students one on one, in small groups, in mediation and in formal restorative conferences as well as working with families and the community. Mr. Roberts was integral to keeping the focus on these goals with the support of the rest of the administrative team, committee members, and the RP coaches.

Prior to Year B, during the summer of 2018, Emancipation was asked to send a representative team to a mandated district level workshop to develop what was called a Preventative Strategies Plan to “define and describe the social, emotional, and cultural goals of

each building, and identify the strategies to be used in the development and maintenance of a positive culture and climate”. It was also referred to as the school’s Culture Plan. Three of the RP coaches were invited to attend as RP was expected to be an integral part of this plan that dealt with student behavior. Throughout the morning there was training and large and small group brainstorming. After lunch, the actual writing of the plan for the coming school year was to be written. The RP coaches left for lunch looking forward to being part of this development but were taken completely by surprise when they received a message telling them they were no longer needed and not to return after lunch. Mary shared that they never fully understood why they were suddenly disinvited. The administrators, four representative teachers, and two other CBO members wrote the plan for Emancipation with no input from BPO RP coaches.

The goals that the team created were to reduce referrals and decrease absenteeism by 10% by the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Restorative conferences were noted as an action step under the reducing referral goal. The schoolwide procedures to reach these goals included an acronym for moving in the hallway called H.A.L.L.S. (Hands by your side, All eyes forward, Lips zipped, Legs moving safely, Stick together). To reach these goals, staff would be trained in lesson plans, Class DOJO, eChalk, Canvas, TEES, school committees, ELLevation, homeroom circles, reflections/hierarchy, H.A.L.L.S, C.L.A.S.S., Code of Conduct, bulletin board expectations, classroom environment, eschool, educators handbook, instructional syllabus, employee handbook, portfolios, roles and responsibilities, hall sweeps, fire drill procedures-cards/folders, classroom management ideas, teacher center resources/PD/book studies, Culturally Responsive Education (CRE), and teacher/student bias. This list is taken verbatim from Emancipation’s Preventative Strategies Plan. Interestingly, the names of two of the CBO’s Emancipation worked with are listed as committee members for the coming year but not staff

members from Best Practices Organization. It is not clear why but considering the timing of asking the RP coaches not to return, one wonders if there was consideration of not having any RP coaches in the building at all.

Also significant is that this plan was to focus on the five pillars of CRE; supportive relationships, engaging learning environments, restorative approaches, SEL supports and interventions, school safety and student supervision, and the shift in language. None of these are antithetical to RP in the least but over time this district, which in 2015 began implementing what was called “Restorative Justice” then changed the language to “Restorative Practices” and now was moving to the phrase “restorative approaches” (no longer capitalized) in the Code of Conduct and the Preventative Strategies Plan each school developed and other MCSD documents. In the Educator’s Handbook, where teachers electronically wrote up student referrals, they were asked what “restorative actions” they had taken in addressing student behavior before writing a referral. As I write this in the summer of 2021 the shift continues, in the current MCSD Code of Conduct, restorative actions are now found under a list of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions and not considered a separate entity as RP once were. There are no longer RP coaches in the schools but there are SEL coaches who use restorative approaches and actions among a lengthy list of other strategies to support students.

In Year B, the goals were to reduce referrals and absenteeism (as well as raise test scores) that included time in class within the school day so BIC, ISS, and work with support staff including the RP coaches, was considered out of class time and to be as minimal as possible. Student behavior in the hallways became a strong focal point and teachers were asked to prioritize learning the acronym HALLS the first days of school and having students master each of the behaviors: hands by your side, all eyes forward, lips zipped, legs moving safely, and stick

together. Ms. James stood in the hallway, in an almost militaristic fashion, calling out classes who were or were not following HALLS to the letter. One teacher was brought to tears when her class was sent back up the stairs to try again because students were talking. A RP coach commented that this was not helpful in the building of relationships as compliance to HALLS under a punitive gaze was the overriding theme of the first few weeks of school. Ms. James told me that she encouraged teachers to use circles to teach HALLS in the first weeks of school; this was far from the community and relationship building purpose beginning of the year circles typically have.

Minimizing ad hoc initiatives. In Year A, there were other initiatives teachers were asked to implement but there was a clear school-wide focus on RP and building teacher RP capacity. With strong administrative support, clear expectations for staff and the five RP coaches in and out of classrooms, a strong presence in the halls, the cafeteria, in meetings and a very positive force in building relationships with staff and students, RP seemed to be truly on the path to being woven into the fabric of the school.

In Year B, a series of new initiatives took priority and the focus on RP faded into the background of the school's priorities and were rarely mentioned. As noted in the Preventative Strategies Plan previously discussed, teachers were asked to implement a wide variety of initiatives with the goal of increasing attendance and students' time in class by reducing suspensions. To promote positive classroom management and behavior, teachers were asked to implement the MCSD Code of Conduct and document behavior in the Educator's Handbook with a priority to keep students in class. Besides individual content area initiatives such as Next Generation Science, teachers were also asked to learn new technology platforms to integrate into their teaching with eChalk, Canvas, and TEES. To meet the needs of their large English

Language Learner population, teachers were asked to incorporate ELLevation into their instructional planning.

The most significant focus area designated by the MCSD was Culturally Relevant Education/Teaching which in part included in-service on teacher/student bias, culturally responsive lesson curriculum and lesson planning, social emotional learning (SEL) and project-based learning. It was under this focus area that RP, now labeled restorative approaches, fell. Teachers were still asked to work on relationship building within the SEL framework but the focus on RP as its own entity was gone.

In the Educator's Handbook, which is the computer-based documentation program the MCSD used to document student behavior, the staff was asked to check off which "restorative actions" had been used with students. This list surprisingly included a number of punitive as well as proactive responses; bus suspension, BIC and community service, family outreach with calls or a conference, mediated or Kid Talk consults, student supports with CICO, behavior plans, mentoring and DASA, and the teacher directed actions of reteaching/rehearsing and the use of proximity. While the majority of these responses to student behavior may be appropriate, they are not all fully consistent with the goal of "restoring the harm done to the community;" these practices can be misleading to teachers and certainly obscure the data collected on the number of RP or restorative actions which are actually being used.

The rest of the list is much more aligned with students having a forum to recognize the harm done, to develop and to implement a plan to address it with restorative circles and conferences, facilitated student/teacher conference, reset and re-entry conferences, peer mediation, and apology. It was reductive to have a teacher check off a phone call home, proximity, or a BIC referral and to consider themselves having used RP. However, in the data

collection, all of these actions were counted and used by Emancipation as the overall count of RP being used in the building.

Continuing to provide time for RP professional development. As previously discussed, the time for RP PD prior to and during Year A was significant. During the initial districtwide roll out in the summer of 2015, all administrators and representative teams from each school went to a week-long training by Mr. Herbson, the national RJ consultant, hired to facilitate this effort. Wonderfully knowledgeable, dedicated, and enthusiastic about RP, Mr. Herbson facilitated trainings that were well-received and left people fired up to get into their schools to do the work of RP based on interviews of staff in my earlier research study (Neddo, 2018, unpublished). Those who were trained that summer became “trainers” and trained the rest of their staff at their buildings. Perhaps not surprisingly, many teachers who were trained by those trained by Mr. Herbson felt they did not receive the same quality training. By the Spring of 2016, nearly all staff in all buildings had some level of RP training and the expectation was that RP was to be implemented in each school was very clearly stated by the MCSD Superintendent.

During the 2016-17 school year, additional summer training was offered, and RP PD was a part of the new teacher training. At Emancipation, in addition, Lauren was assigned as their RP coach and worked extensively with individual staff members as well as provided staff training at the building level during the ten-day training all Emancipation staff attended prior to the opening of the school year and in building level PD throughout the year. Although staff mobility of up to 25% was a regular occurrence at Emancipation, between new teacher training, building level training during the enrichment block, peer support from other teachers who had been trained and Lauren’s support, all teachers not only received some level of RP training but also knew they were expected to use it and would receive support to do so.

During the 2017-18 school year, which is when this study began, the summer and beginning of the school year PD time was similar again with approximately 25% of the staff new but there were structures in place to support them. Lauren began the year as the Emancipation BPO RP coach but in October grant money became available and the MCSD contracted with BPO for twelve additional RP coaches, five of whom would be placed at Emancipation, the most of any MCSD school due to the high interest and support of Ms. James, the school principal. Lauren was promoted to BPO RP supervisor and helped to train these new coaches before supervising them in the field. These five freshly hired and trained RP coaches began at Emancipation MS in early December and this study began in April of 2018 with April-June of 2018 referred to as Year A. This meant in addition to the summer and new teacher training, the ten days before school started building level training that included RP, PD offered during the enrichment block at least twice a month dealing with RP topics by Lauren, the five RP coaches were pushing into classrooms to build teacher capacity by modeling, co-teaching, collaborating and consulting with the staff and administrators at their assigned grade level were all part of the training and support that was offered to staff. This is the level of PD and RP implementation that led me to choose Emancipation MS for my research site.

By the summer of 2018 and through the 2018-19 school year (Year B), the time for PD changed dramatically. Summer training with Mr. Herbson was now only for new administrators and the new teachers I spoke with said they never heard the term RP in their orientation training. The ten days that MS. James had to work with her staff for training just prior to the start of the school year in Year A was cut to two days of which half a day was a district-wide pep rally. The enrichment block was eliminated as funding was cut because Emancipation's test scores had

gone up. The loss of this block meant there was no longer time for the building level PD opportunities that had occurred the previous year.

BPO no longer had anything about building teacher capacity in their contract with MCSD in Year B, so the remaining two RP coaches worked almost exclusively with students in crisis. There was an hour after school on Thursdays for staff PD but that was almost exclusively devoted to departmental content area training with teachers often meeting with other MCSD MS teachers at different schools across the city. This meant at least 25% of the staff new to Emancipation had no RP training, which included the entire seventh grade team and there was nothing in place throughout the year. Ms. James noted in addition that more than 75% of her teachers had no more than three years' experience which meant very few had ever received the initial RP week-long training that had been offered in 2015-16.

It is to Ms. James' credit that when asked by her supervisor, the MCSD Middle School Director, to find a way to have the staff trained in No Nonsense Nurturing, which is a behavior management program that runs counter to many of the underlying beliefs that are foundational to RP, she demurred saying,

I just can't do this to my teachers. Just this year we have block scheduling, AVID, personalized learning, Language Live, and so many initiatives. It is just not a good time to start another one when there's little to no time for PD and no Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. It is just too much.

Her refusal was more based on not wanting to overload her staff than perhaps a true allegiance to RP, but it is of note.

The loss of PD time and the change of the RP coaches' job description from capacity building to only working with students in crisis and returning from OSS was a huge blow to the RP implementation at Emancipation. Paula, one of the Emancipation RP coaches in year A and was promoted to be the BPO MCSD RP supervisor in Year B said:

I think the staff itself is missing the PD once a month where Lauren would come and teach these RP skills or do a circle or teach an activity that could easily be adapted and brought back into the classroom. That way it was hitting the entire school, everyone was getting the same message from Lauren and teachers were going back and teaching that to their students. I think that was very helpful and we (RP coaches) sat in on those sessions so we knew what the teachers were getting and then also could work on that with our students, so they were getting this from their teachers and their support staff so there's this big circle and there's just no escaping it. You are getting the same message from everybody, and I think that gave us a leg up because everybody was getting the same thing. But without that ability to conduct the PD anymore... now you have teachers who, and maybe it's not fault of their own because they haven't been trained, are just trying to navigate the water but when a student is disrespectful to them eventually, they feel 'I'm done,' and the relationships are harmed with no mechanism in place to restore it or fix them.

Paula paused after sharing this and looked both disappointed and troubled that the school she had invested so much as an RP coach in Year A was in such a different place in such a very short time. She, as well as Malik and Sara, were the three RP coaches who did not return to Emancipation for Year B.

In Year A, the multiple layers of training and support for RP PD allowed for both the initiation for staff new to RP and those who continued to build their capacity. It kept the focus on RP as a school priority and allowed for close collaboration between BPO, the RP coaches and the Emancipation staff as they learned together and grew together. In Year B, this critical element of initiating, maintaining, and sustaining RP at Emancipation was torn asunder and vanished.

Component 5: Continuous Inquiry Regarding Results

Fullan (2009a) suggests that continuous evaluation of a given initiative and inquiry into what are effective practices and what can be learned throughout implementation is critical. A mindset of continuous inquiry and evaluation is integral to the implementation of any reform initiative to find out if it is working, how it is working, and if any improvements are needed. This requires that data should be examined frequently and deeply by those at all levels with the goal of learning to get better (Fullan, 2009b). By examining what are effective practices, we learn from our accomplishments and grow from our challenges. The creation of a culture of evaluation is one of the best strategies for educational change where data is gathered, disaggregated, analyzed and action plans are created to be communicated with all (Fullan, 2008).

In Year A, there were multiple layers of continuous evaluation and inquiry. As previously discussed, both the School Climate and Discipline Committee provided for ongoing staff involvement, inquiry, and evaluation of the RP implementation. Meeting weekly, these representatives from each team, support staff, and CBO members discussed ways to improve school climate and matters of discipline, both of which included the RP implementation. Ongoing efforts to build community and increase student success in all areas were made. Events

were planned for things such as family outreach, incentives, community service, gratitude journals, book studies, field trips, peer mediation, mentoring, and many more.

Data was analyzed for BIC, ISS and OSS referrals that included when, where, and what problematic behaviors were occurring and how to proactively address issues as well as what and how many RP were being used. The committee looked at traffic patterns, where adults were placed to support students, if specific skill groups were needed, if staff PD on certain areas was needed, how the RP coaches were being used, what whole school issues should be addressed, and other related matters. What was working was maintained and what was not was modified or changed completely.

For example, lunches were often chaotic and difficult to monitor. The committee brainstormed and came up with the idea of lunch groups which more than halved the number of students in the café. The RP coaches, the support staff and teacher volunteers hosted groups of students in their rooms to work on skill building or special interests. Malik, one of the RP coaches took a group of more than a dozen students into the gym for weightlifting, Mr. G. worked with a group on chess, the RP coaches worked on social skills, the psychologist had her group play board games to work on cooperation and the science teacher had a group help take care of the animals in her classroom. All this committee's work was done in collaboration with the administrative team with Mr. Roberts ensuring that both were aligned in both intent and actions.

In addition, Mr. Roberts met bi-weekly with Lauren, the BPO RP coordinator to discuss progress and pitfalls and to plan to use the RP coaches most effectively. She compiled an extensive data collection from Educator's Handbook, the district referral data source and compiled her own data from the BPO RP coaches' documentation. Lauren shared this data with

the administration and faculty with her analysis of what had gone well, what could be better and how to do so. The RP coaches interacted daily with the administrators; they shared office space and discussed what was going well, what needed to be better, how individual students and teachers were doing, and what the goals were going forward. Mr. Roberts also met with the other administrators to share data and gain their input on what the best next steps should be as he did with the School Climate and Discipline Committee.

In Year B, the mechanisms that had been in place for evaluation and inquiry became much more limited. Lauren continued her data collection and analysis but without her partnership with Mr. Roberts, she submitted the reports to Ms. James. When she heard nothing in response, she said that she wondered if they were even read. Mr. Z. sent out weekly emails that gave the number of restorative actions being used and number of referrals, but that data was passively received and not used to spur any observable action plans as it had in the past without the School Climate and Discipline Committee in place.

The RP coaches received much more limited coaching from Lauren as she became less welcome in the school after a problem the previous year over a beloved BPO staff member being fired. He was not an RP coach nor was Lauren his supervisor, but Ms. James was upset about it and told Lauren she was no longer welcome in the building as reported by Lauren and Ms. James. Ms. James used the RP coaches mainly to deal with students in crisis and returning from suspension. The RP implementation was now primarily outside of the classroom and there was far less staff engagement or involvement in the initiative than had been the year before.

Component 6: Two-Way Communication

Fullan (2009a) states that it is crucial that there is ongoing clear communication between all stakeholders. The given strategy or reform should be stated and restated so there is agreement and consistency. Evidence of success should be shared widely and there should always be plenty of opportunities to disseminate and receive feedback and improvement. Not only does this build confidence and trust but it also enhances capacity building and commitment while reducing potential misunderstandings (Fullan, 2009a). When planning for the amount of communication Levin and Fullan (2008) suggest doing so far more times than you might rationally think would be enough. The three secrets to effective communication they say are repetition, repetition, repetition.

Continuous two-way communication allows for the creation of a system that can align those at different levels with a “great permeable connectivity that allows for increased interaction, communication and mutual influence” (Fullan 2009a, p. 5).. This can ensure that the reform initiative’s vision, ongoing implementation, successes, and changes for improvement of student outcomes are shared and celebrated by all.

In Year A, there were a number of communication channels open within Emancipation Middle School. These included weekly faculty meetings where the administration was able to share information in person with the staff, weekly committee meetings where staff was able to have input into building policies and events in a representational fashion, and weekly team meetings where these representatives were able to share information and get input from their teammates.

As discussed earlier, Lauren met bi-weekly with Mr. Roberts to allow for communication and collaboration with BPO on a school level and the RP coaches were housed in the VP grade level offices allowing for daily communication and collaboration at the grade level day-to-day

operational level. Administrators also met weekly with Ms. James to ensure they were all, as she stated, “on the same page.” In addition, there was a weekly emailed newsletter that shared information including RP implementation suggestions for teachers and data on RP use.

Work was done to address what Mr. Roberts called a “communication gap” to include teachers in knowing what happened when their students went to BIC or worked with a RP coach or support staff so they could support whatever plans had been developed and know what actions had been taken. Ms. Shane, the BIC teaching assistant was instrumental in this effort by making copies of the BIC referrals and reflection sheets which included a plan to return to class for the student and each affected teacher. This was far better than no communication, but teachers often did not get to their mailboxes where Ms. Shane put the copies and there was continued conversation on how to do this electronically.

What is less clear is the communication between the Meridian City School District and Emancipation Middle School which I was able to observe in more frequency and depth in Year B. The RP initiative was under the auspices of the MCSD Director of School Climate and Culture, Ms. Harris, who worked closely with Mr. Herbson, a national consultant the district had hired in 2015 to lead the RP initiative. In a phone interview, Mr. Herbson said the MCSD RP implementation was like “building an airplane in the air” and as discussed much more fully in the Chapter 3 of this document, was in the third year of five-year MCSD RP phase-in program when this study began. Table 10 summarizes Mr. Herbson’s explanation:

Table 10

MCSD RP Implementation Plan as explained by Mr. Herbson

Phase	Time	Actions
Year	Summer	Train 100 RJ trainers to go into schools and be a spark and train their

0	2015	building staff. Offer technical support as capacity was being built
Year 1	2015-16	Continued training, tech support and advanced training to those already trained. Went into schools and modeled RP, met with school teams to answer questions, and draw connections to other SEL programs so it did not seem like just another thing
Year 2	2016-17	More building capacity, SCSD Climate Director Shadows, School visits to see the wonderful things happening where they were embracing it.
Year 3	2017-18	Building Phase: looked for clear ways to institutionalize RP across SCSD
Year 4	2018-19	Bring it back to students, working with the Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program where eighth graders mentor the sixth graders, development of students as circle leaders
Year 5	2019-20	Continue the work with the students to prepare them to be leaders and use these techniques and these circles with the incoming freshmen to increase graduation rates.

In this phase, Mr. Herbson was in charge of the summer training of new administrators, visited some but not all of the schools in the MCSD to observe their progress with RP but had never been to Emancipation. He also facilitated community outreach meetings as part of his contract. He told a group of parents at a Community Forum I attended held at a local high school in February of 2018 that every teacher in the MCSD had been trained in RP and that morning circles happened in every classroom. There was a significant discrepancy in what was being said by Mr. Herbson and what was actually happening at the school level. This was not true at Emancipation, nor was it true across the district as reported by Lauren who worked in ten other MCSD schools. One of the parents at this forum said she had not seen it happen at the school her daughter was at either and she was there daily. It could be that Mr. Herbson based this overarching assurance about RP in all the schools on what he was told by others, because he only visited a select few of the thirty MCSD schools when he was in town.

Part of this communication problem may be traced to the Meridian School District hiring Mr. Herbson to facilitate RP implementation at the district level while also hiring the local CBO Best Practices Organization to provide the RP coaches and training at the building level for a number of MCSD schools. There was little to no communication between the two. When I first met Lauren, she was trying to organize a time to meet with Ms. Harris, the MCSD Director of School Culture and Climate, and Mr. Herbson to coordinate with them to no avail. Based on Board of Education minutes, Mr. Herbson continued to report out to the Board of Education, the MCSD Superintendent, and parent groups that RP implementation was proceeding along successfully. However, this occurred with little to no coordination at the building level or with the actual RP coaches who were working in the schools.

Although the original training had involved a large number of staff, including many at Emancipation, in the three years since the initial roll out, staff mobility and limited availability of training for new staff left the sustainability and maintenance of RP at the school level. When I asked the new staff at Emancipation if they had been trained in RP, they looked at me blankly. So, though Mr. Herbson and the MCSD Central Office staff said there was RP happening throughout the district, there was no structure in place for ongoing training of existing and new staff or evaluation of what was happening at the building level. Like Emancipation, each MCSD school followed their own RP implementation path with minimal supervision or oversight at the district level. Lauren commented that each school was different with some implementing at a much higher level of fidelity and others much less so.

In addition, Ms. James received very clear communication from the State Department of Education and from her middle school supervisor that what mattered, what would keep Emancipation from being labeled a failing school and potentially shut down, was the

improvement of ELA and Math state test scores and student attendance as well as a reduction in suspension numbers. Although she continued to voice her support of RP, in the summer of 2018, Ms. James wanted to see tangible proof that RP was working with improvement in each of these parameters. In the contrary nature of state and federal funding, Emancipation's test scores had increased which led to the loss of additional funding they had received which had allowed for the extended school day with the enrichment block and for the five RP coaches. The very things that could well have been causal to their improvement were being eliminated.

In Year B, communication about the RP implementation became close to nonexistent beyond lip service that it was still being done. There was no ongoing dialogue or direction from the committee work and the monthly faculty meetings were packed with dozens of other priorities. Teachers told me they saw RP as being done by the coaches outside of their rooms and grew increasingly frustrated at what they saw was a lack of support for student behavior. Lauren met twice with Mr. Z, the Dean of Students, but he was very busy, he said, and a third meeting never occurred. The principal refused to meet with her saying that she did not see it as being a productive use of her time.

The weekly newsletter was still emailed each Friday afternoon with suggestions for morning meeting activities, but few teachers did them anymore. As shown Table 11 taken from a sampling of the Weekly Emancipation Weekly Updates, the numbers of RP were inconsistent and not truly representational of what was happening in the RP implementation at Emancipation Middle School. According to the Educator's Handbook which is described more fully below, RP included such things as phone calls home, mediations, redirection, proximity, and bus referrals. Minor incidents are BIC referrals by teachers, behavioral referrals are ISS or OSS, only done by

the administration and Mr. Z. Student mediations were done by support staff, CBO's and Mr. Z. and RP taken from Educator's Handbook.

Table 11

Disciplinary Data Shared with Staff in Weekly Newsletters

Date	Minor Incidents	Behavioral Referrals	Student Mediations	Restorative Practices	Instructional Days lost	Family Contacts
9/4/18	46	6	25	73	6	
9/21/18	35	4	25	95	3	NA
9/28/18	59	6	38	105	7	
10/5/18	77	17	27	140	12.3	28
10/12/18	58	11	22	106	6	20
10/26/18	66	19	36	118	8	34
11/2/18	51	12	28	80	11.25	17
11/9/18	72	16	41	108	15	43
11/20/18	18	9	3	32	3	3
12/7/18	63	24	32	93	16.5	12
5/10/19	52	24	16	90	32	21
5/31/19 (combined 3 weeks)	184	137		18	149	83
6/7/19	13	27	10	26	44	13

The communication from the MCSD and the State Department of Education was clear, and Ms. James was very aware that her success as a principal, Emancipation's success that was needed to prevent it from being labeled a "failing school" and potentially being closed was dependent on showing substantial growth in meeting the state goals. "What I've learned from my dealings with the state is they're not really interested in what you're doing as opposed to how what you're doing in impacting a goal" in reference to the state goals on test scores, attendance, and suspensions. Ms. James told me this had a deep impact on her current perception of RP and BPO. She explained that meeting state goals is what needed to happen this year and if BPO and

the RP coaches are not contributing toward that, what they think should be happening at Emancipation in terms of the RP implementation does not matter. “Because you (BPO) can say this is what restorative should look like but if it looks like that and it’s not doing anything for this (meeting state goals), then how it looks doesn’t make any difference.” Though Ms. James continued to say she believed in RP and its value for her students, Emancipation’s success was based on data driven measures and if BPO could not show definitively that RP was a factor in helping to meet those goals of raising ELA and math test scores, increasing attendance, and reducing suspension numbers, its value moved it to a back burner and those things that were perceived to help meet these goals moved front and center.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a systemic analysis of the RP implementation at Emancipation Middle School using Fullan’s (2009a) Theory of Action of System Reform in Year A and Year B of this study. Using this change theory’s six components of elements Fullan (2009a) says are needed for successful systemic reform change: direction and capacity engagement, capacity building linked to results, development of leaders at all levels, manage distractors, continuous inquiry regarding results, and two-way communication, I shared my findings about how change was enacted at this school. Table 12 provides a summation of Fullan’s Theory of Action of System Reform (2009a) change components for Year A and Year B.

Table 12

Summary Table Comparing Year A to Year B by Change Components

Change Theory Component	Year A	Year B
-------------------------	--------	--------

Direction and Sector Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Roberts, the designated VP in charge of RP was charismatic and passionate about the value of RP, which helped engage the staff and students. • There was a clear vision and established goals to integrate RP into the fabric of the school • Weekly meetings were held about RP with School Climate and Discipline Committee (SCDC), the administrative team and the faculty. • Bi-weekly collaboration meetings with BPO supervisor were held. • At least one RP coach was assigned to each grade level team (there are 5 total). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Roberts transferred to another school, taking other staff members with him. • No administrator was assigned to continue his work facilitating RP. • The vision and goals from Year A lose their priority status. • A change in schedule leads to no time for committees to meet so they disbanded. • Ms. James and Mr. Z. ended the collaboration meetings with the BPO supervisor. • There were now only two RP coaches for the entire school.
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeklong summer training was held for all staff, including RP. • The new teacher orientation included RP training. • RP coaches are in classrooms to model RP and build teacher capacity. • BPO supervisor facilitated monthly PD. • Daily morning circles with 2-3 staff members in each homeroom were mandated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer staff training was reduced to a day and a half. RP is not on the agenda. • The new teachers said they were not trained in RP. • The MCS D contract with BPO no longer included building teacher capacity and focuses on transitioning students back from OSS. • PD time was significantly reduced and now content area based. • Morning circles were encouraged but optional.
Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCDC members become teacher leaders bringing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCDC was disbanded because there is no paid time to meet

	<p>information and feedback to and from their teammates about RP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five RP coaches were extensively trained by BPO to lead by example. • Teachers strong at RP allow other teachers to observe them in action. • WEB trained student leaders and circle keepers. 	<p>and no money in the budget for additional pay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP coaches were no longer in classrooms. • WEB struggled to find time to meet and reduces student leadership opportunities.
Manage Distractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide focus was on RP. • Ms. James reduced number of new initiatives staff is asked to implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide focus moved to multiple new initiatives and hallway behavior. • Ms. James focused on initiatives that demonstrably raised test scores, increased attendance, and reduced suspensions to meet state improvement goals.
Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCDC reviewed RP data weekly and used it to guide decisions. • BPO RP supervisor created and disseminated comprehensive quarterly data reports on all elements of RP implementation with school administrators and staff. • Weekly newsletter went to all staff sharing RP data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCDC no longer meets or reviews data. • The BPO RP supervisor still created her extensive data reports but questioned whether anyone read them. • Weekly newsletter continued to show number of RP but no discussion or follow up was provided.
Two-way Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly faculty meetings were held to ensure all staff are on the same page about RP and other matters. • SCDC members met weekly to share RP information and get feedback from teammates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty meetings were now once a month and jam packed. RP were rarely mentioned. • SCDC no longer met so there is no information or feedback to share with teams. • RP coaches were housed in a large room with three other

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP coaches were housed in VP offices, which allows for ongoing communication throughout the day. • Mr. Roberts met regularly with other administrators, staff, and students about RP. 	<p>CBO workers and only talked to administrators when students were in crisis. They were no longer in and out of classrooms all day and rarely talked to teachers.</p>
--	--	--

In the following chapter, I answer my second research question on why and how TP came to be implemented at this school through a historical analysis. conclude this dissertation with an analysis of my findings for both of my research questions,

Chapter 5: How the MCSD Came to Choose Restorative Practices

In this chapter, I answer my second research question “How does a school choose to implement Restorative Practices?” and describe the sequence of events that led to the implementation of RP in the MCSD. It is important to understand the history and context of why and how this reform initiative was chosen for district wide adoption that included Emancipation Middle School because that is how race, equity and RP became interwoven. The data in this chapter is from local newspaper articles, MCSD Board of Education minutes, government reports, blogs, interviews, personal recollections, and a book written by a local parent and community activist that chronicled this period of time.

Identifying the Problem

Meridian, a medium sized city in the Northeastern United States, boasts of being declared “The anti-slavery city of the state” by Gerrit Smith because of its history as an Underground Railroad stop and the site of the public Jerry Rescue of an escaped slave in defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (New York History.net, n.d.). It has, however, also has been a place of grave racial unrest. Examples of this include the Meridian Race Riots in the summer of 1919, when the Polish and Italian iron molders of Globe Malleable Iron Works went on strike and the management brought in Black replacement workers. The entire police force was called in to stop the violence as the strikers attacked the Black workers with guns, clubs, and rocks (“Meridian riot of 1919”, 2022) and the destruction of the 15th Ward under the guise of urban renewal in the late 1950’s and 1960’s. This twenty-seven-block area in Meridian was filled with strong Black neighborhoods and businesses, which was destroyed to replace it with an interstate highway that cuts through the heart of Meridian both figuratively and metaphorically to this day (Meridian

Now and Then.Org, n.d.). A field report prepared by the Poverty and Race Research Action Council in 2018 (<https://www.prrac.org/>) stated:

Highways constructed in the name of progress became the defining urban infrastructure program in the United States following World War II. However, in the half century since the highway boom took hold, what has become all too clear is that these highways caused or significantly contributed to the devastation of tight knit communities and drained economic vitality from neighborhoods and cities alike. And because of political expediency and/or as a backlash to increasing political and economic power in communities of color, many of these highways were run directly through the heart of African American neighborhoods.

The schools in Meridian were slow to desegregate, taking more than 11 years from the 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education* court ruling. Initially the MCSD implemented a compensatory education program called the Madison Area Project in 1960-1962 in the three district schools where the majority of Black students attended in an effort to address racial equity. Due to minimal results, the project was discontinued and the MCSD began to more formally take steps to integrate its schools.

In 1965, two of district's Black schools were closed and more than nine hundred Black students were bussed to schools that primarily served White students. There was parental outcry and a BOE member voiced his opinion that the segregation in the city was due to housing and, thus, not the district's problem (Mulcahy, 2021). However, despite the discord, through additional school closings, rezoning and incentive programs, additional desegregation occurred almost exclusively due to the bussing of Black students. There was significant concern from

Black parents that this was the case. The MCSD Superintendent at the time said he knew it was unfair to Negro children to bear the entire transportation burden, but it was the shortest route to racial equity that in the shortest time would give these disadvantaged students an improved education (Inger & Stout, 1968).

This more intentional effort of Meridian BOE to desegregate was brought about not in small part through protests waged by the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the mayor's Commission on Civil Rights, and local social justice activists. In 1966, an ambitious Campus plan was introduced which would have created four MCSD campuses of fully integrated schools placed on the outskirts of the city (where land was cheaper), each containing an elementary, middle, and high school program. The MCSD Board of Education originally approved this plan, but tremendous push back occurred, and it was scuttled (Mulcahy, 2021). Efforts to have White students bussed in the same way as Black students were non-existent, instead the MCSD created voluntary plans. Options included a school for academic excellence, a campus school, and magnet schools. By the mid 1970's, seventeen Meridian schools were considered racially balanced under the leadership of the district's first Black superintendent (Mulcahy, 2021).

It was in the 1970's that racial tensions again ran high when several hundred students walked out of their Meridian high schools and violence ensued that included fist fights and rocks throwing. The mayor said that there were efforts to reduce the friction between Blacks and Whites, but he felt it was endemic to what was happening nationally with what he called legitimate Black grievances against discriminatory treatment. Although he refused to make the widespread arrests of Black students that many White parents believed should happen, he did put police officers in the schools (Robinson, 1970).

This was a time of deep unrest and the race riots at the city high schools led to the presence of police in Meridian schools. (Billue, 2014; Cornwall, 1987). It was this continued police presence that began the very contentious period of time between 2010 and 2015, when issues of race, equity and disproportionality led to a community deeply divided, state and federal government mediation, and the eventual adoption of RP in the MCSD.

This journey toward RP began with ongoing concerns by local African American and Hispanic groups about the role of police in the MCSD schools, who were called School Resource Officers (SRO's). Complaints had been filed and an ongoing mediation was facilitated by the U.S. Department of Justice conciliation expert beginning in 2010. These meetings were attended by the Chief of Police, the MCSD superintendent, chief of staff and deputy superintendent, members of National Action Network (NAN), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the County Human Rights Commission, and the Spanish Action League (Riede, 2013).

Within the discussion of the role of the SRO's, the MCSD Code of Conduct (COC) which defined the disciplinary policies being followed in the schools was examined. To assist with the community and parental concerns, the Department of Justice Conciliation Unit led a leadership group to rewrite the sections of the COC regarding the SRO's and to look at related disciplinary matters, including suspension data. In response to this concern, the MCSD school superintendent authorized a research group to gather statistics on disciplinary actions in 2011. Although this seemed to be a proactive response, members of NAN thought it was actually done with the intent to disprove parent concerns. Meetings in 2012 continued with a growing concern there was a lack of transparency on the part of MCSD (Billue, 2014).

Due to what she saw as the lack of cooperation from the MCSD, Ms. W, a local parent, community activist and member of NAN, began to do her own disciplinary data research. She examined local and state reports, teaching herself how to disaggregate the data and compare one source to another. One of the reports she found to be of great significance was the UCLA Civil Rights Project report titled *Out of School and Off-Track: The Overuse of Suspension in American and Middle High Schools*. Based on data from the 2009-2010 school year, MCSD was identified as one of the top one hundred suspending schools in the country with an alarming rate of suspension of 12.6% overall and 31% for secondary students. This report also showed large disparities between racial groups (Losen & Martinez, 2013).

Another report that Ms. W. studied was the VADIR, a State Education Department annual report on Violent and Disruptive Incident which showed demonstrable discrepancies with the MCSD disciplinary data. One of the most striking was the MCSD practice of allowing principals to send students perceived as misbehaving home without documenting their removal as a form of suspension. Both the VADIR and the UCLA report showed numbers of suspensions far above what the MCSD had represented in the data they shared. With great concern in early May 2013, Ms. W. began sharing her results with friends, colleagues, and community members (Billue, 2014).

On May 8, 2013, during a presentation by the MCSD Central Office staff on the disciplinary data for the 2010-11 school year, parents and community members raised many questions. They asked why the middle school suspension numbers were so high and how many days were students spending in in-school and out of school suspension? How much instructional time was being lost? What was the race, gender, and students with disabilities breakdown? What corrective measures were in place? Answers were not forthcoming and the concern with the

alarming lack of transparency continued to grow. Ms. W. said the district should be “ashamed of itself” (p. 124) and called for them to not only investigate the disproportionate suspensions of students of color but also to rectify the matter. Many of the community members present blamed the MCSD for failing to teach and using suspension to push out children of color (Billue, 2014).

Twelve days later, Ms. W. got a phone call from two African American politicians who asked her to review and respond to the 2010-2012 suspension data about to be released by the Meridian newspapers. This data clearly showed the disproportionately high suspension rates for African Americans and Latinos. She called the president of the Meridian chapter of the NAN for permission to initiate a formal review of disciplinary data including data that the MCSD previously said it did not have. In the process of the review, she met with parents, students, community members, the NAACP, NYCLU, the U.S. Department of Justice Conciliation Unit and the MCSD superintendent (Billue, 2014).

The original intent of NAN was to understand the VADIR and if the COC was being implemented correctly and understood by parents, not to only look at disproportionality. But as they looked at the data, both their suspicions and distrust grew as well as the desire to hold the BOE and superintendent accountable. Ms. W. felt that what she was seeing was a “covert technique to push Black students out” (p. 113) and began to examine MCSD disciplinary data more extensively from multiple sources. She found even more evidence of significant disproportionate suspension rates for African American male and female students which she presented to the NAN Education Committee and NAACP as well as the MCSD BOE and superintendent (Billue, 2014).

Parent and community group concerns were numerous and there was growing frustration with both the MCSD superintendent and BOE. They were the ones responsible for MCSD

policy, yet they could not or would not readily answer the questions they were being asked about district policies, state laws or state educational policies. In addition, there were concerns about possible data suppression, the use of undocumented illegal suspensions, parents not understanding the COC or the appeal process, and how more than 10,000 students were suspended between 2009-2011. They wanted to know what the cause and length of all these suspensions were, the number of students involved and the disparities between schools' suspension rates. Even more alarming was the recognition of the huge amount of class time lost for these students. Ms. W. cautioned, "remember you can't teach them if they are not in school" (Billue, 2014, p. 127).

By the end of May of 2013, community groups were enraged by the alarming disproportionality demonstrated by the suspension data and the feeling they were getting little response from the MCSD. NAN, NAACP, and the state ACLU affiliate decided to file complaints with both the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights and the State Attorney General, holding a joint press conference to share these concerns with the public. (Billue, 2014).

At the June 13, 2013, Board of Education (BOE) meeting, the MCSD Director of Special Education announced a change of policy stating that any time a principal decided to send a child home, it would be officially documented as an OSS. But that was not enough to quell the unrest that was brewing. The situation came to a head at the next Board of Education meeting. On one side of the room there were White parents who wanted stricter discipline and on the other side, African American and Latino parents who wanted the suspension disproportionality examined. There were calls from the White parents for the superintendent, the first Black woman in the role, to resign, even though she had just been hired in July of 2011. Ms. W. felt the blame rested

with the BOE who set the district policies and that they were the governing body that needed to change. In terms of the superintendent, she felt the White parents wanted her out while the Black parents were thankful that she was making hard decisions. She was emphatic that “we can’t let you keep suspending our kids like that” (Billue, 2014).

Underlying these very specific concerns were even larger issues that the community was grappling with. Why were these zero tolerance policies in place? Was this a systemic, intentional push out of students of color for offenses that were normal adolescent behaviors or symptoms of the students’ disabilities? There was a deep distrust stemming from a history of the MCSD not working with parents; even a multi-racial superintendent couldn’t erase the concern that institutional racism and teacher bias were endemic. There was a growing belief that “suspension data coupled with the UCLA report and Meridian’s long documented history of Jim Crow tactics make it evident that bias was a factor in referral and suspension. This bias and stereotyping result in unequal teaching and unequal discipline” (Billue, 2014, p. 237). The question remained: now that these issues had been brought forward front and center, what was the MCSD going to do about it?

Seeking a Solution

On Sept 30, 2013, the director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA and one of the authors of the UCLA report did a presentation to the BOE. His data showed that 52% of Black males in MCSD’s middle and high schools were suspended at least once during the 2009-2010 school year, as well as 48% of Latino males and 31% of White males. The largest of the disparities were for minor offenses. He noted that when suspensions are used excessively, you see more disparities.

This director told the BOE and others who were present that it was possible that racial bias was a factor in the suspension process. He thought it was probably subconscious and it was important to stay away from “pointing fingers and laying blame” (Dumas, 2013). His suggestions were to reduce the excessive suspensions by using in school suspension (ISS) vs. out of school suspension (OSS) more often, increase opportunities for social emotional learning, change school discipline policies, and train leaders and teachers about different approaches and, of interest to this paper, the use of RP.

In response, the MCSD BOE president said that they were looking at a multi-faceted approach that would include professional development, hiring more social workers, revising disciplinary policies and the MCSD Code of Conduct. In a show of taking these issues much more seriously, a month later, a national consultant was hired to conduct a third-party quantitative and qualitative review of discipline practices in the MCSD to further examine data patterns, procedures, and development of tools to measure the effects of ongoing changes in disciplinary practices (MCSD BOE minutes, October 2013). He presented these findings in June of 2014 and was later hired to do the same review for the 2016-17 school year.

The president of the local NAACP, who attended this presentation, noted that he was highly disturbed and concerned by the numbers and thought they were more about design than chance. He was concerned that still no clear explanation had been given and wanted to know whose idea it was to suspend these students; now that these issues had been identified, what protocol was being used and what corrective measures were being taken? From here on out, the NAACP wanted to be active in the research and investigation into these suspension numbers to find out where it all started, how it started and perhaps most relevant, why was it continuing (Dumas, 2013)?

Multiple Perspectives

As 2014 began, there was a great deal of discord and unrest on the path to some kind of solution. The issues had now been widely publicized and those in the Meridian community began to speak out with a variety of different perspectives. In this section, a sample of those who spoke out will be presented in the chronological order that they made their opinions known. This sample includes a former MCSD student, current and former MCSD BOE members, Meridian University faculty, and MCSD parents and teachers.

A Former MCSD Student

In January of 2014, a former Meridian high school student, Sam Jones, wrote an editorial reflecting on the MCSD suspension rates and the varying responses to them. He noted that there were public voices that said this was horribly wrong. The first from experts and activists that the MCSD is suspending too many students and the second from teachers who said, “Don’t judge me until you have spent a day teaching my class.” However, in all of these, not one student voice had been heard.

Jones felt a cause of the suspension rate was the “price of partiality” for excluding African Americans and other minorities from wealth in the forms of employment, affordable housing, and access to higher education. He suggested that until the MCSD staff were willing to admit the ways in which they have unearned privileges that are both subtle and vital, “insubordination, rebellion and disrespect will continue from our students.” Jones said that it was not about individual prejudice but more about structural systems of racism that benefit Whites while marginalizing people of color. The disrespect shown to teachers was more about the socioeconomic gap between them and their students.

Racial tension was created, he explained that when student identities were suppressed, their language was labeled as incorrect, their music inappropriate and their dress style unusual. Jones felt that African American students wonder why White teachers can come into their world, but they cannot go into theirs and why they, as African American students, are expected to attain something they never had access to from the start. He suggested dissolving the city schools into the surrounding suburban districts, to provide professional and semi-skilled job training with hiring commitments from the business community, and to increase affordable housing in suburban and rural areas. He ended his letter with the behest to “turn our theory into practice, our religion into policy and our convictions into action” (Blackwell, 2014).

MCSD Board of Education Members

In an op-ed in the local newspaper in April of 2014, seven of the Board of Education members acknowledged that the ongoing attention on the subject of safety and discipline was rightfully placed. As many other school districts across the country, MCSD was not having an easy time with the changes needed to ensure that district policies were being adhered to in each school and that children’s constitutional rights to receive an education and be treated fairly were upheld. They spoke of the dangers of zero tolerance policies and alternative programs. The answer, they said, was not the removal of disruptive students but instead to “help them develop the traits of civility, compromise and dignity” (Body et al., April 2014).

This could be done by confronting discipline problems through Restorative Justice principles that would build a support network for students to talk to one another and work with trained professionals to address their fears, anger, and anxiety. A comprehensive set of tools was being built for school staff to improve their classroom management, de-escalation skills and positive student engagement. To enact the meaningful change needed, there would need to be a

clear focus on the path of restorative justice. They called for the entire community to come together to promote the dignity and respect of all so that the MCSD could become “the safe and nurturing learning environment that we all want it to be.” (Body et al., April 2014).

Meridian University School of Education Faculty

On May 11, 2014, a commentary signed by thirty-nine faculty members from the Meridian University School of Education was published in the Meridian newspaper. They pointed out that data shows suspension was not the best course and change was needed. Students who were suspended were less likely to graduate. Only 12% of those who had been suspended four or more times walked the stage, and only 34% of those who had been suspended once.

This group cautioned it was not tenable to write off any young people, and certainly not one out of five. Instead of blaming away the problem on others, focus on keeping kids in school. They suggested RP would be a positive choice as it focused on involving all stakeholders, making things right, and moving away from a punitive lens. They pointed out this could benefit the community, students, and schools. These faculty members recognized such an endeavor would require a sustained commitment of resources and time. However, valuing all students “as human beings whose lives matter” was critical. They offered to play a role in this commitment “for a sustained plan to maintain quality education in safe school environments that every student, teacher, administrator, family and the community so rightly deserve” (Theoharis et al., 2014).

Meridian Teacher’s Union

In a vote the week of June 13, 2014, 95% of the 2,800 teachers in the MCSD voted that they had no confidence in the superintendent. The union head said that the concerns of teachers

had been ignored and the MCSD was headed in the wrong direction in school safety, lack of communication, and “inept implementation” of district policies. This was the first time in the history of the union that such an action had been taken (DeCarr, 2014).

A Journalist's Perspective

In August of 2014, a lengthy article by a journalist in the Meridian New Times discussed “Safety in the Schools”. He wrote about the new code of conduct that was waiting final approval by the Board of Education and noted a community-wide roll out had been scheduled that month was abruptly canceled the week prior. Teacher training was still to be scheduled (Griffin-Nolan, 2014).

As the 2014-15 school year was about to begin, there were concerns about the no confidence in the superintendent vote from 95% of the MCSD teachers [add citation]. Coupled with the concerns about disciplinary policies and disproportionate suspensions, a split in the community was revealed that spoke of a deeper racial divide (Griffin-Nolan, 2014). The Meridian mayor tried to intervene to bring the teacher union and the superintendent together but that ended after one meeting. The superintendent was in the “center of a debate on student behavior and discipline that has pitted teachers against administrators, parents against teachers and at times, Blacks against Whites. The city remains sharply divided over the dimensions of violence in the schools, the reason it exists and what to do about it” (Griffin-Nolan, 2014).

African American parents and advocates were alarmed about suspension leading to the “pipeline to prison” on one side, and on the other, teachers who wanted help for troubled students but also for disruptive students to leave the classroom so that others could learn. In June of 2014, the MCSD signed an agreement with the State Attorney General that neither disputed

nor affirmed the findings but agreed to take on a series of corrective measures (Griffin-Nolan, 2014). A group of both teachers and parents gave interviews about school violence and “a culture of fear” in schools. The teacher group “Be the Change” voiced concern that the restorative justice approach would not adequately address persistently disruptive and violent students. The number of teachers filing worker’s compensation claims involving incidents with students had nearly doubled in the first four months of the 2013-14 school year. Other teachers said that teachers need to improve on handling student behaviors and cultural differences that could be misinterpreted (Griffin-Nolan, 2014).

Both groups agreed that cuts in over one thousand support staff have left fewer adults on hand to help with student behaviors and the reduction of alternative programs for disruptive students have been factors in the concerns raised. They each hoped that the creation of a behavioral intervention center (BIC) at each school would help make a difference. The article ended with these figures; 24% of the 1900 MCSD teachers at that time lived in the city and of those, only 125 or 7% were people of color (Griffin-Nolan, 2014).

Other Voices at the November 14, 2014, BOE Meeting

At the November 2014 BOE meeting, an Iraqi immigrant and MCSD translator listened to concerns about violence in the schools and shared that she thought she had left this fear when she left Iraq and was dismayed to hear parents and students talk of school violence and discrimination (Miller, 2013). Other parents at this meeting talked about their children being bullied. A student shared she had been bullied by teachers who called her and her peers lazy, ghetto, and unproductive. All those present felt there needed to be more staff training and policies to support not only the child who bullied but also the children who were bullied. The superintendent responded that there was a need to create better relationships (Ratick, 2014).

The superintendent also reported to the Board that out-of-school suspensions in the first two months of school had been reduced from 997 to 850, and in-school suspensions had increased by fifty-eight. The teacher union representative cautioned that just because the suspension numbers had been reduced did not mean that everything was okay. Ms. W., a parent advocate, was concerned that institutional discrimination within the schools was not being addressed, saying, “It’s easier to blame the child for the problem than to say bias exists” (Ratick, 2014).

A White Parent

On November 17, 2014, a widely circulated blog from a website called *MCSD Take Back our Schools* included an entry called “The Creation of a Fairy Tale” written by a MCSD parent. She called to other parents to act and request an independent investigation into why 95% of MTA members voted NO CONFIDENCE in MCSD Superintendent the previous June. Ms. W. and her peers were accused of “fanning the flames of a racist divide” by undermining teachers and removing consequences for “all but the most heinous of infractions by the students” and the failure of the BOE to address these issues.

The blog suggested the “groundless accusations of racism was [sic] making things worse within the school,” escalating anger, aggression, and rage. It further railed against what was described as a “wily and most convincing (and well financed) PR campaign” to discredit MCSD staff and called into question the publicity it brought to Ms. W’s self-published book. The blog further described student behaviors continuing to spiral downward and claimed teachers’ concerns were being ignored. The COC changes called for K-2 students to no longer receive any office referrals, and none for 3-12 students for Level 1 behaviors (refusal to follow directions, name-calling, throwing objects without hurting others, backtalking, cutting class or minor

hallway misconduct. Teachers, instead, would take observational notes, So, the decrease in suspension numbers being touted would not be comparing apples to apples (MCSD Take Back Our Schools, 2014).

Shortly after, an additional blog entry was submitted titled “We’re Back Unfortunately” that specifically addressed the Code of Conduct, Character, and Support. The author, an anonymous parent, felt the policy was filled with wonderful ideas and philosophies, such as “suspensions don’t create better behavior or safer schools and children who are out of school don’t learn.” RP were specifically noted as giving the opportunity to help students be held accountable for the impact of their actions. The blog noted these were powerful ideas but that they were being “abysmally implemented” due to a lack of necessary funds, personnel, or adequate training, which was a result of poor planning, poor follow through, and lack of direction and leadership. Parents were called to attend BOE meetings and give their input on the new COC and the resulting chaos. A concern was voiced about the civil rights of students who “want to learn” and that the real problem was the superintendent, as she did not embody the change “we want or need.” The response the blog made to the disproportionate suspension data was that, of course African American students were suspended more, because most City of Meridian residents were not White anymore (MCSD Take Back Our Schools, 2014).

Former Members of the MCSD BOE

In September of 2015, three former MCSD BOE Commissioners wrote an op-ed that was published in the Meridian Newspaper pointing out that Meridian had one of the nation’s highest poverty rates among Blacks and Hispanics, which is why it should surprise no one that MCSD has struggled for so long. They questioned why some people were so quick to blame the MCSD Superintendent for these issues but no other public officials. The group commended her for

“working tirelessly to right many of the wrongs children have faced” and her adherence to Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and state education laws designed to protect students from institutional discrimination. They wondered why this moral outrage had not also been leveled against other social ills that plagued the MCSD. In addition, they pointed out that hiring another superintendent would not necessarily be the great fix that some desired, and the brief tenure rates of urban superintendents nationally did not help with continuity or consistency (Bullen et al., 2015).

These former commissioners also noted that the current superintendent was well respected across the nation, had hosted the President at a local high school, and was a consultant for high government agencies regarding RP that address a history of unfair, and likely illegal, disciplinary practices. They applauded the increasing graduation rates and decrease in the drop-out rate, the new contract with teachers that prioritized retaining teachers in the first five years, the opening of new schools and renovation of existing ones, and the establishment of an aspiring leadership academy. They ended by commending the superintendent’s efforts and prayed that the community would recognize that the MCSD problems were created by the community and needed to be solved by the collective community (Bullen et al., 2015).

Coming to a Solution

Throughout this tumultuous time, when the problem with the MCSD disciplinary policies that led to such disproportionate suspension rates had been clearly substantiated and communicated throughout the community, the question remained regarding the best course forward. With the release of the State Attorney General’s scathing report in July of 2014, a list of mandated actions was given to the MCSD that became the backbone of the solution. The superintendent had already convened an advisory board to revise the COC and had begun to put

the suggestions from consultant of the UCLA report into place. A national RP consultant, Mr. Herbson, was hired to provide training on RP as one of the required preventative strategies. In addition, Best Practice Organization (BPO), a local community-based organization, was also brought in to provide restorative coaches, training, and support. This section will discuss each of these and where the MCSD was in terms of RP through April of 2018, when my research at Emancipation Middle School began.

The State Attorney General's Report and Assurance of Discontinuance

In 2013, in response to multiple complaints made by parents, advocates and community leaders, the State Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau began an investigation into the disciplinary policies and practices of the MCSD to ensure they were in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act says that no person in the United States will be excluded from excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to the discrimination on the ground of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (<https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI>). The investigation included interviews with parents and student advocates, and a review of documents and data analysis regarding MCSD disciplinary practices (Mulder, 2014a). The investigation revealed that 30% of MCSD students were suspended in the 2012-13 school year, giving this school district one of the highest suspension rates in the nation. Most of these were for non-violent behavior, and Black students were suspended at twice the rate of White students. Serious, procedural deficiencies in MCSD's implementation of discipline were found. The state education commissioner was quoted as saying, "what happened in the Meridian Schools was deeply harmful to students and completely unacceptable" (state.gov press release, 2014).

Other specific data points from this report included that thirty-five percent of all students were removed from class and sent to the principal's office in the 2011-12 school year.

Significant racial disparities were found throughout the disciplinary process for ISS, OSS, Superintendent's hearings, and non-violent conduct. Forty-four percent of Black students were taken out of class for a discipline referral, compared to only 26% of White students. Written notifications to parents were lacking including description of the specific charges. The district failed to provide adequate safeguards for students with disabilities and School Resource Officers did not get training on the MCSD COC (Mulder, 2014b)

On July 10, 2014, the State Attorney General announced that his office had made an agreement with the MCSD to reduce the high use of exclusionary discipline with the MCSD, saying that "every child has a right to a quality education and zero-tolerance policies deprive them of that basic right". The MCSD was to immediately begin the work to end the harm, address racial inequalities, and protect the rights of all students (state.gov press release, 2014).

This agreement was called the Assurance of Discontinuance and under its terms, the MCSD would commit itself to reducing its use of exclusionary discipline against students. These conditions were mandated:

- Retain an independent monitor to provide oversight during the agreement, and periodically audit the district's compliance with the agreement and with state and federal laws and report his or her findings to the Attorney General's Office.
- Create plans for the adoption and implementation of preventative techniques at its schools that would be aimed at encouraging students to avoid misbehavior.

- Amend its Code of Conduct to adopt or encourage the use of disciplinary strategies that do not rely on exclusion as a form of discipline, except as a last resort.
- Train its staff in these new preventative strategies, and on the new provisions of the Code of Conduct.
- Designate an Ombudsman to help the district and individual schools comply with the new Code of Conduct and to address school-level issues.
- Upgrade the MCSD data-keeping and analysis capabilities to ensure that it has the tools necessary to identify issues in its discipline practices and act accordingly.
- Enter into a memorandum of understanding with any entity that supplies the district with school safety officers that will provide policies governing officer's conduct and training for officers on interacting with children in a school environment.
- Implement new measures aimed at informing teachers, parents, and students of their rights, and protecting their voices in the formulation of the discipline process

MCSD officials responded in the press that they were already working to address the high suspension rate. The superintendent and school board vice president released a statement that said they were fully cooperating with the Attorney General and had already put multiple initiatives into place to address student behavior and discipline, ending with the statement, "We believe we are making progress and are dedicated to working together with the Attorney General to promote the safety, dignity and respect for all students, teachers and staff" (Mulder, 2014b).

The MCSD superintendent further said:

Today we have come together to ensure that all of our students are provided with a safe and supportive learning environment. We still have difficult work ahead to implement

appropriate disciplinary policies and practices. I look forward to working with the AG, its Civil Rights Bureau, our dedicated staff, and the entire community to provide our children with the highest quality educational opportunities and schools of which we can all be proud. (state.gov press release, 2014)

The MCSD Code of Conduct

In December of 2013, the MCSD superintendent created a task force of fifty stakeholders, including parents, a student, teachers from all grade levels, special education staff, student support staff, district and school administrators, community-based service providers and community activists to revise the COC. The group met twelve times for more than 40 hours (Contreras, 2014). The goal was “to create a code that clearly and concisely reinforced the roles and responsibilities of students, staff and parents, set student behavior expectations, ensured fair, appropriate and equitable student discipline practices and complied with all applicable laws and regulations” (MCSD website, 2020). In addition, the task force would also:

- Gather community input and feedback to gauge perceptions and experiences and to determine community beliefs and values regarding discipline practices.
- Explore the specific concerns that prompted the convening of the task force.
- Explore the approaches to discipline and student support and features of exemplary code of conduct documents, policies, and practices.
- Identify the expected outcomes as a result of revisions and changes to the code of conduct and disciplinary practices.
- Come to consensus about foundational approach and orientation for code of conduct.

- Review the disciplinary data and discipline processes and procedures with attention to applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
- Research the best practices for Codes of Conduct.

After this extended process, the superintendent presented the revised COC to the BOE, saying that it would limit the use of OSS and ISS by stressing that removing children from classrooms should be a last resort. The revised COC focused on supports and interventions to aid students in developing self-discipline using a multi-tiered system of support and a social and emotional learning (SEL) orientation. It also embraced an alternative approach to student misbehavior – restorative interventions to solve problems, make amends and repair harm, learn new behaviors, and restore their good standing (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

The major shifts in this revised COC were “accountable and restorative interventions,” “adults committed to keeping students in class,” and the “provision of support for students to learn from their mistakes and repair the harm they have done.” The goal of this document was to establish “a seamless and independent system of discipline and student support that welcomes parents as partners and provides a clear description of the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders (Contreras, 2014).

In addition, the COC included a very specific leveled list of behaviors and how they should be handled to provide consistency and clarity across all MCSD schools. No K-2 student would receive a referral, instead observation notes were to be taken, interventions put into place and support staff consulted. For Grades 3-12, behaviors that were considered level 1 or minor offenses would also not receive referrals; instead, a menu of interventions was offered and very specific guidelines for how to address level 2, 3 and 4 behaviors were included. A sample is

provided below from pp 18-19 of the 2017-18 MCSD COC. Within these interventions, there are repeated references to RP, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

MCSD Code of Conduct Leveled Behaviors and Interventions/Responses

LEVEL 1 BEHAVIOR

<i>Classroom Interventions and Responses.</i>	<i>Student Support Team Interventions and Responses.</i>
Student/Teacher conference Use of Restorative questions Restorative conference Develop relationships with families Family conference Daily progress sheets on behavior Create a classroom check-in plan Reflection activity Restitution/Restoration strategies	Reflection activity Check-In with school building staff Mentoring Peer Mediation Mediated conflict resolution conference Service to the school community Restitution plan

LEVEL 2 BEHAVIOR

<i>Classroom Interventions and Responses.</i>	<i>Student Support Team Interventions and Responses</i>
Student/Teacher conference Use of Restorative questions Restorative conference Develop relationships with families Family conference Create a classroom check-in plan Reflection activity Restitution/Restoration strategies Collaborate with family Student/Teacher conference Restorative practice strategies Peer Mediation Collaborative Family Conference Community conference	Reflection activity Check-In with school building staff Mentoring Service to the school community Restitution plan Conflict mediation Administrative and/or support team conference

Conflict resolution	
---------------------	--

LEVEL 3 BEHAVIOR*Classroom and Support Team Interventions and Responses*

<p>Student/Teacher conference</p> <p>Restorative conference</p> <p>Develop relationships with families</p> <p>Daily progress sheets on behavior</p> <p>Create a classroom check-in plan</p> <p>Restitution/Restoration strategies</p> <p>Monitor all plans created and reevaluate every two weeks</p> <p>Initiate a student-centered discussion about the incident (and Repair, Restore and Re-teach expectations)</p> <p>Create, implement, and monitor a transition plan for students returning to the classroom, restorative circle</p> <p>Mediated conflict resolution conference</p> <p>Restitution plan</p> <p>Assignment to Behavior Intervention Center for behavior skill building interventions</p> <p>Informal conference with principal and student</p>

Other references to Restorative Justice and RP in the Meridian COC include:

student discipline and support policies and practices must be implemented in ways that are **ACCOUNTABLE AND RESTORATIVE**. Students and families need to know that the school will provide behavioral interventions inside and outside of the classroom that support a restorative rather than a punitive orientation. Restorative interventions require students to own the problem, reflect on the impact of their behavior on themselves and others, and understand why the behavior was unacceptable, inappropriate, or unskillful ... and enable them to correct behaviors, repair relationships and the harm they have done to others, learn desired replacement behaviors, or restore their good standing. (MCSD Code of Conduct, 2017, p. 3)

A definition of restorative conferencing found on p. 29 states:

Listening and speaking responsively are the basic building blocks of all restorative interventions. Restorative conferencing provides the structure in which we listen and speak responsively. Restorative conferencing ranges from informal one-to-one conferences to more formal processes like mediation, discipline circle, family group conference, and school return. All these conferencing structures create a safe space in which people directly affected by an incident or problem can discuss it safely, openly, and honestly.

On pp 29-30, protocols for a variety of restorative conferences are listed, as shown in Table 14:

Table 14

MCSD Code of Conduct Types of Restorative Conferences

Type of Conference	When to Use
Social Discipline Conference	When a specific incident or behavior has harmed others and prompts immediate attention...
Personal Efficacy Conference	When a student's unproductive or ineffective behaviors, habits, or mindsets raise an adult's concerns... 1. What happened? (What was your part in what happened?) 2. What were you thinking and feeling at the time? 3. Who else was affected by this? How? 4. What have been your thoughts/feelings since then? What are you thinking/feeling now? 5. What do you need to do to make things right?
Defusing Conference	When students are upset, and their emotional state is making it hard to focus and learn....
Problem-Solving Conference	When the focus is on helping a student address a specific academic or behavioral problem 1. I have noticed that you look upset (angry, frustrated, bored, distracted). What is going on for you? 2. What is not working for you right now? Is there anything else bothering you? Is there anything else that can help me understand?

	<p>3. How are you feeling right now? How do you want to feel?</p> <p>4. What might you do to feel better / to be okay right now?</p>
--	--

Restorative Practices: A Means to the Desired End

In response to requirements of the Assurance of Discontinuance to implement preventative and disciplinary strategies that encourage students to avoid misbehavior and do not rely on exclusion and to train staff in these as well as the new COC provisions, the MCSD did more than just add RP into the language of the revised COC, as noted above. This kind of change required far more than lip service, and so additional moves were made. Eight more staff were hired, including a Director of School Culture and Climate, a programmer, data analysts, a professional development liaison, and ombudsman (MCSD BOE minutes, 2015). The ombudsman was an outside monitor who would help with the compliance of the new Code of Conduct, address school-level issues and provide quarterly reports to the BOE and State District Attorney's Office throughout the four years the Assurance of Discontinuance would be in place.

In addition, as noted previously, the MCSD hired national RP consultant and trainer, Mr. Herbson in early 2015 who continues to this day. They also contracted with Best Practices Organization, a local education support agency to provide staff, programming and training for RP that is also ongoing as well as other community-based agencies who provided restorative approaches and one-on-one support with students to meet these requirements.

Mr. Herbson

Mr. Herbson is the CEO of an RP organization and is a national trainer, consultant, and strategist of RP. His background includes five years as the Culture and Climate Specialist in a large urban high school and six years as the program director at Community Youth Institute

where he conducted RP training to address issues of disproportionality related to the School to Prison Pipeline (STPP). His training focused on Peace Circles, Restorative Mediations, and Family group conferences. His website says that restorative responses are “designed to repair the harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense” (Restorative Strategies, 2020). In an interview in May of 2019, Mr. Herbson gave a simpler, scaled down definition of restorative justice as “justice that heals” (Herbson, private communication, 2019).

In this interview, Mr. Herbson described how, in his recollection, the MCSD turned to RP on the initiative of the superintendent upon her review of disciplinary data over the past twenty years. She noted that it was trending toward zero tolerance, pushing out African Americans and other marginalized populations and causing serious damage to the district. He noted that the MCSD was required to follow the specific guidelines from the State Attorney General, but it was the MCSD superintendent who wanted to change the Code of Conduct, replacing punitive measures with RP and the teachers who gave incredible pushback because they felt their authority was being threatened. This is what, he felt, caused the no confidence vote by the teachers’ union.

He recalled that the superintendent sought to address a communication misdirect by forming an advisory board to look at the reality of where the MCSD was and how to get back the confidence of the community. He said the community loved her and said they would stand by her no matter what the teachers said to make the changes that were needed. They admired her courage in bringing the issue forward because they had known something was wrong and now knew what it was.

At this time, Mr. Herbson was the Culture and Climate Coordinator at a large urban high school where his job was to bring about RP in the school and train the staff. The school had

gotten such good press for the work they were doing, he was asked to do a four-day training for the National Education Association (NEA) to promote RP as a means to address the problems of zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion. The MCSD Superintendent sent three teachers to the training whom in response strongly recommended that Mr., Herbson come to the MCSD. That was exactly what the superintendent did. (Herbson, personal communication, 2019 May 14).

MCSD RP Implementation: A Phase in Program

In the summer of 2015, Mr. Herbson trained two cohorts, each a group of fifty teachers, administrators, and support staff in RP. He worked closely with the superintendent as a consultant, however she left the MCSD in August of 2016, so he worked with the MCSD Director of School Culture and Climate to realize the vision of RP in the MCSD. Mr. Herbson remembered how impressed this new director was when she saw that teachers everywhere were using circles and that it must be a result of his training the previous summer. Since that time, he said the goal has been to institutionalize RP throughout the MCSD so that no matter who the principal or teachers are, these practices are in place. Table 15 provides a summary of how Mr. Herbson explained the phase in program:

Table 15

MCSD RP Implementation

Phase	Time	Actions
Year 0	Summer 2015	Train 100 RJ trainers to go into schools and be a spark and train their building staff. Offer technical support as capacity was being built
Year 1	2015-16	Continued training, tech support and advanced training to those already trained. Go into schools and model RP, meet with school teams to answer questions, and draw connections to other SEL programs so it does not seem like just one more thing
Year 2	2016-17	More building capacity, MCSD Climate Director shadows and visits schools to see the wonderful things happening where they were embracing

		it.
Year 3	2017-18	Building Phase: look for clear ways to institutionalize RP across MCSD
Year 4	2018-19	<i>Bring it back to students</i> , working with the Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program where eighth graders mentor the 6 th graders, development of students as circle leaders
Year 5	2019-20	Continue the work with the students to prepare them to be leaders and use these techniques and these circles with the incoming freshmen to increase graduation rates.

A review of Mr. Herbson's contracts through the MCSD Board of Education minutes shows that there was much more involved within the scope of his consultancy and training of MCSD staff, students, families, and community members. This discrepancy could be due to the interview format and his efforts to put it in an arching overview. However, the contracts lend themselves to a much more nuanced view of what Herbson's role in the implementation and training was to include. Table 16 shows the Phase in Program based on the MCSD BOE contracts.

Table 16

MCSD Contracts with Mr. Herbson based on MSCD BOE minutes

<i>Phase/Fees</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Actions</i>
<i>Year 0</i> <i>\$100,000</i>	<i>Summer 2015</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) introduce teachers, support staff, administrators, coaches, SROs, and security staff on restorative strategies (trained one hundred staff) b) provide hands-on training and discussing real world application of these practices c) provide technical support by the trainer after the training, analyze data as a part of making decisions in schools
<i>Year 1</i> <i>\$100,000</i>	<i>2015-16</i>	<p>Facilitation of professional development on RP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) expose community partners and parents/guardians to Peace Circles and RP being utilized in schools.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) To continue to train and support school teams in RP while building trust within the school community. c) One Day Immersion workshop for external partners which gives the participants a “taste” of the circle process (8 will be offered in July) d) 2-hour parent and community meetings, which give the participants a “taste” of the circle process that is being utilized in schools (5 will be held throughout the school year) e) Quarterly Advanced Training for the School Teams f) 4-day Train the Trainer for new trainers supporting schools g) 2-day intensive training for a group of ten trainers who will support the ongoing training and implementation of RP.
<i>Year 2</i> <i>\$100,000</i>	<i>2016-17</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To provide new training to students to become Circle Keepers in their schools b) to train new school team members to support RP in schools in a 4-day intensive training c) to expose community partners, parents, and guardians to restorative circles in a 2-hour community meeting d) to visit schools and participate and/or observe the RP being utilized e) A 1-day Circle Immersion specifically for school administrators to give them a “taste” of the circle process f) Quarterly advanced training for school teams will continue this year g) New training to introduce and model Trauma Informed Conversations.
<i>Year 3</i> <i>\$100,000</i>	<i>2017-18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Demonstrate to community partners, parents, and guardians the benefits of Peace Circles and RP being utilized in schools. b) Continue to train and support school teams on Peace Circles and RP with an overarching goal to continue to build trust within the school community. c) share data-driven outcomes and progress with community shareholders to ensure that these practices are yielding intended outcomes and that this information is shared and understood
<i>Year 4</i> <i>\$100,000</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To expose community partners and parents/guardians to Peace Circles and RP being utilized in schools and continue to train and support school teams while building trust within the school community.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Workshop for external partners, as well as parent and community meetings which will give the participants a “taste” of the circle process. c) Quarterly Advanced Training for the School Teams d) Train the Trainer for new trainers supporting schools. e) Intensive training for trainers who will support Restorative Justice district-wide. The district wide team will provide immersion trainings, community events, and workshops for students.
<p><i>Year 5</i></p> <p><i>\$100,000</i></p>	<p><i>2019-20</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Expose community partners and parents/guardians to Peace Circles and RP being utilized in schools. b) Continue to train and support school teams while building trust within the school community. c) Provide a workshop for external partners parents and the community which will give the participants a “taste” of the circle process. d) Quarterly Advanced Training for the School Teams to review and evaluate the initial implementations of circles with the school team trainers and the process and initial analysis of data. e) Introduce Family Group conferencing model and Victim/Offender Model and review implementation data. f) Train the Trainer for new trainers supporting school with intensive training for trainers who will support Restorative Justice district-wide. The district wide team will provide immersion trainings, community events, and workshops for students.

From these contracts, it becomes evident that throughout the implementation, training was to be provided to new staff, new school team members, turn-key trainers at the schools and a ten-member district wide team. School visits, consultation with school teams, exposure of circles and the rationale of RP to families and community groups, data analysis, coordination with other school community partners and additional training on trauma-informed conversations and the Victim/Offender Model. In the fifteen months I was at Emancipation; I saw very few of these

occur. This is not to say it may not have happened at other buildings in the MCSD; but in terms of institutionalization, not every building received the same attention. This will be discussed further in the discussion of my findings.

Mr., Herbson did note there were some difficulties in the initial training when some schools only sent one person, often the social worker or VP, who were not able to lead and coordinate school climate committees and train their staffs with all their other responsibilities. This hampered the turnkey training that had been envisioned. He felt there remained some resistance to buying into RP because a number of teachers were still mad at the prior superintendent and associated the initiative with her. However, he assured me that the schools that embraced RP were doing all kinds of wonderful things and there had been a 400% decrease in suspensions over the five-year period (Herbson, personal communication, 2019 May 14).

Mr. Herbson shared that RP are a philosophy and he would know if it was happening effectively when he saw positive relationships being developed within the school and its community. There would be circles and other RP being used with fidelity and the principal would be the leader, who supported a growing momentum to replace punitive with restorative responses. He cautioned that this was not about letting students get off taking responsibility for their actions but to face the person they harmed and to foster an emotional connection.

Mr. Herbson said when you know better, you do better, and it is all in the relationships that must be built and nourished. RP sets up the doorway for justice that heals. He would see students that trust their teachers and teachers who use their authority in ways that are fair, ways that do not slash and burn relationships. Recess is not taken away; prom is not taken away nor is being able to walk the graduation stage; these are examples of the punitive types of measures that can destroy a child. RP can repair things; it can be done, and it is possible (Herbson, private

communication, 2019 May 14).

Furthermore, Mr. Herbson wrote an article titled “A Rock and Rug-A New Technology to Bring Restorative Practices in Schools” which suggested that collaboration was key to ensuring the success of RP, a child-focused process that puts the needs and the feelings of children first, brings unity to the community and shows children that we are ready to change the way that we do things and to listen to what they have to say (Herbson, 2014).

Best Practices Organization

Best Practices Organization (BPO) is a local community-based agency located in Meridian that has a long-term relationship with the MCSD. It has received multiple contracts from the district to provide staff and social emotional programming, PBIS, enrichment, afterschool programming and a host of other services in schools across the district. With the emergence of RP as a MCSD initiative, BPO entered into a series of contracts with the BOE as shown in to provide a variety of supports, services, and staff. Table 17 offers a summary of those contacted services more specifically dealing with RP.

Table 17

Best Practices Organization's RP BOE contracts

Time /Fees	Work Contracted for
7/1/15-6/30/16 \$437,913	a) training, technical assistance and ongoing coaching for school-wide design and implementation of restorative school culture and multi-tiered systems of prevention, intervention, and support in alignment with the MCSD COC to all schools
July 1, 2016- June 30, 2017	a) To increase consistent use and effect of school-wide strategies for promoting a vibrant and supportive school culture among all staff. b) Increase data-based decision-making by the Discipline/School Climate team

\$174,689	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Reduce use of punitive discipline measures in schools. d) Increase capacity of general education settings to successfully educate all students <p>BPO will provide a staff member to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) facilitate restorative conferences, peace circles, re-entry conferences and parent and community circles, and technical assistance to all schools. Staff members will be assigned to a home school to include Clary, Lincoln, and Westside Academy at Blodgett. b) Universal Support at Tier 1: Pro-active and preventative school wide practices for building and reaffirming relationships, developing community bonds, and applying individual social skills to promote a vibrant and supportive school culture and caring environment c) Targeted Support at Tier 2: Managing difficulties and maintaining or repairing relationships through structured communication and skill building. d) Intensive Support at Tier 3: Developing mechanisms of accountability which also serve to repair harm and offer opportunities to rebuild relationships.
7/1/17-6/30/18 \$947,600	<p>Renew an agreement with BPO to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide three full-time staff members to facilitate restorative conferences, peace circles, re-entry conferences and parent and community circles, and technical assistance to all schools (another ten were added in late fall bringing Lincoln to 5) b) Provide the knowledge and skills necessary for Discipline and School Climate teams to comply with District priorities and expectations including guidance to support Discipline and School Climate Teams in the creation of Preventative Strategies Plans c) Provide trained and qualified coaches to work with individual teams, attending meetings, provide guidance before and after meetings to ensure teams are adhering to District protocols for reviewing behavior data, implementing prevention plan strategies, and coordinating efforts across the faculty d) Work with building teams to observe the implementation of school wide culture and climate
6/30/18-8/30/19 \$696,970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide full-time staff members to facilitate restorative conferences, peace circles, re-entry conferences and parent and community circles, and technical assistance b) Increase consistent use and effect of school wide strategies for promoting a vibrant and supportive school culture.

(Reduced from \$927,000 with reduction)	<p>c) Increase data-based decision-making by the Discipline/School Climate team related to social-emotional, behavioral, and academic instruction strategies and practices across all school settings.</p> <p>d) Reduce use of punitive discipline measures in schools</p> <p>e) Increase capacity of general education settings to successfully educate all students and prevent academic and/or social failures, which result in lost instructional time</p>
6/30/19-8/30/20 \$696,970	<p>f) provide full-time staff members to facilitate restorative conferences, peace circles, re-entry conferences and parent and community circles, and technical assistance</p> <p>g) Increase consistent use and effect of school wide strategies for promoting a vibrant and supportive school culture.</p> <p>h) Increase data-based decision-making by the Discipline/School Climate team related to social-emotional, behavioral, and academic instruction strategies and practices across all school settings.</p> <p>i) Reduce use of punitive discipline measures in schools</p> <p>j) Increase capacity of general education settings to successfully educate all students and prevent academic and/or social failures, which result in lost instructional time.</p>

These ongoing contracts are of particular interest because of their direct application to how RP were being implemented at the school where my case study took place. In summary, the MCSD contracted with BPO to provide the following services:

- for training, technical assistance and ongoing coaching for school-wide design and implementation of restorative school culture and multi-tiered systems of prevention, intervention, and support in alignment with the MCSD COC to all schools
- to facilitate restorative conferences, peace circles, re-entry conferences for students, staff, parents, and community circles
- to provide supports multi-tiered levels of preventions and intervention for student behavior

- provide coaches to work with individual teams to ensure adherence to District protocols for reviewing behavior data, implementing prevention plan strategies, and coordinating efforts across the faculty
- reduce use of punitive discipline measures in schools and increase capacity of general education settings to successfully educate all students and prevent academic and/or social failures, which result in lost instructional time
- develop assessments will be to triangulate data, assessing implementation through measures completed by the Discipline and School Climate Teams, by faculty, through student forums and through structured building walk-throughs

These were very important elements of the RP implementation that the MCSD subcontracted to the BPO and to Mr. Herbson. Despite the obvious overlap between their contracts as shown in Table 18 there is little to no communication between the two (Lauren, private communication, 2018 April 26). This disconnect will be discussed more extensively in my final chapter.

Table 18

Mr. Herbson's vs. BPO's MCSD Contractual Responsibilities

Only Mr. Herbson	Both	Only BPO
1) To train external partners in restorative strategies 2) Provide train the trainers professional development and advanced training for school teams 3) Train students to become Circle	1) train staff 2) build trust within the school community 3) provide technical support and data-driven decision-making skills for school teams 4) facilitate Peace circles and RP for staff, students, parents, and	1) Provide ongoing coaching for school-wide design and implementation of restorative, vibrant and supportive school culture 2) Provide multi-tiered supports for prevention and intervention of student behavior 3) Provide coaching to Discipline and School

<p>Keepers in their schools</p> <p>4) share data-driven outcomes and progress with community shareholders</p>	<p>community members</p> <p>5) Observe the implementation of RP, school wide culture and climate with or without school teams and give feedback</p>	<p>Climate teams to comply with District priorities, create and implement Preventative Strategies Plan</p> <p>4) Reduce use of punitive discipline measures</p> <p>5) increase capacity to successfully educate all students and prevent academic and/or social failures, which result in lost instructional time</p> <p>6) Develop measures to triangulate data to assess implementation</p>
---	---	---

Both BPO and Mr. Herbson were contracted to provide training for staff and to “build trust within the school community.” Both were to provide technical support and data-driven processes for decision-making for school teams. Both were to facilitate peace circles and RP for staff, students, parents, and community members. Both were asked to observe schools’ implementation of RP, their culture, and climate, and give feedback.

Best Practices Organization provided more of the “boots on the ground” support of the MCSD RP implementation. They provided not only training but actual coaches in schools to support students with peace circles, re-entry conferences, restorative mediations, and circles and to work with School Climate and Discipline Teams to create Preventative Strategies Plans and utilize data-driven decision-making processes. BPO RP coaches were to reduce the use of punitive measures and increase capacity to meet the academic and SEL needs of general education students, as well as to create assessments to show the effectiveness of the

implementation through quarterly and annual reports.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 provides a history of the journey that led to the MCSD choosing to implement RP. It describes how the problems of disproportionate suspensions and disciplinary practices were identified, the path used in seeking a solution, and how RP became a means to the desired end: a quality education for every student without exclusionary measures.

Although this study focuses on the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School, this school does not operate in a vacuum. To understand how Emancipation chose to implement RP requires an understanding of how the MCSD came to adopt RP to be implemented in every school in the district. Just as schools are responsible to follow the directives of the school district they are part of, school districts are responsible to follow the directives of the state authorities they operate under and to listen to communities they serve.

The history of how RP came to be implemented in the MCSD and at Emancipation Middle School shows how the adoption of this initiative is the result of a tremendous amount of time, effort and interest convergence of many parents, families, community members, civil rights groups, and government agencies. It was born out of a time of great controversy and unrest. RP was specifically implemented to address racial inequity as part of a legal agreement that the MCSD had to make with the State Attorney's Office with the intent of ending the inequity that had plagued this district for years. It was not entered into lightly and the implementation was intended to get results.

The primary measure of results that the implementation of RP was expected to achieve was a reduction of overall suspension numbers the eradication of racial disproportionality

specifically. RP, as noted previously, is often used as an alternative to zero tolerance policies and does so by replacing hierarchical authoritarian structures with more collaborative, shared authority. In my next findings chapters, I share my findings on how race, equity and RP were negotiated in Emancipation's implementation of RP in Chapter 6 and how authority and RP were negotiated in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6: Findings on Race, Equity and Restorative Practices

In Chapter 6 I address the first part of my research question “How does a school negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?” by sharing my findings on race, equity, and RP. The findings on authority and RP will be described in Chapter 7 and in Chapter 8, I discuss how Emancipation Middle School negotiated this intersection of race, equity, authority, and RP.

As described in Chapter 3, Emancipation Middle School, located in a mid-sized urban school district in the Northeast United States, was selected as the site for this case study. This school was identified through careful research and discussion with those involved with the RP implementation in the Meridian City School District for its commitment and progress toward full RP implementation.

In this chapter of my findings, I discuss the responses of the Emancipation and PS staff members to questions about race, equity, and RP. From fourteen semi-structured interviews, I found that when asked about race and RP, my respondents overall used the following three tactics; they rejected that race was an issue, they deflected the conversation away from race, or they reflected how race was significant not only in reference to RP but also within their professional practice, society, and their own identity.

Staff members who appeared to reject the idea of race as an issue used three different perspectives: a) they doubted the validity of the disproportionate suspension data, b) they were “color blind,” or c) suspensions were solely based on a students’ behavior regardless of race. Those who used deflection either evaded the questions directly or changed the topic to speak about the effects of other social ills such as poverty and trauma. Finally, staff members who used

reflection talked about what it means to be a white teacher, different standards based on race, or expressed a more systemic view of RP and race overall.

In fact, only three out of over one hundred discrete responses (each person could have multiple responses through the coding process) directly responded to whether RP was effective in reducing the number of suspensions. All other responses were more tangential or nuanced. One staff member said simply, “It does reduce the suspension numbers.” Another commented that the statistics were alarming, but with great administrative support and RP, the numbers were coming down and an administrator said RP helps and referrals have decreased although she was not sure if it was addressing disproportionality.

Rejection

In this section, I delineate ways in which some staff rejected the idea that race was an issue that RP needed to address or whether it was an issue at all. There are three different tactics that I examine: doubting the validity of the disproportionate suspension data, claims of colorblindness and the need for what one teacher called “consequencable” behavior.

Denial: Doubting the Validity of Disproportionate Suspension Data

More than a third of the staff members I spoke with doubted the validity of the disproportionate disciplinary data cited in the State Attorney General’s report. This report stated that Black students received in and out of school suspension referrals at twice the rate proportionally as White students. They explained their rationale in various ways. Most felt that having a larger African American population meant that, of course, there would be more suspensions for that group and seemed to wonder why there was so much fuss about it. Others

questioned the statistical approach used and were suspicious the data was skewed, incorrectly disaggregated, or variables poorly controlled for accuracy.

The BIC facilitator (White) suggested that if the ratio in the building was more students of color than white, then that needed to be investigated. A sixth-grade teacher (White) said she felt the data was skewed and if it said more African Americans were being suspended that is because there were more African American students in the school compared to other racial groups (Emancipation's demographics at this time were 53% African American, 24% White, 10% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 2% Native American and 2% Multiracial). She then gave me a knowing wink and added, "You can make data say whatever you want and that is what they did. I firmly believe that."

An eighth-grade Spanish teacher (Asian) made this analogy; "It's kind of like you have a bag of marbles with most blue and others white and yellow." She then explained that if you put your hand in, you would pull out a blue again and again which is what the MCSD district population is like. "How aren't we going to be disproportionate when our district population is made up of a demographic that is predominantly Black"? In a similar vein, one of the RP coaches (White) said, "Our minority students are the majority of what makes up our population, so I wonder if it's like are we really only suspending African American males or is it that the majority of our population is African American males." She thought about that for a moment and then added that she would need to do a lot more research before she could answer a question like that. All of these viewpoints seem to indicate a misunderstanding of what the concept of statistical disproportionality means.

The sixth-grade vice principal (White), who had just received her EdD, explained her concerns with the disproportionate suspension data because she said, sometimes, you do not

know if the numbers have any validity. Ms. Livingston added, “Synergistically we have like 22,000 students in MCSD, and I will just say from an educated standpoint that 80% of our students are minority which was possibly controlled for but maybe not. I do not know if that is true, but I am a data kind of person and to me it does not make sense.” (For reference again at the time of this study, there were 53% African American, 24% White, 10% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 2% Native American and 2% Multiracial taken for the state education website). The disproportionate suspension data that was the issue in the State Attorney General’s report was specifically about African American students, not close to the 80% the VP spoke of.

The dean of students (White) spoke of how “they” keep coming back at them for disproportionality but in his mind, which was not the problem, He said, “Focusing on the disproportionality of the Black and Brown kids being suspended so much more than white kids isn’t the core of the issue.” He added the real problem is that the impoverished are having less success and acting out more in academic settings. He felt that results in more referrals and suspensions for “a higher number of our minorities who are impoverished and so are not complying academically or socially with what we are asking them to do.” Mr. Z. suggested that focusing on race instead of poverty is a smoke screen.

“I’m Colorblind”

For staff members who responded in ways that suggested they were colorblind, there was a degree of emotionality in their responses, just short of anger and betrayal, that they were being unfairly accused of being racist. An eighth grade Social Studies teacher (White) responded that it makes her upset when students say it is because they are Black when they do something wrong. “I don’t look at them as black, white or green and it really makes me mad because I am here fighting for all of them every day.” She said she gives so much of herself to her students that she

does not take good care of herself, often coming home at night so tired that all she does is make ramen and go to bed. She paused to take a breath and apologized to me, “I am sorry I went off a little, but it really irritates me and makes me angry. It is kind of a sensitive spot for me.”

A similar sentiment was shared by one of the administrators (White) who told me, “Here at Emancipation, it doesn’t matter what race you are.” With some dismay, she recounted a situation she had been in a recent MCSD administrative committee meeting when something she brought up was considered very controversial in a way that surprised her. She said to the group that she does not see color and has no predetermination based on ethnicity, deals only with what the behavior is, and considers only the student’s individual background. The others in the committee disputed that and she said perhaps she was just too logical for them. In addition, she shared that she does not agree you have to be African American to teach African Americans. “It is important to be culturally responsive, but something has to give. Some of the best teachers I have ever seen working with students of color have not been of color. Good teaching is good teaching and does not need to change based on student race.”

In sharing a story with me about difficult conversation with teachers, the school principal (Black) said she has witnessed teachers whose biases come out in their documentation of student behavior. She finds that for many White teachers, their response is to become defensive, to say they are not racist, and that they do not see color. She is saddened, she said, by their inability to talk about race and their biases in this context.

What Behavior is “Consequencable”?

For a number of teachers, there was great concern about behavior and consequences. When asked if race was a factor when students were referred or suspended, an ELA teacher (White) said, “No, I think it’s the behavior that’s the factor.”

An eighth-grade teacher (White) seemed exasperated when she said, “We have kids running around the building and it does not matter about race. There are no consequences, so it is like the students are running the show.” She continued

What I want to know is exactly what is “consequencable,” if that is even a word because when you look at the Code of Conduct and the kids get it. They say I can do this so many times before I get into trouble.

She shared there was a student who had left her bruised and disrupted class daily that she cannot do anything about. There are some things that are restorative, she told me, and there are some things that are not. “We’re trying to do what’s best but clearly it’s not working because the kids are running the show and it has nothing to do with their race, it’s because there are no consequences.”

Another staff member (White) said, “I don’t think any one group of students is being judged more harshly than others but it’s a problem when staff and students feel there are no consequences,” She wonders if there needs to be another layer of support for schools that have a majority of Black students and thinks maybe that could be RP. However, right now as things stand at Emancipation she stated, “Everybody is running around saying I don’t know.” This was said in terms of how to handle student behavior.

This perceived lack of consequences was a constant topic in the halls as I observed teachers who were frustrated and felt that their authority had been compromised. There was a

complex classroom hierarchy that had to be followed (nonverbal reminder, verbal warning, call home, time out with another teacher) before a student could be sent to BIC. They were generally back within 15 minutes with a reflection sheet and re-entry plan that was often not followed, so the same behaviors often escalated, teachers told me.

Teachers could no longer write office referrals, only administrators and the Dean of students could. Students did what were called “restoratives” with the RP coaches but there was little communication or coordination with classroom teachers who often felt little positive effect on classroom behavior as a result of these interventions. This created what one staff member called “a demoralizing and toxic environment.” It was behavior that was the issue, not race, several teachers told me, and the solution seemed simple, bring back more significant consequences and back teachers up. One teacher suggested that by being given excuses for students’ bad behavior because of their race, poverty, culture, or whatever kind of hardship, and saying it is the school’s fault or it is somebody else’s fault, that, she felt, is where it seemed racism arises. In the move toward restorative responses for behavior issues instead of punitive responses, many staff felt extremely frustrated and the push to keep students in class felt to them like it was creating less academic success instead of more.

Deflection

When asked about race and equity, some staff chose to deflect from the topic of race and discuss what they felt was more pertinent or perhaps easier to talk about. Two staff members evaded the question entirely and others talked about issues of poverty, homelessness, incarceration, refugees, and trauma not as issues equal in impact with race but as the more relevant and important things to focus on.

Evaded Question

Four of the 14 Emancipation staff members interviewed used a variety of strategies to evade questions about race and RP. One of the RP coaches (White) said that RP were being done across the board and were not intended to specifically focus on any one racial group. Then she paused, perhaps to acknowledge that she was not answering the question she had been asked and said that she did not know enough about racial disproportionality to answer the question. While she at least noted what my question was, the instructional coach (White) said he knew why RP had been brought into the MCSD and without telling me why, shifted the topic to whether behavior should be used as an entry criterion for high school admission.

Another staff member (Black) started to say that RP does and does not affect disproportionality. When asked to explain what he meant, he shifted to an explanation of what RP is, defining it as a way to help students understand what behaviors they need to change and what happens right after the behavior occurs, so it is not a fix-it for bad behavior.

Poverty and Culture

Approximately a fourth of the staff members interviewed felt that it was not race that was the reason for the disproportionate suspension data, but rather poverty. The Dean of students (White) said what plagued the MCSD is poverty which was the driving force behind the disconnect between academics, success, and the increased rate of unacceptable social behavior. That, he maintained, is the core issue and the fact that most minority students come from impoverished homes is far more relevant than their race. He then said,

I am not sure, no, I definitely do not think that there is a concerted plan by our district to hold our minority students down, although there may be one at the state level. They

continue to lower the standards and give our urban centers the idea that academic success is not necessary for promotion.

I was not sure if he was using minority students synonymously for impoverished students or how he had moved from suspension data to promotion without academic success, but he had definitely deflected away from my question about race.

In another example, one of the eighth-grade teachers (White) said she knew of many people who said that the disproportionality was due to poverty but knew others disagreed. She then shifted the topic and said “I wonder if there aren’t people running about using disproportionality as an excuse to blame the schools, saying it’s our fault which causes people to get resentful and that’s where the racism comes in.” She started out talking about poverty being a cause and then pivoted to talk about disproportionality being weaponized as an excuse to blame the schools and reasoned that is what made people get resentful and that is where racism comes in. It was not completely clear if she feels that racism is brought in by the resentful people who are alarmed by the disproportionate data and want action taken. What does seem clear is she does not see racism as endemic to the school system, but something others bring in. Then she pivoted again and said she thinks really, it is the culture of the students and in the end, she felt everyone has some hardship and being a good person does not cost a thing. That, she concluded, is what really matters.

The sixth grade VP (White) doubled down on this notion of culture. She said she had noticed that students seem to have two sets of norms, those for at home and those for school. They often do not match, and that created a clash with parents who were not acting like parents. “Many students do not feel the school norms apply to them and so it does not matter. It is not a

race reason and although we are trying to instill consistency and continuity, we are losing the battle.” she explained.

Trauma, Refugees, Homelessness and Jail

The Community Liaison (White) said that she thought the disproportionality may be much more related to the students’ trauma and homes that do not provide a stable environment than race. When students are not getting their basic needs met and there are such big academic deficits, this is where you may see these big behaviors. She added,

This is compounded when students are struggling in school, are starving and know that a member of their family just got killed or is in prison or has seen domestic violence happening. There is so much going on in our students’ lives that if the adults in school do not know what is going on with a child, they are easily at risk of setting that child off.

She finished our conversation by telling me that she thinks nine out of ten students at Emancipation were already on the cusp of acting out before they even eat breakfast.

Ms. M., the BIC facilitator (White) explored this further, telling me that she feels the disproportionality is due to a host of multi-faceted reasons that include home life, parents in jail, homelessness, and refugees as well as poverty.

I see a mix of students in BIC, kids of all colors, so many from poverty where one parent is dead, in jail or has just disappeared and grandma is raising them. There are refugees who are going to school for the first time and are trying to integrate into a group of kids who pick, pick, pick at them so they have to defend themselves. We are trying the best we can! So, whoever is in the state capital or the Attorney General who types up these things on their computers instead needs to come here, meet these students, and make a

judgement on because you do not understand the baggage these students come with. The data they look at does not tell you what is going on with these kids, it just does not. They do not know.

One of the special education teachers (Asian) said he thinks many of the issues his students have are a result of generational poverty which he suggested is an important cause of the disproportionate data. However, he noted that many of the conflicts he sees at Emancipation are primarily African American students and wondered why. What he did not say is that in the special education wing, most of the students are African American which is a whole other matter of consternation. His deflection to generational poverty then back to an observation and concern that most conflicts he sees are between Black students left me unsure if he sees a connection between the two or if in his deflection, he realized that there was a race element that went beyond generational poverty.

Reflection

Several staff members responded to my questions about race and equity in ways that suggested reflection on race in school. The respondents who talked about being a White teacher fell into three categories: “I’m not racist,” “I am misunderstood,” and “I have to be so careful.” Another set of responses dealt with the perception of different standards toward staff and students of color and a third set dealt with looking at race and equity in schools from a more systemic, nuanced level. In this section, I examine each of these.

Being a White Teacher

In this section, I explore how the White teachers I interviewed talked about race and how they viewed their own identities working in a school where one teacher explained “the minority

is the majority.” These were often emotional conversations with these White teachers sharing their anger, frustration, defensiveness, and sense of being unfairly accused. Although some felt that the disproportionate data was invalid and others had said they did not see race, for these respondents, race became much more open for discussion not for how students might be treated because of their race, but for how teachers felt treated because of theirs.

I am not racist. Several White teachers spoke about feeling judged as racist by the State Attorney General’s report, the State Education Department, MCSD administration, community members, parents, and even students. Ms. C. was a SS teacher (White) I had observed several times and felt I had a pleasant working relationship with. She responded to my questions about race and RP with a sense of anger that surprised me,

I am sorry, but that is a bush league question. I and my colleagues are here in the trenches every day and we do not see our students as green, yellow, or purple. It makes me mad when they start talking to me about race and what it feels like they are saying is that I am not a good teacher because I am White and that is not fair. I work in a predominantly minority school by choice. I have been here longer than any other teacher and I am not racist.

Other teachers spoke with what seemed like a sad frustration of how some of their Black students perceived them. Ms. L., an ELA teacher (White) said she felt her students react differently to her because she’s White. She wondered if it is because they subconsciously think she does not understand their culture or their way of life, but she does get it, she says, and she does understand it even if they think she does not. Ms. L. shared what she says to her students, “I know you are angry, and I know why you are upset. I get it, so when you are screaming at me, it

is not that you are mad at me, but it is just what you do.” She explained she thinks this is just part of the students’ culture and how they interact with each other. She’s not sure RP can address it.

Ms. L. posits where these students’ anger comes from. She hesitated for a moment and looked at me sadly,

Sometimes kids tell you that you are racist and what they mean is you are trying to make me White. I tell them no, I am not trying to make you White, I am trying to make you part of society so you can be ready for the real world.

I am misunderstood. Another way White teachers talked about race is that they feel misunderstood, and how they had rough lives too growing up so they were more alike their students than they might realize. These staff responses seemed to attempt to minimize the importance of race and center their own experiences as being somehow equal to being of color.

As other teachers also shared, Ms. G, a special education teacher (White) said,

Sometimes I think kids will say something like “You’re racist” or “You don’t like Black people” because they just want to hurt me. It is not true, so I tell them that’s not true and act like it did not hurt me, but it did. I have worked really, really hard for my students and I am not that kind of person.

She hesitated and with a forlorn smile explained that she does her part to understand the students and where they are coming from and feels they do need to connect with people who look like them. There are a lot of students who need that. “You know, most people do not really know my story but make assumptions because of the way I look and how I am now but that is not my story. There are a lot of assumptions both ways.” Ms. G explained and added that she thinks there is an impact because she is a White, female teacher in the MCSD, but she is hoping

it can be a positive one. She hopes that she and her students can find common ground to work on and better understand each other. An eighth-grade teacher (White) said, “I’ve had a hard life and could probably give some of my kids a run for their money if we compared our stories.”

In a similar vein, one of the RP coaches, Rachel (White) said a student she works with told her, “Miss, you would never understand because you’re White and you look like a cheerleader.” The RP coach said she explained to the student that is all true for her, but she also has a background very similar to the students. Her childhood included divorce, substance abuse, mental health issues, and frequent moves. She said she tries to use these interactions as a teaching moment about stereotypes and not judging a book by its cover. Rachel shared that she knows her students perceive adults in a certain way which includes their race, but she wants them to know she is more than just “some blonde, White girl.”

I have to be so careful. Another response that White teachers spoke of was the sense that they had to be so careful about what they say and do. Ms. V., an ELA teacher (White) said,

I worry about what is bad and what is not. What is going to get us accused of being racist? As a White teacher, it makes it a bit more difficult because you are always in the back of your head making sure that you do not want to offend anybody. That is not what I am here for. I am here to teach but you have to be so careful. You just do not want to say anything that anyone could take offensively, and I try not to be offensive because that is just how I am. If I am going to say something, I try to filter it.

In reflection, she added that she wonders if perhaps in an effort to make things more equitable, the school had leaned too far and that makes their jobs as teachers all the harder.

As noted previously, many teachers felt that race was a factor in how students respond to teachers. One of the sixth-grade teachers (White) said her students responded to her differently because she is White than they did to another teacher on her team who was African American. She shared a strategy she found effective that she learned years ago from an African American teaching assistant (TA). The TA advised her to whisper into her students' ears and be very careful how she phrased things. Ms. L. said she knew the TA could say things to students as a Black teacher that she could not, and she understood that. Just like she gets that Black teachers can use Black grammar, but she cannot because it is not allowed. This sixth-grade teacher said, "It's important to be careful about things like that."

Staff of Color and Those Who are Not

In the discussion on race and equity, a number of White teachers talked about their colleagues who are of color from different stances. There were those who felt that the increased staff diversity was a wonderful thing. Out of the ninety-two staff members, approximately 40% were of color and 60% White which was a huge change from a few years prior when the staff was almost all White. Others felt there was favoritism and different standards.

Like a significant number of the staff, both Mr. N., the Art teacher (White) and Mr. O., a special education teacher (Asian), were very happy with Ms. James, the first African American principal at Emancipation Middle School. The two shared what a strong administrator she was and how her leadership in RP and other areas really made a positive difference. Mr. N. added that he would like to see even more minority teachers on staff so that all the racial things that students say to White teachers would not be an issue. "For example," he explained, "if Hispanic students had Hispanic teachers, which wouldn't work and would change the conversation in a more positive direction."

Mr. O. (Asian) however shared something that surprised him when he came to Emancipation. He said that he had thought that being a young, male Asian, students would respond to him differently than White teachers. Instead, he found that they treated him just like any other teacher and his first year was a rough one. His theory was that kids saw teachers as all having one skin color because they were nothing like them. He thought that was attributable to the students' homes and the parent do not educate their children to what a non-African American looks like or is. "So that is why we are all one color so whether I am Asian, White, Somali, we are all the same. I wish my experience had been a lot different." he explained. It appeared that he originally thought being Asian might put him in a separate category than White teachers with students but that didn't happen. However, Mr. O noted there is still some disconnect with teachers who are "non-African American" which contrasts with his theory that students see all teachers having one skin color.

Not all felt that way, Victoria (White) a RP coach, said that at first, she did not take into consideration the staff of color when she first came to Emancipation. However, what she found was there seemed to be an immediate sense of belonging, connectivity, and trust between them and students of color. There was a Black teacher, Ms. A., she said, who from her initial perspective used shame and guilt to manage her students. This concerned Victoria. because it goes against the RP philosophy, but now she was not so sure. The Black students told her that Ms. A. understands them, and White teachers do not. She thought more and said she also knew of a Hispanic teacher who did an outstanding job developing relationships with challenging children that most other adults had trouble with. Victoria said she thinks students are very aware of race and have a lack of trust for those of different races. She wondered what her students think when they see her White skin.

The Community Specialist (White) said she had talked to several African American teachers about their behavior management and how they do not seem to struggle as much as many White teachers do. She thought it might have to do with the tone of voice, the way students are spoken to, or perhaps it is because there is a common understanding of their shared culture and expectations.

A few teachers voiced concern about what they perceived to be the different standards that teachers of color are held to. One of the special education teachers (White) said she felt that sometimes the administration targeted those staff members who are not a minority more than those who are and there is more leniency with teachers of color.

Too Loud: Teacher Bias toward Student Behavior

Although many teachers talked about how the disproportional suspension data was invalid and that referrals and suspensions were due to behavior that was not related to race, not everyone saw it that way. Ms. M. (White), the BIC facilitator, spent her days with students who needed a reset or had a referral, so she saw all students in all grades, all day who were having behavioral issues in class. In my interview with her, she shared two different scenarios that she had seen repeatedly over her seven years at Emancipation. Ms. M. said,

Well, if you have an African American boy who is running around, banging on doors, skipping class, and making a nuisance of himself, he is going to get into trouble because he is causing issues. You could have another kid skipping class who might be Asian or Caucasian, but he is hiding. Who is going to get the suspension?

I wondered because the offense was the same, they both skipped class. Ms. M. continued,

It is going to be the African American kid because he is the one causing issues and that is what you see when you look at the data. That is what it is, kids who say I am going to skip, and I am going to throw garbage cans so that is why they get caught up.

Ms. M. gave me another example telling me about three girls, two were Black and one was White. Two of the girls had loud, obnoxious voices she explained, so when they say suck my whatever, you are going to hear it. They asked her what about the White girl who said the same thing and did not get a consequence. Ms. M. said she asked them if the White girl had been as loud as they had. She told them,

It is the loud ones who are going to get into trouble when they scream, holler, and say obscenities. So, when students come in and tell me that the teacher only yells at them because they are Black. I asked them how loud you were compared to the other ones. It is not about your color or because you are wearing your red sweatshirt, it is because you are the louder and most annoying one.

Ms. M. felt this supported her opinion that the disproportionate suspension data was invalid but as I think of her examples and the different behavior incidences I witnessed during my observations, I wonder. If the same behavior gets different consequences depending on how loud or annoying the student is and the students in trouble are primarily of color and those that do the same thing but are quieter, get no consequence or a smaller one, what is the message to students? How teachers perceive behavior, what is “consequencable” and what is not, who gets referrals and who does not is important particularly when the data shows such disproportionality and being louder and more annoying perhaps supports questions of bias more than repudiates it as Ms. M. suggests.

I observed a conversation between two White teachers about racial bias. One said that he felt there were teachers who were biased on “both halves” as he put it and that some were biased toward students of color and others biased against. He explained that it was more a form of ignorance than maliciousness. The other teacher said she found that there was a much larger racial divide between staff than students which she felt was terrible. It was not clear if this racial divide was in how students were being treated, which is what the first teacher was referring to in a way that seemed to minimize the problems with teacher bias. He seemed to suggest that it was just a form of ignorance, not maliciousness. I wondered if he felt that was the cause of the disproportionate data, this teacher bias that he seemed to think was benign and there were teachers he saw as favoring students of color, so perhaps it seemed it all evened out to him. This minimization and misunderstanding of the potential impact of bias reminded me of one of the eighth-grade teachers (White) who told me, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen implicit bias and I know I don’t try to behave in that way at all.”

When the suspension data was disaggregated, it was not only the African- American males and females who were suspended much more frequently than the rest of the population, it was also the same for special education students. Both of the special education teachers (White and Asian) spoke of their concerns that their self-contained classes were all Black boys and how that happened.

A More Systemic Look at Race, Equity, and Identity

In this section, I examine the responses about race and equity that involved a more reflective, systemic look at the issues. I had only one White respondent who shared in this way. Victoria, one of the RP coaches, told me that she recently learned about White privilege and was struggling to both understand it and to accept it. She had been thinking about what it means to be

White and work with so many students of color. Victoria said she had conversations about race with her students and it was not comfortable, but it was needed. She considered what students thought as they looked at her Whiteness and said she believed that students were very aware of race in ways that were personal, systemic, historical, and the forefront of their existence. “I wonder how in this country Whiteness can be overlooked as part of one’s identity, whereas Blackness is sometimes all people can see.” Victoria pondered.

I shadowed Gregory, one of the African American RP coaches four times during my study. I found out many things about him: the breadth and depth of his education and experience working with high need populations, his views on RP, his love and pride for his family, and the impressive way he used humor and respect in his restorative work with students. What I did not learn was how he felt about race and RP despite my questions. At one point he said, “You can’t blame a problem with a problem” when asked about the disproportionate suspension numbers and then shared with me that he thought teachers’ jobs were so difficult. Next, he said, in what seemed metaphorical,

If all the walls are always blue, you might want to say they have always been and will always be blue, but I might say no, have you thought about changing them to light brown? It is important that we face the need to challenge ourselves to think outside the box. We can never grow, and we can never teach our students to grow if we do not. How can we expect students not to fall into the School to Prison Pipeline if the educators who are teaching them are not willing to grow and learn and change?

Another time, Gregory described how RP are built on building relationships and trust. “If you allow children to believe you are going to carry them out of the storm, that you sleep where

they sleep and eat what they eat, they will trust you.” he said. He stopped for a moment and looked at me intently before adding:

I am very conscious of how I build relationships with students, what I share about myself and what I do not. I check in with them often, and I make them laugh. I observe them carefully before I address them, think about what I know about them, where they are at this moment and consider their tone, their voice, and their body language.

Ms. James, the African American school principal, did not directly talk about RP and race when asked. However, she shared with me her concerns about the assumptions that people made about her,

The staff needs to learn that just because my skin color is the same as the students does not mean that only I can control them. It does not mean that I grew up in the same way they have or had the same problems or level of trauma.

She told me that she had grown up in an upper middle-class neighborhood in a large metropolitan city and both her parents were college educated. The norms, the culture, and the belief systems she grew up with were as different from these students as many of the staff members. It did not mean she did not love them or did not try to help them as much as she could, Ms. James explained, but she was troubled by the assumptions people made about her because of the color of her skin and how students related to her.

In a different conversation about whether teachers were being restorative or not, Ms. James described calling in a teacher who had written what she described as a “culturally insensitive” referral. Ms. James asked the teacher to reread her referral and what she would say about it if she were the principal. The teacher said she was clearly upset when she wrote it and

the principal said she could tell. Ms. James shared she has found this to be one of best ways to handle such a problem. These teachers' responses, she said, tended to be "OMG, I can't believe I wrote that." Ms. James added,

I do not have to say anything more, but these teachers have to see that because they wrote it (the referral) in the heat of the moment and then to really think about it. After that, I do not have to say much. But this is the work I must do. So, this is a setting collectively run by people who want the right things for these children, and we need to take care of them and show them the way.

Malik, one of the RP coaches, said he was concerned about the PTSD that he felt many Black students suffer from. He told me that in this case, PTSD stands for Post Traumatic Slave Disorder. Malik explained that the problem with schools is that they are funded by the government and that the education system as we know it has not been set up for the success of all children. He added,

We (people of color) are bombarded with a Eurocentric system, and we can maneuver seamlessly into your White world, but it is not reciprocal. I tell kids you cannot be a hood CEO unless you are the one who founded it. You have to have the vernacular and be able to code switch but do not bring that vernacular into the street.

Malik ended our conversation by telling me that one important way to improve schools is to teach adults just to be real humans and to put all their prior beliefs aside so what's left is our common human experience.

The most prolific response that I received was during my interview with Samuel Herbson, the national RP consultant to the MCS D throughout the initiation and continuation of the implementation. He told me,

We have an issue in this country that we need to deal with. People are always looking for the silver bullet, some panacea to address the racial divide that has been developed throughout our history, and I would be very foolish to think RP could magically solve those racial differences that go back to 1619. It is important to ask ourselves what is it that we are restoring our children to with our great circles in schools and community forums when our students go home to injustice in their communities: domestic violence, police brutality, sexual assault, and structural and systemic racism.

Mr. Herbson added that it may be too aspirational to think that RP could address issues of race but what it can do is open the door to such important conversations. However, he cautioned that RP does not go far enough to raise a consciousness that a group of people have been systemically marginalized. White privilege and implicit bias do exist. “White educators must see these problems and be willing to move beyond their implicit bias and racial lens to build the needed relationships so that all children see themselves as valued citizens of America.” Mr. Herbson shared that in this way RP can, in part, support another way of interacting that addresses these historic, systemic, and structural ills.

Chapter Summary

In my interviews and conversations with staff members at Emancipation about race, equity, and RP, and race in general, I found that the responses I received fell into three categories: rejection, deflection, or reflection.

One of the ways that staff responded to my questions about race, equity, and RP was to reject that race was an issue at all. Some disputed the validity of the disproportional suspension data showing a marked lack of understanding about statistical methods. However, these teachers were sure the real reason was that because there were more African American students, there were more African American suspensions.

A second form of rejection was to claim colorblindness. Often these staff members seemed angry and defensive that anyone would see them as racist. One vice principal said she did not see color, much to the dismay of her fellow administrators who were unable to convince her this was untrue, and she walked away thinking they just did not get her logic. Others spoke of not caring if students were green, blue, white, they saw all students the same. In the course of a few minutes, one teacher said she felt upset, she felt angry, and then she felt irritated when anyone suggested she was a racist because she did not see color, so it was a “very sensitive subject” for her.

The third rejection response was to say that the issue was not race at all but rather student behavior and the lack of consequences. They argued that it was the behavior in question, not the race of the student who had caused referrals or suspensions. In the current climate, because of all the changes in the Code of Conduct and use of RP, the misbehavior was felt to have accelerated. Students and teachers both felt there was much more leeway for the tolerance of misbehavior leading one teacher to say that she did not even know what behavior was “consequencable” anymore.

The staff members who used deflection to respond to my questions about race, equity and disproportionate suspension data did not question the validity of the statistics in the way that those who used rejection did nor did they necessarily say that race is not an issue. Instead, what

they seemed to say was that it was not the most salient of the many issues that affect Emancipation students and put it more on a back burner. They moved the conversation away from race, some by evading the question completely but others deflected by passionately discussing issues of poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, incarcerated parents, unstable environment, and students who are not getting their basic needs met. They spoke of refugees who had never gone to school before and students who are just barely hanging on emotionally when they get to school. Similarly, to the staff who responded with rejection, these staff members wanted people from State Education Department to come to their school and meet the students. They wanted them to understand all the baggage that students carry and how none of that is reflected in the data that could identify Emancipation as a failing school with disproportionate suspension numbers.

My participants used three different ways that showed reflection about race, RP, identity, and school. In the first way, I looked at how a significant number of my White respondents felt about being a White teacher and their perspectives about not being a racist, being misunderstood, and having to be so careful in what they said and did.

The second category of reflection included thoughts on staff of color, student relationships, and bias. Teachers spoke of perceived different standards, of how students responded differently toward teachers of color, and how teachers responded toward different student behaviors.

In the third category, I examined reflections that were more systemic, and equity minded. One was from a White staff member who questioned how her Whiteness affected her perceptions of her students and race as well as how it affected their perception of her. I also looked at the responses from the four staff members who were Black. They spoke of race, explicitly or

implicitly, on a systemic, societal level, on a personal level of self-identity and being in relationship with students and staff. These respondents also shared what steps each of them was taking personally and professionally to help their colleagues learn and grow. Overall, they saw RP as a way to open doors to important conversations but that their White colleagues would need to go beyond their racial lens, prior beliefs, and implicit bias to do so.

This study showed that in an initiative such as RP that is implemented in part or whole to address issues of racial disparity, talking about race is critical. Although the issue of racial inequity was why RP were brought into the MCSD, it did not appear that any substantive conversations about race had taken place with the White teachers in this study. For those who did know that the RP implementation was due to racial disproportionality, they seemed to dismiss that as inaccurate, or insignificant. RP cannot address issues of race without a race-cognizant lens. Talking about race is hard but not talking about it only exacerbates the problems.

There were three recurrent themes in my findings. The first theme was the discursive moves that these White teachers made to avoid talking about race. They denied that there was racial inequity in the disciplinary practices of the MCSD by doubting the validity of the statistics that said so or deflected the conversation to move from talking about race to other social ills that they felt were more important such as poverty, parental incarceration, homelessness, drugs, trauma, and violence. One commented on behavioral issues, a result of the culture of some of the students' homes in what appeared to be a veiled reference to race. Several teachers used an "equalizing of experiences" to say that they had much more in common with their students than they realized as they too had come from broken homes, from poverty and had addiction issues in their families. These moves appeared intended to silence our conversation about race and move it to more "comfortable" social issues.

The second theme was the pervasive White fragility of my participants who became defensive and dismissive when asked about racial inequity. One berated me for asking such bush league questions and another spoke of how sensitive a topic race was for her and she preferred not to talk about it. These teachers countered with how they felt victimized as White teachers because they had to be so careful about what they said and did so students did not call them racist. Several complained about the preferential treatment some felt Black teachers were given and how they could say things to Black students that White teachers were not, as one teacher put it, allowed to. They lamented about how misunderstood they felt and how they did not get credit for choosing to teach what they called a “majority minority school” so how could they be racist. My questions were about the systemic nature of inequitable disciplinary data and practices, but these teachers instead made it about them and personalized or self-referenced not the experience of their students of color but of their experience as White teachers. They gave evidence to the presence of White fear, White talk, and White ignorance.

The third related theme was the concern that their very goodness as teachers was being questioned. Many pointed out their colorblind ideology as a sign of their goodness. They did not see color. It did not matter if a child was blue, green, or red, they treated all children the same. Referrals were written only based on behavior, the idea that race was a factor was repugnant to them. One grew frustrated with me as she explained she came in early and left late every day, doing her best to meet the needs of all her students, and she was tired of all this talk about racism. The fact that I even mentioned racial inequity was seen as a personal affront to them and their concept of themselves as good teachers and as good people. This does raise the question of how you can be a good teacher for students of color if you cannot handle a conversation about race and practices that are detrimental for your students that you may perpetuate by not being

willing to even entertain them is a problem. Racism is not only the overt actions that are obviously discriminatory but also in the covert actions of the well-intentioned and the endemic presence of implicit bias.

In Chapter Eight, I offer a more expansive discussion on how the focus on the “how” of implementing RP should only happen with a thorough unpacking of the “why.” Race is an essential topic within the training and implementation of an initiative brought in directly to address issues of racial inequity. Teachers who dismiss the very idea of disproportional data due to a lack of understanding of statistics, teachers who do not understand the historic issues of race in education and the inherent problems the punitive, exclusionary system of disciplinary practices have created that has led to such inequity, are not able to practice RP with integrity or in a way that will address this critical social justice issue.

I conclude my findings chapters with Chapter 6 about authority and RP and Chapter 7, a systemic analysis of change and Emancipation Middle School’s implementation of RP. In Chapter 8, I analyze all of these findings and include a section on the intersection of how race, equity, authority, and RP were negotiated within the RP implementation at this school.

Chapter 7: Findings on Authority and Restorative Practices

In Chapter 7, I share my findings that pertain to the rest of my research question: “How does a school negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?”. One of the tenets of RP is that it is a philosophical shift away from traditional, punitive, authoritarian ways of dealing with students that focuses on positive relationships and a supportive environment that results in a change in school culture. How schools negotiate authority within the implementation of RP both in the ways students are dealt with and how the school is run overall is a big part of how school culture is changed. It is foundational to RP that authority is shared, and students are seen as agential. This chapter will explore if and how that was happening at Emancipation Middle School.

Chapter 7 looks at authority from three relational perspectives: (1) shared authority, (2) as it is experienced by those who are subject to others’ authority, and (3) as it is experienced by those who are in positions of authority. The first section discusses how Emancipation used shared authority structures in Year A and how they fared in Year B. The second section “Being subjected to the authority of others” discusses how the principal and school staff perceived the State Education Department’s and MCSD Central Office’s authority over the school and how the staff and BPO RP staff perceived the principal’s authority over them. The final section “Having authority over others” section shares the perceptions of school staff of their own authority over their students, the perceptions of the principal of her authority over her staff, students, and Best Practices Organization and two of the VP’s and Dean of students about their authority over staff and students. Following that, I discuss ways in which language, a tool of authority, was used in restorative and non-restorative ways. In these sections, the underlying question is how Emancipation Middle School negotiated authority and whether these power relationships show

evidence of a school culture change away from top-down authoritarianism and toward the more collaborative and egalitarian structure RP embodies.

Shared Authority

In Year A, Emancipation had a number of shared authority structures in place. The School Climate and Discipline Committee provided a structure of shared authority between the staff, administration, and BPO as well as the biweekly meetings between Mr. Roberts and Lauren which provided for collaboration and shared authority between BPO and Emancipation. Having RP coaches in each VP's office also allowed for daily collaboration and shared authority as did having RP coaches assigned to every team to build teacher capacity and support students.

Daily morning circles where all staff were assigned to classrooms provided shared authority to ensure these community building meetings took place and staff and students got to know each other in important ways. RP coaches were in and out of classrooms all day to support teachers and students in a manner that allowed for shared authority, ongoing communication, and follow-up between teachers, RP coaches, and students. Students had multiple ways to get support for conflict resolution, skill building, and behavior issues, often at their request in a way that shared authority. W.E.B. provided opportunities for student leadership. PD was offered weekly, and the choice of topics was open to staff and administrative. All of these avenues of shared authority in place in Year A were powerful, proactive, and promising of a shift in the power dynamics, the culture change, and the level of collaboration supportive of RP. In Year B, these structures had nearly all disappeared.

In another means of moving away from more traditional top-down punitive authority, restorative language was used by staff in a way that valued and empowered students as well as building proactive relationships. Teachers spoke of talking to students about not looking to give

consequences or “punitives,” as they called them, but to use behavior concerns as a learning opportunity. De-escalation was used with parents, with students, and with staff to provide a means to get to a point where conversations could take place. Ms. Livingston and Mr. Z. shared that they wanted to help to coach teachers in ways to be more restorative in their interactions with students. This ability to “share authority” shown by respecting, valuing, empowering, and supporting students was essential for building the kind of school-wide culture change RP requires. All of these helped move Emancipation toward a model of shared authority essential to the success of RP in Year A.

Being Subjected to the Authority of Others

There are two different areas of authority that members of the Emancipation staff shared with me that were done or imposed upon them without their input, feedback, or discussion. The first was the authority that the State Education Department and the MCSD Central Office had over the school in general and the principal specifically, that significantly shaped decisions that were made. The second was the authority that the principal wielded over the staff. Due to the constraints of this research project, the students’ perceptions of authority were not possible to obtain. In each of these areas, I will examine how staff members viewed authority within a relational power dynamic as whom has authority over whom, how it was implemented, and how the authority was perceived.

State Education Department/MCSD Central Office’s Authority over the Principal

Emancipation Middle School had previously been identified as a “struggling” school by the State Education Department and placed in receivership based on scores on the state ELA and math tests. As a result, a series of changes were mandated and the current principal and at least

50% of the current staff had to be replaced. Ms. James was hired in 2015 to remove Emancipation from the state receivership list by showing annual significant improvement. This required improvement in test scores was monitored by the State Education Department which published state-wide annual school report cards with ELA and Math state test scores. In the two years prior to this study, improvement was shown but the pressure to do more was enormous, Ms. James, the school principal told me.

In the second year of this study, Year B, the State Education Department added suspension and attendance numbers to their success criteria in addition to ELA and Math scores. Monitors from the State Education Department and from the MCSD Central Office visited Emancipation throughout the year. Quarterly standardized assessments were given to students to monitor their progress and the MCSD middle school department head sent out weekly statistics on suspension and attendance numbers creating a competition between the four MCSD middle schools. These reports listed each school's data in rank order and awards were given to schools who did the best with the lowest suspensions and highest attendance.

Ms. James felt this pressure to improve from the authority above her intensely. She explained that it was fine that Best Practices Organization (BPO) created data reports that showed how many RP were happening at Emancipation, what time of day, for whom, and where. This was all well and good, but, in the end, if BPO was unable to show their work was a factor in meeting the success criteria the State Education Department mandated on suspension numbers, attendance and test scores, Ms. James questioned the value of their RP work. The recognition of the value of BPO and RP was further diminished when the MCSD reduced the number of RP coaches from five to two and removed building teacher capacity from the contract with BPO to being solely a service delivery presence.

In addition, it was the MCSD Central Office and Board of Education who further diminished the implementation of RP at Emancipation Middle School when they:

- a) eliminated the funding for the extended day and enrichment block that had been instrumental for the essential planning, collaboration, oversight, and staff development for RP
 - b) precipitated the building schedule change that reduced the time available for morning circles
 - c) transferred Mr. Roberts, who led the RP implementation, to another school
 - d) changed the professional development focus from being determined at the school level by the principal and School Improvement Committee to district led focused on academic departments.
- All of these had significant impact on the RP implementation at Emancipation and all were imposed on Emancipation and the principal by the external authority of the MCSD.

The Principal's Authority over the Staff

Ms. James' authority as the principal of Emancipation Middle School in the building was as top-down as the authority the State Education Department and MCSD Central Office wielded over her. She was fully in charge and ran the school as she saw appropriate to reach the goals she had been given. Ms. James' administrative team included two vice principals, an administrative intern, and a dean of students. She also directly oversaw two security guards, a hall monitor, the BIC and ISS rooms for resets and in-school suspension, and teacher deans who were assigned hall duty. For student support, there were two guidance counselors, two social workers, and a school psychologist. Ms. James was very clear that each of these answered directly to her. Emancipation was her school, the students were her children and as Ms. James explained, the buck stopped with her. She took responsibility for all that happened in the school and expected her staff, as well as the students, to respect her authority.

In a more nebulous role, there were five community-based organizations (CBOs) the MCSD subcontracted with who had their staff in place at Emancipation to support students Best Practices Organization (BPO), Freedom Partnership, Orange Academy, Reach Out, and All You Can Be. Each agency had their own supervisors and own schedules for pulling staff out of the school for trainings and meetings. They worked in partnership with Ms. James, but she was not directly in charge of them.

The BPO RP supervisor, Lauren, met several times with Ms. James to ensure there was a clear understanding of the contractual role the RP coaches were intended to fulfill. Ms. James wanted the BPO RP coaches to carry walkie talkies, do hall duty, come immediately when requested, and provide services in a large communal room that allowed for little confidentiality or privacy when working with students, Lauren told her that none of those were in their job description or allowed for them to provide the services contracted for. Ms. James found this extremely frustrating and remarked that she would be much happier if they were MCSD staff and could do what she felt was the best use of their time.

Transitions were a huge priority for Ms. James in Year B, and she explained that she made sure that everyone knew their roles. The year before she felt she had dropped the ball on hallway behavior, and she was determined that would not happen again. When the bell rang between classes, all staff including herself, stopped whatever they were doing and went into their assigned hall posts to assist with an orderly transition and support what Ms. James called the essential implementation of HALLS. Ms. James would quiz students on what it meant and if a class was not following HALLS hallway procedure, they would be sent back with their teacher to where they had started. When this happened to one class I observed, the teacher was so upset, she started to cry in front of the students. Ms. James said:

It is important that students know what HALLS looks like and to practice it and to hold teachers accountable because a lot of times when our systems fail, it is because they are not holding students to be true to them and that is our fault. That is why even as administrators, we need to oversee the teachers to make sure that they are following through.

In Ms. James' office there were three computer monitors and a series of walkie talkie chargers. Every administrator, the dean of students, the teacher deans, ISS, OSS, the hall monitors, and security guards all had walkies and with Lauren's reluctant compromise, the RP coaches. In between transitions, Ms. James often sat at her desk monitoring the building, which had cameras strategically placed throughout. There were twenty snapshots of locations she could see at one time and maximize their size as needed to see what exactly was happening. Teachers said that it felt like Big Brother was watching them. As she observed, Ms. James would call into her walkie things like, "Where is Mr. T? He is not on his post." "There are children running in the 7th grade hallway out of class". "All administrators report to the café, there's a fight," "Mr. P a student needs support in BIC." "Security needed in room 224", "I see a scholar in the gym. Is he supervised?," "A student is missing, please check all restrooms," "Support to 229 all teacher deans", and "I'm not sure that's helpful, Mr. F."

Teachers were under strict guidelines about how they should handle student behavior. Each room has the CLASS (Come to class on time, listen to all directions, actively participate, sit in assigned area) acronym poster displayed, and those expectations were to be taught, implemented, and reinforced. Misbehavior was classified under the MCSD Code of Conduct with leveled offenses. Teachers must follow the school-wide hierarchy of reminder, warning, time out in a partner teacher room, action plan, call home, and follow up. If all of those were

exhausted, then a referral to the behavior intervention room was possible for a reset. Students went to the Behavior Intervention Center (BIC), talked with an adult, completed a reflection paper with a plan to improve, and returned to class often before the bell rang for the next class. Upper-level offenses could result in ISS or OSS but only as determined by an administrator, the dean of students, or the BIC facilitator, not teachers. If a referral was deemed inappropriate, teachers might receive what Ms. M., the BIC facilitator called a “mean email” or be called in to an administrator to discuss the problem. Tallies were kept of which teachers wrote the most BIC and office referrals which were used as part of their evaluation process.

There were some teachers at Emancipation who felt that Ms. James was a wonderful principal who was supportive, hands on, and had made a very positive impact on a building that ran through five principals in three years prior to her arrival. There were others who felt that there was a growing toxic environment in the school as staff morale declined, a sense of favoritism increased, and teachers did not feel backed up in terms of student discipline.

The Principal’s and MCSD’s Authority over Best Practices Organization

Lauren, the BPO RP supervisor said initially she felt that Ms. James was fully committed to RP, that she really believed in it, and was willing to put time, money, and staff toward the implementation. However, after Mr. Roberts left, she felt that instead, Ms. James wanted more people to react to kids in crisis whether that was true to the intent of RP or not. “My people are caring, empathetic individuals who are doing amazing work with 1300 kids. It might not be the work the district wants but it is not shit work and I am thankful that kids are being respected, de-escalated, and heard.”

Ms. James said she knew her lens on how RP should look was in conflict with Lauren's but hers was aligned with the state rubric and tenets that she felt define what the impact of RP needed to be. "I think it has been a clash of A type women so what she (Lauren) thinks is suitable for the building is not what I think. I love Lauren to death socially but meeting with her might not turn out as you would like it to" Ms. James said in reference to a meeting I had hoped to set up with BPO RP coaches, Lauren, and her. She was dissatisfied with the data BPO provided for her on the number and type of RP the coaches were implementing. Ms. James wanted to know exactly what skills were being addressed in skill groups, how they translated into the classroom, what the outcomes were intended to be, and how they would be measured. The report as written was too broad and too vague, she said.

When Ms. James attempted to direct the BPO staff to do what she wanted she explained, they would often say "that's not what I'm supposed to do" because it is something they truly did not want to do. She shared she often felt her CBO staff was poorly supervised with little accountability, strolling in and out as they please. She told me again she would prefer these positions to be MCSD staff so she could be fully in charge of them. Lauren shared that she had finally told her BPO RP coaches to follow as closely as possible what their contract stipulated their jobs were intended to be but that there needed to be peace in the building so do what Ms. James asked within reason.

As it stood in year B, the two RP coaches sent in weekly schedules to Ms. James, carried the walkies Lauren would rather they did not and were only allowed to work with ISS re-entries, skill groups, and mediations during lunch. The rest of their time was spent with students in crisis and when Ms. James called them on the walkie, the two RP coaches stopped what they were doing and came. Lauren said she had asked Victoria and Gregory to follow the RP training they

had to the best of their ability under these circumstances while maintaining a working relationship with Ms. James.

“We feel like first responders going to emergency after emergency” said RP coach, Victoria. Gregory suggested that Ms. James did not want to relinquish control. Neither one of them was happy and said they felt their impact on students was much smaller than the prior year when they were assigned to only one grade level and were in and out of classrooms to support both students and teachers. Now the two RP coaches each had two grade levels and primarily worked with students who had already been suspended so their work was much more reactive than proactive. Lauren wondered if, at the end of the year, she might reassign the RP coaches to a different school who wanted to work with her more collaboratively than Ms. James. There was currently a waiting list of MCSD schools who wanted RP. If this occurred, it would end what had been overall a productive five-year relationship.

Having Authority Over Others

Authority that a person has over others is what happens when they are in charge. In this section, I examine how those in authority perceived and used their power over others, specifically how the principal, Ms. James thought about her authority over her staff and how the staff thought of their authority over students as well as how RP was perceived to affect that authority.

Teachers' Authority over Students

A considerable number of teachers felt that their authority had been deeply compromised and students thought they had a free pass before any consequences were enforced. Some teachers were concerned about their own safety as well as that of other students. They noted that it was a

minority of the students who caused a majority of the problems. Their efforts to establish positive relationships with students, to nurture and value them, and to provide quality instruction worked with most students.

Some questioned the lack of consistency and clear expectations. Mr. N., the art teacher said, “I think in the beginning of the year, you have to be insanely strict and consistent with high expectations. I do not know why consistency is such a problem, but it is.” Others voiced concern over the role of RP coaches whom they felt seemed to be hyper-student-first often taking their side although many students, teachers said, may often lie about what really happened which could cause a clash. Ms. V., an eighth-grade teacher said, “Ideally a restorative coach should talk to the teacher prior to the restorative but I’m not sure that ever happens.” She shared that she had seen colleagues become callous when they did not feel they were being listened to or valued and once one became callous, it was difficult to be receptive to another adult asking you to see things from another angle. “Sometimes, it’s like if a student punched a teacher and everyone has a different feeling about physical violence and pain, sometimes a lot of baggage shows up in these situations and it’s difficult.” These differing views of what were appropriate ways of handling behaviors were evident throughout my interviews. The “baggage” that Ms. V. referred to included implicit bias and authoritarian mindsets needed to be unpacked and addressed to get everyone on board with RP but most often, was not.

Ms. M, the BIC facilitator said that teachers often think RP takes authority away from them, but they need to take ownership also,

You cannot just kick kids out because they are disruptive, and you want to teach and say good-bye forever. We (BIC, the RP coaches, the dean of students) handle it on our end and when the student is ready to return some teachers will say “No, I said good-bye and

you are gone” then the kid goes off on a whole other level and the relationship between them is damaged even further. It does in some ways take away from teachers, but they have to own up. RP may create some hostile conversations, but just as we tell the kids, own up.

The majority of teachers I spoke with complained about a lack of consequences for the general population and in particular for specific students with IEP’s (Individual Education Plans) or level 4 SEL (Social Emotional Learning) needs. They felt that no matter what the behavior, these students did not get consequences. They attributed some of this to state regulations on dealing with behavior related to a student’s disability. One ELA teacher said she understood to some extent why “but it’s like a Catch 22 because we are trying not to get shut down so the administrators are trying to protect us by not referring; if we referred every incident, we would definitely get shut down.”

Two eighth grade teachers discussed how there needed to be both “punitives” and “restoratives” as they called RP, not just restoratives without consequences. They were particularly concerned about times when there had been sexual incidents and that those offending students should not have remained at the school. These teachers were concerned they said about the many vulnerable young girls who were scared to be on the bus or in the halls and did not feel safe. However, the students of concern who behaved in these sexually inappropriate ways were still attending Emancipation.

Ms. C., a Social Studies teacher, said,

Restoratives are perfect for students who can handle understanding how their behavior was inappropriate and can make changes but when, for one student, it continues and

continues, and the restoratives continue and continue, then there needs to be a line drawn for that because it can mentally affect the victims for a long, long time.

Another teacher agreed there needed to be more “punitives” for certain behaviors “because that’s what happens when students get out in society, and we need to mirror that a little more.” Ms. V., an ELA teacher, noted that she felt RP had stripped them of a lot of their authority so now kids thought that nothing happened when they broke school rules, and they feared nothing now. “Not that I want them to fear me, I would rather have their respect but when they do something wrong and I say I am going to call mom, they say they do not care, and when I say I am going to write you up, they say I do not care so I don’t know. I just feel like it is (RP) are not being implemented properly.”

Other teachers were concerned that even when consequences were given and RP were implemented, students did not know why, and they did not get the reasoning behind RP. These teachers shared that this kept problems from truly being solved. “It’s like the kid who keeps saying “I’m sorry” but never fixes the problem and figures out how to work the system: this is like the student I watched who was suspended for hitting others, came back at the end of the day, waiting until just before the buses were called and started slapping students in the head again. She did not care, I watched it with my own eyes.” explained Ms. L. a sixth-grade teacher.

There were some staff who felt that their efforts to develop positive relationships with students and to really listen to them has made their students respect them more. Ms. G., a special education teacher said what matters is:

They know I try to be fair to them. When I get off on the wrong foot with a student, I make time to sit with them and talk it through. When I need to apologize, I do, and we

start brand new. It is great. RP is really powerful. I don't force students to apologize because it's not helpful if they don't mean it.

Another teacher in a similar vein said:

When students do something wrong, we don't say we're going to "consequence" you, instead we say we are going to sit down with you and talk this through so kids are coming out and shaking hands, moving forward without suspension and that's good. They are learning a better way to solve problems that I hope they take to high school and beyond.

Dean of Students' Authority over Students and Teachers

Although Mr. Z. saw his role as supporting both students and teachers, he felt concerned when teachers fell back to yelling. He noted some were so stressed out that some of their students were sent to BIC for what he felt were ridiculous reasons and others should be sent to BIC but were not. Personally, Mr. Z. said he started out as a punitive teacher, but it did not work for him, so he became more restorative and wondered if for him it was more of an intuitive thing. He said he was not in charge of teachers but saw himself more as a coach in his role as the dean of students, but he did have the power to override referrals so when it was needed, he did. Mr. Z. recognized how frustrated teachers were with what they saw as their loss of authority, which he acknowledged made them feel devalued and diminished. For example, Mr. Z. shared that recently a student hit an administrator and was suspended for three days. If it had been a teacher, it would only have been one day if at all.

"What is the responsibility of teachers?" Mr. Z considered and said that some take on too much of a "strongman stance" and get into power struggles that only escalate situations, where others let things slide that they should not. Sometimes it was the teachers being immature and

others it was the students who were immature and often prone to violence and walking out of class. “Teachers are so stressed out and pushed away from using referrals, especially new teachers and are told it’s their management that’s the problem.”

“When teachers say their authority has been taken away,” Mr. Z further explained, “I question what authority they really have. The district may have authority over teachers to hire or fire, to evaluate as proficient or deficient but they do not, and now we don’t, have authority over the students.” He went on to say that now teachers were not allowed to fail students, were not allowed to suspend students, and were being told to keep students in class, it had become problematic. The punitive model allowed one to force compliance by what could be taken away but those deterrents had become less meaningful, less acceptable, and less viable so teachers felt their authority had been taken away.

Mr. Z stated:

Restorative is that I am going to grow in this individual the capacity for self-motivation, intrinsic motivation, to care about others and how their negative actions affect others and to foster compliance by growing individuals who want to follow societal norms.

He paused and wondered if the two models intersected then said he was not sure about that, but he knew they could be used in tandem. “So, I still use punishment to get attention and then I follow up with a restorative to mend that relationship because in the long run, that’s what’s going to have an impact.”

Vice Principals’ Authority over Students and Staff

Ms. Darlington, the eighth grade VP, said she always tried to consider the student’s situation before she considered a consequence; when a student cut another’s hair, she felt that

was impulsive rather than premeditated, so it became a lesser offense. Overall, she believed in beginning with an appropriate punitive response and then following up with a restorative.

Ms. Livingston, the sixth grade VP explained her perspective:

I think deep down inside, within the issue (of teacher authority) is a teacher's tendency not to let go and I don't know if that's inherent on the teacher side of the equation. I don't know if that's because of how we have our power system set up, but I don't think we've done a good job of walking teachers through the process.

She felt that at some point teachers had to know when enough is enough but also know when they needed to have a tolerance level for certain behaviors and an intolerance for others. "It is part of being human, but it is not ok to crucify a child for making a mistake. We need to back up and revisit the whole thinking and processing teachers have to go through in dealing with students." She noted that a lot of teachers have had pushback to RP, and she thought that actually punitives and restoratives can and should go hand in hand.

Ms. Livingston shared that she knew most teachers were trying to hold students accountable and build relationships but there had been more student pushback, more aggressive behavior which meant having students engaged in class was a struggle. She had heard the teachers who said students were learning there were no consequences but did not think that was fair. Overall, Ms. Livingston said there was still much work to be done and she met with her team to problem solve these issues frequently.

Principal's Authority Over Staff and Students

Ms. James said that she had worked hard to develop positive relationships with students and families and that she had a tough love approach to both students and staff. She said she knew

she was relentless about staff accountability but felt that she was also very warm and concerned toward each individual. She had made a point to know all of their names and as many details as she could about each. She was observed to be as apt to compliment as she was to find fault and often responded to situations with great compassion. For example, when a student told her she was too sad to talk, Ms. James took her hand, and they sat in silence. Another student spoke of getting kicked out of class because she would not remove her head covering which, when gently questioned, turned out to be because she was having a bad hair day. Ms. James helped her style her hair and spoke of how lovely a natural look was on her before walking the student back to class.

Ms. James was expert at de-escalating situations such as when an irate parent came into the school looking to take out the school secretary whom she felt had disrespected her. Ms. James approached her. She said “I can see you’re upset. Please come into my office so I can listen carefully to what you want me to know.” The parent who was ready to fight, paused, sputtered a bit and when Ms. James put her arm around her, walked calmly toward the office together. At times I observed a vulnerability and sense of self-awareness of the authority she wielded, how she intended it and how it could be perceived, and at others this principal was, as she said, relentless in getting the staff and students to follow her policies and procedures to the letter.

RP are valuable, Ms. James told me, but only in balance and not as a what she called a “scapegoat” for not addressing student behaviors that need to be addressed. She gave an example of a stabbing that had occurred at one of the MCSD high schools where some frustrated staff had asked what was going to happen as a consequence and wondered if it would be just a mediation. This concern that many staff had about RP being used in a manner that did not fully address

student misbehaviors and caused many to speak derisively as just noted about mediation as a consequence was one of the reasons many staff didn't fully buy into RP. Ms. James cautioned that blatant and intentional misbehaviors must be dealt with punitively first and then restoratives and healing could occur. If not, she suggested, things could get out of hand. Thus, she said she chose to be relentless about HALLS, attendance, student time in class, engaging and effective lesson plans, bulletin boards and classroom management.

The commitment to RP at Emancipation was not met with the same relentless approach during the second year, Year B, of this study. For example, Ms. James moved morning circles from mandatory to suggested and RP coach work from in the classroom working with teachers to a pull-out program when students are in crisis or returning from suspension. Furthermore, there were two security guards in uniform that Ms. James called as she warranted to remove students who would not leave a space on their own to be escorted to BIC or ISS. The job description of these security guards was to maintain safety for the students and staff. They were allowed to put their hands on students and remove them forcibly if need be. Neither was trained in RP.

Language Used by Staff and Students

With all of the rules and procedures, structures and people at Emancipation, the language that was used by both the staff and the students not only gave insight into their enactment of authority in the moment, but also into their implementation of RP. There was a range in how staff spoke to students with multiple examples of restorative language and others of threats and punishments. The same person could be heard using both, depending on the situation and/or the child.

It appeared that in one-on-one conversations, restorative, empowering, and agential language was much more likely to be used. However, in the more public forum and in the heat of the moment, more “traditional” punitive language was often evident. But this was not always true, as I also heard proactive, relationship building/maintaining language in hallway transitions. Children were called “my love” and other endearments, lighthearted teasing could be heard between staff and students and the language of de-escalation could be heard as well as escalation. “Come here, my love, you look unhappy.” “Are you two, ok? Do you need me to help you work this out?” “Just breathe, let’s breathe in and out together for a minute or two and then you can tell me what’s wrong” were examples of de-escalation. Both male gym teachers were observed escalating situations with one almost coming to blows with a student saying, “You think you’re such a big guy, go ahead and take a swing at me” and the other said “Get out of here. I don’t want you in this class so get out now and don’t come back” as the student threw tennis rackets around. This did not seem true of all males and could be much more related to personalities and philosophies than to gender.

Many staff seemed able to turn their use of restorative type language on and off depending on the situation, their level of frustration, and their perception of personal attack. For example, the principal was often exceptionally restorative and caring in her language but when a student affronted her, she was quick to move to threats and anger. Several staff mentioned that when a student put his hands on her, Ms. James went off on him and pushed for a week of OSS and a formal hearing as his consequence.

Table 19 provides examples of restorative and non-restorative language by staff:

Table 19

Examples of Restorative and Non-restorative Language

Restorative Language	Non-restorative Language
<p>“If I didn’t respect you, this would go differently.”</p> <p>“I see you are upset. Let me give you a hug and tell you that I really like you.”</p> <p>“Who owns this problem? You are at a crossroads and can either stay the same and get the same consequences or make changes and get better results.”</p> <p>“You have five weeks to get your grades up if you want to play football. You could make up some work at lunch with me and I will help you.”</p> <p>“Choose not to engage, choose not to jack it up.”</p> <p>“You are under contract with me not to start fights” as Ms. James hugs a student.</p> <p>“Thanks for the honesty. What could you have done that would have been a better way?”</p> <p>“You are doing an excellent job of staying calm, fellows. So, what are we agreeing to?”</p> <p>“Does everyone feel safe? Let’s talk.”</p>	<p>“If you are not in your seats by the count of 5, no amusement park trip and I’m not kidding.”</p> <p>“Go ahead and do it. I want you to, not only will there be no trip, but you will be out for the rest of the year.”</p> <p>“Why am I mad annoying? Because you are mad annoying.”</p> <p>“Have you lost your everlasting mind? Get out.”</p> <p>“You are out of class so I’m going to write you up for skipping.”</p>

A Paradox

Ms. James was a paradox, being authoritarian in some situations yet often profoundly restorative in her dealings with students and families. In both Year A and Year B, I observed these kinds of inconsistencies repeatedly not only with Ms. James but also as other teachers and administrators. They moved in and out of restorative responses depending on the situation and often the person in what seemed to be interrelated to the level and kind of authority judged to be appropriate. There were those who wielded their authority with a very restorative lens almost always, and those that did depending on the situation and others that remained authoritarian seeming to see student immediate compliance as their goal.

Chapter Summary

This study looked at authority from a relational stance: shared authority, authority from others that one is subject to and authority that one exerts upon others. These three ways that authority can be experienced are relevant to how the RP implementation at Emancipation was supported and how it was thwarted.

The first stance, shared authority, is foundational to the implementation of RP. When I began my research at Emancipation, I observed that there were multiple ways that the school was invested in shared authority. Mr. Roberts, the VP in charge of RP, was deeply engaged in collaboration with the School Climate and Discipline Committee, Lauren the BPO RP supervisor and his fellow administrators. RP coaches engaged in daily collaboration with the grade level VP whose office they were housed in and the teachers they worked with. This model of collaborative, shared authority for the implementation of RP at Emancipation allowed all teachers, support staff, administrators, RP coaches and BPO leadership to have shared information, shared voice, shared agency, and shared support in Year A.

A major source of the breakdown of shared authority at Emancipation was the authority that was exerted upon the school from the MCSD, the State Education Department and from Ms. James, herself. There was no collaboration or shared decision making as the MCSD, over the summer between Year A and Year B, dictated that Mr. Roberts would move to another building, reduced the number and charge of RP coaches, and removed the extra period used for PD, team and committee meetings.

Ms. James felt intense pressure to prioritize the State Education Department's mandated annual yearly progress (AYP) goals to avoid being labeled a failing school because she felt her

job was on the line. She now looked at school initiatives as whether they would directly support meeting AYP and told Lauren, the BPO RP supervisor, she was unsure that RP did so.

Another component of the relational authority exerted upon others was the authority that Ms. James exerted on her staff. In Year A, her philosophy was that “we are all in this together.” She took great pride in telling me she knew every student’s name and most of their stories. In Year B, this all changed. Ms. James determined that she needed to move from enabling staff to depend on her to coaching them to be more independent. She did this by monitoring cameras set up throughout the building, sending orders to staff and RP coaches through walkie talkies and making an intense effort to improve hallway behavior in the first weeks of school instead of focusing on relationship building. All these events broke down collaborative, shared authority avenues which had been in place in Year A causing a detrimental impact on the implementation of RP. I found this to be a paradox between Ms. James’ voiced ideology that she supported RP and her actual practice.

The final relational stance on authority identified in this study is the authority that one exerts on others. For this, I primarily looked at how teachers looked at their authority over students based on interviews and observation held in Year B. Many teachers voiced concerns that their authority had been deeply compromised over their students and felt RP and the new Code of Conduct were the reasons why. There was a general question about what was “consequencable” as one teacher put it, and a feeling that there were now no consequences for student misbehavior. This seemed to indicate that the ideology these teachers held was that a system of punitive consequences was needed, although such systems are what brought about the inequity in disciplinary practices in the MCSD that RP was brought in to address. It also may point to a very limited view of what consequences are and that punitive consequences such as

ISS, OSS or expulsion are the only options that work. This could be from an incomplete or partial understanding of what RP entail, perhaps due to insufficient training and/or implementation.

RP include what could be called restorative consequences when students participate in mediations and circles, when they enact their plans to restore the harms done and relationships broken, when they work in skill building groups and one on one conferences with the same end goal of improved behavior and better decision-making skills but through a much more inclusive means that does not demean, devalue, and dismiss students. It is critical that in the training of RP and throughout the implementation of RP, such ideologies that believe only punitive consequences are affective are challenged with an understanding of the overwhelming harm such systems have had on far too many students and exactly how RP offers much more effective and far-reaching alternatives through restorative consequences. In addition, it is incumbent on the administration and RP coaches to ensure that teachers are in the loop of the RP their students are involved in, what their plans are to restore harms caused and in the follow up that such plans are carried out to counter the potential misconception that students have no consequences.

In my final chapter, I provide a more extensive analysis of my findings, a discussion of the strengths, limitations, and significance of this study as well as suggestions for future research. In addition, I share why this is not the story I wished to tell and reflect on being a White researcher and how it affected this study.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The Story I Wished to Tell and the Conflict to Tell the Story I Saw

This is not the story I wished to tell. When I embarked upon this research on RP, my intent was to create a portrait of a school effectively implementing this social justice initiative to be, perhaps, both an inspiration and guidepost to others. The Meridian City School District had responded to community outrage over the racial inequity of disproportionate disciplinary practices by overhauling its Code of Conduct and developing a five-year plan to fully implement RP within all its schools. They hired consultants, provided extensive professional development with the goal of training every staff member, and looked for changes to begin. Morning circles were to be held in every classroom, and new structures were put in place to support students that included circles, mediations, and skill building. The positive momentum was evident throughout the school district.

Emancipation Middle School was recommended to me as an optimal site to study RP. The administrative team were strong RP proponents and most of the staff had been trained. The school had invested additional grant monies for more RP coaches than any other school had and had developed a positive collaborative relationship with the community-based Best Practices Organization (BPO) who provided the RP coaches and training. There were systems in place for professional development, for morning circles, for accountability and the principal, Ms. James, said she would be pleased to have me observe her school's RP implementation.

I began this fifteen-month case study in April of 2018, fully planning to use portraiture as my methodology. In those initial months, I spent dozens of hours shadowing Ms. James and the RP coaches, developing relationships with staff members, and beginning classroom, morning

circle, and training observations. When the school year ended in June, I looked forward to what the coming year would bring.

Over the summer, however, several changes occurred which affected the implementation of RP at Emancipation in ways that I did not completely understand at the time. These changes were not unlike those that occur in schools all over the country; there were staff and schedule changes, grant funding was eliminated for one program and reduced for another, new initiatives were introduced and there was increased pressure to raise test scores, increase attendance and reduce suspension numbers. On the surface, these could be seen as just the course of business in schools, everyday occurrences that happen from one school year to another. I was curious how the RP implementation would be affected but not alarmed. It is in the nature of schools to meet challenges, to adapt and adjust, so I wondered how this might happen at Emancipation.

The effects of some changes were quickly apparent; other effects came later. As documented throughout this study, nearly every component that contributed to what initially appeared to be a successful implementation of RP was compromised, reduced, or eliminated. Some things I realized immediately, and others became more apparent as I went through my data at the end of my study. Thus, I was left with what I felt was an ethical dilemma of great concern to me.

One of the foundations of portraiture is to look for the good to be found in whatever setting you are in and with the people you are doing your research about. That appealed to me because it is my nature to look for the good, to look for the hope and the promise of doing better. It is why RP are of such interest to me; it is why I have been so passionate throughout my career about education and all the potential and promise that is possible. It is what I promised in my

request to do research on the MCSD application and in what I promised Ms. James when I first met her.

It was the story I wished to tell but it was not the story I saw. The more I sifted through my data, the more concerned I became. This is not to say there were not incredibly dedicated staff at Emancipation Middle School and Best Practices Organization. This is not to say that I did not see remarkable interactions and efforts to meet the needs of students. But the changes that occurred over the summer and into the school year profoundly affected the implementation of RP at Emancipation. What was in place in the Spring of 2018 was largely no longer in place in the Spring of 2019.

I went through a great deal of angst and considered for a long time not completing this work. I care deeply about this school and its staff; they trusted me with their stories, their thoughts, and opinions, and welcomed me into their classrooms, offices, and shared spaces. My intent was to celebrate all the good that I saw but that was not possible. It seemed better, perhaps, to leave this story untold; I wondered what value there could be in describing “an implementation gone wrong.” Wouldn’t it be a betrayal to those who trusted me and unintentionally cast this school and this district in a what felt to me as a negative light? Even if I were able to maintain the full anonymity I would strive for, it still seemed unethical to me, if not immoral.

However, I was encouraged by those I deeply respect to reconsider and came to understand that there was value in this story of how what appeared to be a successful RP implementation in progress was derailed and how. There were lessons that could be learned from this experience.

This is not the story I wished to tell but it is the story that I observed. This is the story, the case study of one urban middle school in the Northeastern United States and its implementation of RP over a fifteen-month period. This school was well into what appeared to be a successful RP implementation that was then derailed by a series of external and internal changes, many of which were outside of the school's control. My plan had been to create a series of portraits of the school and people who helped drive the successful implementation of RP. However, due to these unexpected changes, I revised my methodology from portraiture to a case study to understand the change that implementing RP requires at a systemic, organization level, and at a more fundamental examination of how belief systems about race, equity and authority were being negotiated. I also added a research question to help me more thoroughly understand the context of how RP came to be implemented at Emancipation.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize my findings and follow that with a description of this study's strengths and limitations. Next, I highlight the significance and implications of this research, suggest future research possibilities and end with a final note.

Discussion of Findings

This section will include a summary of my findings by data chapters. To answer my first research question "How is change enacted in the implementation of Restorative Practices?" I discuss my findings from Chapter 4. Following that, my findings on my second research question of "How does a school choose to choose to implement RP?" from Chapter 5 are delineated. Finally, I answer my third research question "How does a school negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?" by sharing my findings from Chapter 6 "Race, Equity, and Restorative Practices", then my findings from Chapter 7 "Authority and

Restorative Practices” and subsequently explore how this school negotiated the intersection of race, equity, authority, and RP.

Change and Restorative Practices

The focus in Chapter 4 was my first research question; “How is change enacted in the implementation of Restorative Practices?”. To answer this, I used Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) to complete a systemic analysis of how Emancipation implemented RP. I examined each of the theory’s six components: direction and sector engagement, capacity-building linked to results, development of leaders at all levels, manage the distractors, continuous inquiry regarding results, and two-way communication. This allowed me to more clearly understand the changes that occurred within this RP implementation and between Years A and B. I provide an overview of my findings using the six change components of Fullan’s Theory of Action of System Reform and then a critique of this theory as applied to the implementation of RP.

Findings on the Six Change Components. Central to the change observed during this study was the collapse of the Emancipation Middle School’s direction and sector engagement. Without clear direction from the top or an effective leadership team with a shared vision and achievable goals in Year B, the RP implementation at Emancipation Middle School sputtered and came to a near halt.

This component directly affected the other three in significant ways. The opportunity and the drive to encourage RP capacity and leadership building disappeared, which was directly related to the end of the School Climate and Discipline Committee structure that had been in place. This committee had facilitated the continuous evaluation and inquiry, brought information

to and from their respective teams and put out a weekly newsletter with RP data and tips that had been an important part of the two-way RP communication. Without the administrative leadership at the district or school level fully supporting RP as a school-wide initiative and the end of RP capacity building, the number of distractors not only grew but also supplanted RP as a building priority.

Specifically, due to both external and internal factors, regarding direction and sector engagement, the leadership team was disbanded as Mr. Roberts was promoted; there was no time within the school day for the School Climate and Discipline Committee to meet and Lauren, the BPO RP director was asked not to return to the building. Thus, in year B, none of these team members were still in place and although Ms. James said the school was still doing RP, it was without clear leadership. The RP vision and goals became skewed and the resources and flexibility which supported it were, to all intent and purposes, removed.

With the direction and sector engagement no longer in place, all the other components of change were deeply compromised. The structure for continuous inquiry and evaluation was no longer in place without the committee who oversaw it and the collaboration with the BPO RP director, Lauren became non-existent. The two-way communication broke down as the school district gave mixed messages that RP and morning circles were happening in each school but without support and accountability. Ms. James said RP was still happening at Emancipation but for staff, the communication was that morning circles were optional, and the RP coaches only did the RP work with students outside the classrooms. Lauren sent data reports to Ms. James that she felt were not read or commented on. Mr. Z. continued the weekly email that included data about restorative actions and suspensions, but nothing was done with it. There were few

expectations and even less accountability beyond the ongoing exhortation to build relationships with students and keep them in class so they could learn.

Capacity building of RP, without leadership, without goals, without time, became a thing of the past and the precious little PD time that was now available was designated for content area work to improve student achievement. Without capacity building, there was no longer development of staff leaders on a schoolwide level. The art teacher continued to try to find small pockets of time for the WEB student leadership group to meet and the eighth graders now only planned two or three school events for the entire year, not the bi-weekly to monthly community building and mentoring of sixth graders they had done previously. Staff members who had been deeply involved in RP on a school-wide basis retreated into their classrooms.

There were a handful of teachers who still held morning circles, three in eighth grade, one in sixth grade and two self-contained special education teachers. There were staff who were truly restorative with students, often intuitively it seemed. But, for the building as a whole, the back of the RP implementation was broken; the structures that supported it had collapsed, leaving just remnants. Victoria, one of the RP coaches, explained their work was now more “triage than restorative” as they ran from one crisis to another.

The final component of this theory of action is to manage distractors, and this is where, in year B, the implementation was most severely compromised. There was a myriad of distractors that included the loss of the enrichment program and extra planning period that had been used for committees and PD that incorporated RP as a priority, and the change in the MCSD PD focus from school based to district level content areas. In addition, Ms. James felt increased pressure from the State Education Department and MCSD to show measurable improvement in

academics, suspension, and attendance numbers, and how initiatives directly contributed to those.

As discussed previously, there were multiple new academic initiatives teachers were asked to implement (CRE, PBL, STAR, etc.) and there was an intense focus on HALLS and CLASS at the beginning of the school year. This set a tone of almost militaristic compliance about how students were to behave in the halls and intense pressure on teachers to ensure that they did so. Instead of relationship and community building in the all-important first days of school, students were drilled on what HALLS meant and how to perform it, so that the hallways were orderly and quiet, students were seen but not heard, and compliance to these adult orders was absolute. There was no longer a focus on RP and the goals that guided the initiative in Year A had close to disappeared. Thus, the focus on RP, dimming and fading, now became barely visible in the horizon of the skies of Emancipation Middle School.

As shown in the discussion thus far, there is an interrelationship between each of the components. In Year A, an effective leadership team promulgated direction and sector engagement with a clear vision and goals set up and supported the structures for evaluation, inquiry, and communication about RP. There was a plan for ongoing capacity building which helped to develop RP leaders in the staff and student body. These three components helped to keep the building focus on RP and the leadership maintained this focus by managing distractors that could deter the implementation. There was a synergy between the components in Year A that supported the RP implementation at Emancipation Middle School in positive and productive ways as detailed throughout Chapter 6. In Year A, Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) was in place but that was not to last.

In Year B, as the RP implementation faltered, these components now were not able to work synchronously and instead added to the breakdown that occurred at each component and in the building as a whole. With the goals and vision of Year A no longer in place, and a lack of a clear leader for RP, there was no one to manage distractors and other initiatives took precedence; those initiatives took on what little PD time there was to build their own capacity. There was no longer a vehicle for continuous evaluation and inquiry; RP capacity and leadership development and communication about RP were no longer forthcoming. The RP coaches who were so involved in classrooms, in committee work, in PD, and working with the entire student body now only dealt with students in the midst of crisis. This happened even though RP is best implemented when students have calmed down and the situation has been de-escalated, Lauren admonished. Without the clear direction, passion, and enthusiasm from the top that enabled full sector engagement with a set vision and goals for RP in Year A, the rest of the Fullan's components additionally contributed betwixt and between to the near dissolution of RP at Emancipation.

A critique of Fullan's Theory of Action. On an organizational, systemic level, my findings on how change was enacted during Year A and Year B of Emancipation's RP implementation illuminate important elements that are supportive of designing, implementing, and sustaining the change RP requires. However, this initiative was intended to address issues of race and equity. Even if everything that had been in place in Year A had continued in Year B, there would still have been something essential missing.

What does "doing RP" mean? Ms. James told me that the school continued to "do RP" in Year B because there were still RP coaches in the building and staff were encouraged to build relationships and use restorative language. A few teachers still did morning circles. This was

categorically different than what “doing RP” meant in Year A, but in both years, still something was missing.

In an article written after his Theory of Action of System Reform was published, Fullan (2009b) provides a more expansive explanation of what having a vision under the change component “Direction and Sector Engagement” should entail. He says it is not just having a vision but having an inspirational vision of the overall purpose and the means of getting there or as discussed later in this chapter, the “why” as well as the “how.” This is what taps into the moral imperative of educational reform, Fullan (2009b) says, which is to raise the bar for all children and increase academic achievement. Along with Levin, he cautions that change knowledge does not satisfy an ideological agenda on its own, but that only deep sustained cultural change does that (Levin & Fullan, 2008).

This is part of what was missing at Emancipation. What the theory of change I used for analysis lacked is the means to “satisfy an ideological agenda.” There was a vision that RP would be embedded into the fabric of the school with the engagement of every student and staff member but there was not a vision that included the purpose or reason RP was being implemented. There was not a focus on the “moral imperative” that Fullan (2009b) contends is essential. Just as in my analysis of how change was enacted during Year A and Year B of Emancipation’s implementation of RP, there can be the impression that positive change is occurring even if an understanding of and focus on the moral imperative or ideological agenda is missing.

What is the moral imperative of RP? Certainly, my findings show that few staff members at Emancipation knew, so that vision, what Fullan (2009b) calls the inspirational vision. was not in place in Year A or Year B. However, this was not the only thing that was missing.

RP was brought into the MCSD very intentionally in response to a legal mandate to address racial disproportionality. Without a race-cognizant element (in addition to such a theory of action or theory of change), once again, RP loses its potential as an equity reform initiative. Consider the stronger message, the more substantial focus that this framework could provide if there was an additional column next to each of the six change components. This addition would require plans for how the school would incorporate the “why” of this initiative with specifically identified action steps that would support the goal of racial equity.

For example, under direction and sector engagement, this new column might include a town hall or better a faculty circle where RP is introduced with the history and reasons why it was initiated. Under capacity building, a PD session on basic statistics and a deep dive into the disproportionality data that made this district one of the worst in the country just prior to the adoption of RP could be provided. By maintaining a focus on race from the onset, RP would be much more likely to achieve the intended goal and certainly the school could choose to collect much broader data than just disciplinary statistics; they could explore race and education currently and historically, Whiteness, and other related topics. Instead of silence about race, it could become a topic of ongoing dialogue and growth. This additional column that keeps the intent of RP in the forefront could make all the difference in the effectiveness and focus of this initiative. It is not enough to just say its goal is to address issues of racial inequity; there needs to be ongoing attention and action steps to ensure that happens.

Change, such as reform initiatives, happens through purposeful planning and sustained effort. Within that planning, an understanding of what the change entails and the development of a theory of change such as Fullan’s Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a) can produce a model for successful change. In Year A, Emancipation had each of Fullan’s components in place

to a degree and a plan and mechanisms in place for the change RP requires to continue to grow. If these had continued to be in place, RP at Emancipation in Year B could have been expected to continue in a forward trajectory in this more limited view of what change entails. What would be most effective and true to the intent of the initiative is to add a race cognitive element to each component as discussed above.

What this research shows is that, without safeguards in place, change can be fragile on two different levels .. As my results in Chapter Four show, there is a need for additional mechanisms beyond the building level to ensure that reform initiatives such as RP are not derailed by the loss of a leader and changes that directly and indirectly affect the integrity of an implementation's mechanics. Sustaining change over time is hard and takes effort.

To fully accomplish the vision or intent behind an equity reform initiative such as RP, it is essential to incorporate a race-cognizant element into all components of this reform with specific action steps for each. In Year A, Emancipation was “doing RP” in a manner that had made significant strides toward accomplishing how to do RP, but that change was not sustained in Year B and what progress had been made was derailed. For all that was in place in Year A, without the inclusion of a race-cognizant plan, it was a more superficial application of RP. Thus, the transformative change of RP that Winn (2018) says can disrupt inequities in schools was not achieved.

How Does a School Choose to Implement RP?

My second research question was “How does a school choose to implement RP?” In Chapter 5, I provided an extensive history of how Emancipation did so. One of the first things I found was that implementing RP in this case was not a choice that occurred on a school level. Schools operate within their school districts often with limited autonomy and follow prescribed

district policies and programs. It was a school district decision in response to the State Attorney's requirements that all MCSD schools would implement RP, however, within each school there was some leeway for exactly how that would happen.

Thus, to answer how Emancipation choose to implement RP is to determine how the MCSD came to implement RP. It became clear as I looked for this answer that history and context matter a great deal. Not only does Emancipation operate within the context of the MCSD, the MCSD falls within the context of the city of Meridian which is where this history begins. Not surprisingly, my journey to understand an initiative meant to address issues of racial inequity begins with unpacking the history of race in this city.

Meridian's racial history is filled with examples of inequity and societal unrest. Despite an auspicious start during the abolitionist movement, there were race riots in the early 1900's, the disastrous destruction of a prosperous Black neighborhood for a highway in the late 1950's, and a very slow path to school desegregation in early 1960's. This history showed the recurrent impact of White supremacy as decisions made again and again benefitted the White population to the detriment of others.

The period of 2010-2015 was a particularly tumultuous time for the MCSD. What began as concerns over the role of police officers in schools led to a review of disciplinary data that exposed alarming disproportionality of suspensions between African American and Hispanic students when compared to White students, a nearly 3:1 ratio.

The Meridian community became splintered in what was described as a racial divide when the Black and Hispanic communities demanded changes in how the MCSD handled discipline. In response, White families and teachers questioned the accuracy of the suspension

data and were concerned changes in disciplinary policies would undermine school safety and teacher authority.

In a significant instance of interest convergence between the Black and Brown parents and community members, the NAACP, NAN, NYCLU, ACLU and the U.S. Department of Justice, the State Attorney General did an investigation and found numerous flaws in the MCSD disciplinary policies and procedures. This occurred concurrently with a national consensus that profound disparities in suspension rates must be addressed. In January 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and Department of Education issued formal guidance that directed school districts told to examine their data and their discipline policies and practices. If unjustifiable disparities were found, immediate steps must be taken to close the discipline gap. (Losen et al, 2015). This report encouraged the use of RP as a viable intervention that would improve equity, reduce disciplinary disparities, and address the school-to-prison pipeline ([U.S. Department of Education, 2014](#)).

Given both state and federal mandates to take action, the MCSD Board of Education and superintendent signed an Assurance of Discontinuance that contained a list of stringent requirements that needed to be met over the next four years and that would be monitored by an outside source. Throughout the now newly revised Code of Conduct, RP were woven into the procedures language as the appropriate responses to student behaviors. To allow the MCSD to embrace this new way of thinking about ways to respond to student behavior, the superintendent brought in Mr. Herbson, an outside RP consultant and contracted with Best Practices Organization a local community-based organization to assist with the design, training, implementation, and evaluation of RP in the MCSD.

Why does this history matter? In determining if the MCSD truly addressed the concerns of all of those who came together to call for changes to ameliorate the alarming level of disproportionality and issues of equity for students of color, there needed to be some form of continuous inquiry and evaluation, similar to what Fullan (2009b) called for in his Theory of Action of System Reform. One way to measure progress would be to examine the suspension numbers over time. The external monitor appointed required by the State Attorney did just that in August of 2018, comparing data from 2014, the baseline year, to 2018 after the RP implementation and the revised Code of Conduct had been in place for four years ([AOD Final Update Final public.pdf \(boarddocs.com\)](#)). Table 20 provides a summation of the data presented.

Table 20

MCSD Suspension Data 2014-2018 by Individual Student

	All Students	White Students	Black Students
2014 ISS	16%	11%	22%
2018 ISS	8%	4%	11%
2014 OSS	16%	11%	21%
2018 OSS	10%	6%	13%

It is significant that from 2014 to 2018, overall, the number of individual students sent to in school suspension (ISS) had been reduced from 16% to 8% and out of school suspensions (OSS) were reduced from 16% to 10%. Looking vertically down the columns, both White and Black students saw at least a 50% drop in ISS and close to a 40% drop in OSS incidents by individual student. However, when one looks horizontally, the disproportionality still exists. Twice as many Black students were sent to ISS than White students in 2014 and that rose to 64% more in 2018. Forty-eight percent more Black students were sent to OSS than White students in 2014 and in 2018 that rose to 54%. Although the number of suspensions went down, the disproportionality actually increased for both ISS and OSS from 2014 to 2018.

This is similar to what Davison et al. (2021) found in a 10-year study of the implementation of RP at Meadowview School District. They said that while the overall effects of RP are promising for lowering suspension rates, they were not particularly effective at ameliorating Meadowvine's persistent racial discipline gaps and actually served to unintentionally increase disproportionality.

Davison et al. (2021) said they did not interpret this increase as an indictment of the RP philosophy but more as highlighting the challenges to addressing systemic and racialized inequalities in school discipline; this suggests that the promise and potential of RP programs should not be considered separately from the racialized contexts they are adopted within. Furthermore, Lustick (2017) suggests that if only the reparative aspects of RP such as circles and mediations receive attention, RP may "only reinforce prejudice and institutional order instead of disrupting it" (p. 132). She suggests that school discipline reforms not only count the number of suspensions and RP but also how relationships and trust have been built with a "more critical eye toward cultural responsiveness and anti-bias work" (p. 132). Gavrielides (2014) cautions against the potential pitfall of not addressing what he refers to as "anti-Blackness" that may contribute to racially divergent outcomes.

This history of how RP came to be implemented in the MCSD (and thus at Emancipation) shows the outrage and concern at the inequities that Black students (and all students of color) faced that kept them out of class, removed from learning and unable to graduate. This outrage was expressed by many, both those within and outside of the Meridian community. There was an ongoing lack of transparency by the MCSD when parents and community members asked questions about the disproportionality in disciplinary practices before

the State Attorney General got involved; it appears that there may still remain a lack of transparency. It is certainly important that the suspension rate in the MCSD went down for all students. However, when the external monitor gave her report and said it would be her last one because the district had made so much progress, she did not mention that not only did the disproportionality still exist, but it actually had widened. Did all of the people who had fought so hard to change the COC and implement RP know that? What the external monitor and MCSD chose to amplify was the general decrease in suspensions and not to call attention to the continued disproportionality.

These parents, community members, civil rights groups and government agencies came together to fight for equity and the issue of disproportionality was not solved. For all the promise of RP, it operates within a racialized context where RP alone may not achieve a critical stance toward anti-bias work (Lustick, 2014) or counter the anti-Blackness belief systems (Gaverieldes, 2014) that are in place. A robust examination of and dialogue about race, the root causes of systemic racism and the pervasiveness of Whiteness is essential to truly address the equity problems disproportionality illuminates; these go far beyond the implementation of RP and Code of Conduct revisions. This history of how this school, within this district, within this community, within this state, and within this country chose to implement RP is essential to understanding the limited success of this initiative in addressing the inequity it sought to alleviate.

Race, Equity, and Restorative Practices

The focus of Chapter 4 was the first part of my research question: “How do schools negotiate the intersection of race, equity, authority, and Restorative Practices?” During my

interviews, I asked my participants if they knew why RP were implemented in the MCSD and if they felt that RP were successful in addressing issues of race and inequity. The responses I received from the White teachers I interviewed fell into three categories: rejection, deflection, and reflection.

Teachers who rejected the premise that there was inequitable racial disproportionality in the MCSD suspension data felt that the statistics were not valid, and the numbers only showed that there were more African American students than White students suspended because there were more African American students. One teacher carefully explained to me that if there were more blue marbles than red in a box and you chose a marble, of course you would get more that were blue. Others said that the referrals and suspensions were based only on behavior and teachers did not consider race as a factor when writing a student up. A number of participants said they were “colorblind” and treated all students the same.

The rejection and denial that there was a problem with racial disparity, the assertion the statistics were incorrect, and that in writing referrals and in general, these teachers gave evidence of saying they were truly being “colorblind.” Bailey (2007) has called this a form of cognitive dysfunction. This practice of ignoring, not noticing, not naming, or recognizing difference was a means to allow these teachers to feel they were fair, neutral, and non-racist. For these teachers, it appeared that race was not an issue, and they showed a level of annoyance at the suggestion that it was.

One White teacher told me that race was a very sensitive subject for her, and she would prefer not to talk about it. These responses are the hallmarks of White fragility where even “a minimum amount of racial stress in habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves... to reinstate white equilibrium” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 103). Calmly and in a way that they

saw as completely rational, these teachers found a way to discount and deny that racial inequity was an issue that needed to be addressed or even existed.

I originally looked at teachers who used deflection as a purposeful means to avoid difficult conversations about race. However, as I dug further into the data, I began to see that for some it was an attempt to avert the gaze toward what these White teachers saw as bigger issues that impede student success, perhaps not in repudiation of race as an issue but an awareness that it became more secondary or even tertiary when there were so many other concerns they considered of greater importance. These included poverty, trauma, addiction, refugees, parental incarceration, and a perhaps more veiled reference to race, the culture of some of the students' homes.

The concern is that by deflecting the conversation away from race and equity and by saying other issues are more immediate, the disciplinary disparity is less likely to be addressed and the belief systems that maintain the inequity were not challenged. It does not have to be a binary choice to either talk about race or talk about all the other issues of concern. Both deserve time and attention. However, to allow conversations about race to be deflected, regardless of the importance of other issues, gives the message that race does not really matter, or it does not matter as much as other things; it does.

Recurring themes. For those White teachers who reflected on race, it was not about the how race affects students or that race was a factor in the disparity of disciplinary practices. Instead, these teachers reflected on their own race and what it means to be a White teacher, sharing how hurt they were when they were called racist. Two common themes were how careful they had to be in how they spoke with and about students and how misunderstood they often felt. Several shared with me how difficult their own childhoods had been in what appeared to be an

effort to “equalize experiences” and how these teachers understood their students far more than they might realize. Others spoke of what they perceived as staff members of color being treated with more deference from the administration and students who behaved better for them than White teachers. One told me how her students yelled at her not to try to teach them how to be White and tearfully said that they just did not understand that she was only trying to teach them how to be successful.

Another recurring theme was that White teachers felt their identity of themselves as good teachers, even their very moral goodness, was being questioned. One chastised me for asking what she called “such bush league questions.” Those who reflected and deflected showed what appeared to be an unwillingness to engage with race and racism because it seemed to cause a conflict with their desire to be seen as a good teacher. Of note, my questions were not about if these teachers were racist but if they knew why RP had been implemented in the MCSD and if they thought RP was addressing the issue of racially disproportionate suspension numbers. I was asking questions on a more systemic level, but these White teachers appeared to interpret these questions about race as a personal affront. This speaks to a level of White moral ignorance that they seemed to use to protect their status as being “good” and to ignore the very real possibility of their complicity with racism (Applebaum, 2015) and the causes of disproportionality.

Self-reference, frustration, and avoidance. For White teachers in this study, evading talking about race, equalizing their experiences with students of color, and protesting that they were unfairly called racist points to an ongoing sense of frustration. There was a feeling of outrage at being questioned although my questions were about RP and race within the MCSD system. Instead, it seemed to them that to admit there was inequity was to admit to being part of the problem, and that was not tenable. This relates to Sara Ahmed’s (2012) work on institutional

racism where she found that responses to a critique of racism that actually “require not referring to what is said or written back to oneself but engaging with what is being asserted” (p.150).

These teachers chose not to engage with my questions about why RP had been implemented and if it did address issues of racial disproportionality and instead chose to “self-reference” and personalize their responses taking my questions as a kind of accusation. Ahmed (2012) cautions that “when self-reference happens too quickly, the opportunity for engagement is lost” (p. 150). That seems to be exactly what happened. This also aligns with the racial victimization that Bell (2019) found to be true of White teachers who taught in predominately non-White schools.

What I observed appeared to be “the normality of hegemonic whiteness which has allowed whites to deflect, ignore, or dismiss their role, racialization, and privilege in race dynamics” (Matias et al., 2014, p. 290). There were numerous instances of White talk that dismissed racism. For example, this occurred when teachers told me the disproportionate data was invalid and that they were colorblind. As these teachers shared their perceived difficulties as White teachers who had to be so careful about what they said and could not say and how often they felt misunderstood, it appeared evident that they were experiencing what Bailey (2007) identified as White fear and anxiety. I witnessed very similar responses as McIntyre (1997) describes in her seminal work as my participants also derailed conversations, evaded questions, withdrew from the conversation, and interrupted me. All these defensive postures gave evidence of a level of denial, ignorance, defensiveness, victimization, and narcissism that seemed more instinctive than planned or intentional.

This exemplified the premise that “white people have a variety of discursive mechanisms to avoid considering their complicity, to remain in the space of comfort and these are socially sanctioned. They have the privilege to avoid, evade and ignore.” (Applebaum, 2015, p. 10). It is

a manifestation of an ideology of color ignorance that racial inequity will just disappear if we do not talk about it and is often “perceived by white people as a moral virtue... and prevents racist patterns of practices from being recognized and interrogated” (p. 4).

Castagno (2008) agrees with this point and says further that race is not part of the accepted or expected discourse in schools because it is too conflict laden, too tense, too hurtful, and even, more importantly, implies that one is racist. That proved true in this study. She adds that by not engaging in such conversations, people create silences around race that allow White teachers to maintain the illusion that race does not matter or does not even exist. In this study, all of these were found to be present and for an initiative that was intended to address racial disparities, highly problematic. Gorski (2019) says it is important to prioritize equity over the comfort of silence and advocates for more direct confrontation about these issues.

Authority and Restorative Practices

One of the premises of RP is that there will be a culture change which includes structures of authority. My findings on authority are broken into the three dimensions of authority: shared authority, being the authority in charge, and being subject to an authority in charge. Ideally RP would create more egalitarian ways of interacting and there would be structures, policies, and actions moving toward more shared authority.

Shared authority. One of the precepts of RP is that people acknowledge problems, problem solve, and create solutions using consensus with all stakeholders. This occurs within relationships and community building. The idea of a circle is that every member has equal voice without a hierarchy or authoritarian structure. RP are intended to be inclusive and respectful of

the dignity of all as well as to restore relationships and mitigate harms or as Mr. Herbson, the MCSD district-wide RP consultant, suggested, to provide “justice that heals.”

In Year A of this study, there were structures in place for more of the shared authority that is an important part of RP. The School Climate and Discipline Committee met weekly to discuss the RP implementation, review data, and monitor and adjust as needed. The committee representatives brought information and feedback to and from their teams to ensure a successful implementation of RP. There was collaboration between the VP in charge of RP and Lauren the RP supervisor of BPO during their biweekly meetings that were shared with other school leaders for feedback. At least one RP coach was assigned to each team to provide support for students and teachers to build capacity. These coaches were housed in the VP offices so there was ongoing communication between all stakeholders.

Very little of this remained present in the second year of this study. What had been in place in Year A was generally dismantled. The more participatory authority structures, which had been much more in accordance with RP in Year A had changed. The voice and relationship building students had in daily morning circles was gone. The support teachers had from the five RP coaches to build capacity and support students in the classroom was gone. The collaboration between Best Practices Organization and the Emancipation administration had become minimal. Teachers’ role in decision making and consensus through committee, team, and faculty meetings was diminished. The ability of RP coaches to run circles and facilitate student mediation was limited. The role that Mr. Roberts took in facilitating RP at Emancipation was gone. All of these had disrupted the traditional authority structures within the school and had created a more shared authority paradigm. What had been a more collaborative and inclusive way of doing school;

building community, increasing staff and student voice, and leadership while providing the means for restoring any harms to the community was greatly diminished.

Traditional authority practices. Instead of more shared authority and stakeholder involvement in problem solving and solutions, Emancipation continued to be invested in a much more traditional, top-down model that became much more evident in Year B of this study as the progress seen in Year A receded. The principal was given limited autonomy with mandates and changes made on the district and state level in which she had very little voice. The intense pressure she felt to meet state education improvement goals toward increasing academic test scores, reducing suspension numbers, and increasing attendance rose to such an extent in the second year of this study that every program and initiative including RP was expected to show demonstrable affect in these areas. This was one of the reasons what had been a very positive and collaborative relationship with BPO became strained and broke down when Ms. James began to question if RP was effectively helping to reach these three goals and wanted to use the coaches in ways that BPO told her were not their jobs. When Lauren, the RP BPO supervisor tried to meet with the school principal, she was told it would not be productive because Ms. James said they were no longer “on the same page.”

In addition, Ms. James had no authority over a funding loss that removed the extended day opportunities for staff to meet and reduced the RP coaches from five to two. There were significant staffing changes she did not have input into, which included the loss of Mr. Roberts and other staff who were RP advocates. This, as well as other factors, led to a third of the staff being new to Emancipation in the second year of this study, none of whom had been trained in RP. New initiatives and changes in PD focus also were not in Ms. James’ control. Each of these

changes affected the integrity of RP implementation at Emancipation and were put in place by the authority the State Education Department and MCS D held over Emancipation.

A number of staff who were subject to Ms. James' authority felt that she had become what one teacher described as much more "militant" in the way that she ran Emancipation in Year B with her focus on student hallway behavior and monitoring cameras that were placed throughout the building. Throughout the day, Ms. James watched what was going on in the building on multiple computer monitors using a system of walkie talkies to direct staff to any issues she saw or reprimand them if they were not on task. Staff felt there was a "Big Brother" sense of being watched and judged at all times that made them uncomfortable.

Authority of teachers. Many teachers felt that their authority with students was deeply compromised by the revised Code of Conduct and RP. There was a shared perception among many staff members that there were no longer consequences and students felt they could get away with whatever they wanted. Teachers were told students could not learn if they were not in class and to keep them in the classroom as much as possible. Students could be sent to the Behavior Intervention Center (BIC) for a reset and were returned to class within 15-20 minutes, often still disruptive, teachers said, despite their re-entry plan. In addition, teachers who wrote what were considered too many resets were called in to speak to Ms. James about their behavior management issues.

Teachers knew that some of their students worked with the RP coaches who they met with in the BIC room, but there was little communication, so they often did not know what was going on. Several felt that when there was a student/teacher issue, the RP coaches sided with the students, and no one asked for their "side." Many staff members felt that student behavior had become worse and blamed RP as one of the reasons. Suspension numbers were down but they

explained that was only because students were rarely suspended anymore. Teacher frustration over what they felt were lax consequences was tangible and they felt the negative effect to instruction and their authority was significant.

Sabotage or neglect. For all that the MCSD and the State Education Department said that they supported RP as a means of decreasing racial disparity, and for all the language of restorative actions, restorative justice, restorative practices, and restorative approaches that were found within the MCSD Code of Conduct and other school documents, what happened in Year B belied their words. Instead of continuing to allow for Emancipation to reimagine how authority was used in the school, their subsequent actions became close to a form sabotage, whether intentional or not, their effect was. Perhaps it is more accurate to say this was a form of neglect with no one looking out for the maintenance, nurturing, and support of initiatives such as RP need over time. Increased pressure by the State Education Department to raise test scores, decrease suspension, and increase attendance led to increased authoritarian measures taken by the school principal that included a break down in the collaboration with Best Practices Organization.

The “undoing” of Emancipation’s progress that had occurred in re-envisioning how the school operated because of the MCSD decisions, whether intentionally or not, to reduce funding, change the schedule, move staff, and add new initiatives and PD priorities were problematic. They greatly diminished the opportunity for student and staff voice, problem solving, and decision making. Instead of moving away from a more traditional hierarchical authority structure, Emancipation reversed much of the progress it had made, leaving students and staff frustrated and RP nearly dismantled. It is not credible or sincere for a state agency or a school district to say they are supporting an initiative, while at the same time removing the very

structures that support it whether by purposeful actions to do so or perhaps even more concerning and more common, by neglect to protect and support the initiative over time.

This becomes a further example of a reform that “dissipated without producing sustaining change” (Hess, 2011, p. 1). Reforms often fail when capacity is diluted; time, energy, and talent get dispersed among a growing number of initiatives and staff becomes more “fragmented and frenetic rather than more effective and efficient” (Malen et al., 2014, p.166). Shifts in key personnel can undermine promising initiatives. Further derailing can occur with competing time demands, lack of time for training, reflection, and planning, not enough leadership, lack of ownership, minimal compliance, role ambiguity, instability of key personnel, lack of program coherence, and follow through (Payne, 2008). “One of the biggest impediments to school reform is the failure to nurture and sustain improvement” and without that commitment, reforms lack stability (Lynch, 2014, p. 9).

Interest divergence. In addition, the “interest convergence” that led to the implementation of RP in this school district had diverged. After three years of suspension data that showed a reduction in disproportionality and following through on all that the state government had mandated, the external monitor said that the MCSD had shown adequate growth and there was no further need for the mandate or additional monitoring on this concern. Done quietly at a Board of Education meeting, it was unclear if any of the parents and community members or local and national organizations were present who had led the charge for RP and substantive actions were aware of this change.

The revised Code of Conduct remained in place and within it and throughout MCSD documents, the term restorative approaches were referred to. It begs the question what it means when a school says it is “doing RP” or restorative approaches. Was Emancipation still doing RP,

but in a far diminished capacity? Were those that fought for district change to correct such racial inequity satisfied that it had been accomplished? Had their gaze, as that of the state government, moved on to new issues and places of concern? Was this one more example of reform churn that came and went, or perhaps better became a side note as more reform initiatives took center stage? Indeed, this seemed the case. I could not help but reflect on what one staff member had said to me about how RP was like “cutting off the head of the snake. The snake was still moving, but the data piled up differently. The snake is still moving but the data looks different.” I wonder about that snake of racial inequity and how, indeed, it is still moving.

The Negotiation of the Intersection of Race, Equity, Authority, and RP

By focusing on the “how” and not the “why” of RP, the MCSD and Emancipation Middle School were able to impart the appearance of RP but were not able to sustain or protect it. With great fanfare, a five-year RP implementation plan was created and in the first year, staff across the MSCD were trained in how to run morning circles and mediation strategies. Consultants and community-based organizations (CBO’s) were hired to provide additional training and support, and RP coaches were trained and placed in buildings. The expectations were clear that all teachers were to hold daily morning circles and every building was to incorporate RP into their school disciplinary plan. This plan was based on the revised Code of Conduct and utilized Behavior Interventions Centers, so children were in class more and suspended less. The “how” of RP was covered quite extensively, particularly in these first years of implementation.

What did not occur was addressing the “why.” RP were brought in as part of a mandate by the state government to reduce racial disparity. For those who did understand that the RP implementation was in response to the racially disproportionate suspension numbers, many felt that the statistics were invalid. RP, particularly as a response to racial inequity, require

substantial conversations about race. It does not work on its own to address such weighty issues. RP without a race-cognizant approach is how its potential can be lost, and RP can easily become more of a symbolic, superficial gesture. Without interrogating race and within the discussion, interrogating one's own identity, and one's own Whiteness as applicable, both before and during RP implementation, this reform initiative loses its potential to disrupt inequitable authority and belief structures that result in racial disparities.

This study shows, as others have, that talking about race is hard (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014; Skiba et al., 2016). To admit there is an issue with disproportionate data is hard because to do so is to admit that one's school district has a problem with racial inequity and therefore to admit that the staff is involved as part of that problem. Yet it is essential for these issues to be addressed (Castagno, 2008; Matias et al., 2014; Wadhwa, 2010). It is far too easy to just not talk about race and focus on the "how" of implementation. It is far too easy if race is discussed for White staff to take a defensive stance and fall into the norms of White talk, showing their White ignorance, their White rage, and their sense of White victimization. This is not to say this was true of all White staff. For instance, Victoria, a White RP coach spoke of how important she felt race was to her students and her efforts to have open conversations with them as she explored her own Whiteness by doing a book study on the topic with her sister. However, as this study showed, it was true for many.

To have a discussion on the racial inequity of MCSD disciplinary data that got derailed into talking not about students but instead about what these White teachers felt to be what some have called "reverse-racism" is of great concern. Some teachers felt that being White caused students to misunderstand them, that they had to be so careful in what they said and did and how unfair it was to still be called racist. Their desire to be seen as good teachers, to bridge the

good/bad binary, can make it “effectively impossible” for white people to talk about race (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 72).

Although RP are a powerful tool toward the creation of more equitable ways of addressing student behavior, they cannot break into Whiteness on their own and as shown in this study, Whiteness can deflect their effectiveness. To truly implement RP well, particularly when used in response to racial disproportionality, RP requires us to interrogate our beliefs about race in general and specifically, our own racial identities. As a teacher in my preliminary study about RP suggested, there must be a sustained effort to address “the third rail” by having deep conversations about race, ethnicity, one’s attitudes about race, and why RP was initiated in the first place. These findings align with Matias et al. (2014) who suggest it is imperative that Whiteness and its impact on the school and larger community be acknowledged, especially in those with a much more diverse population staffed by a majority of White teachers. This recognition and ongoing vigilance are needed to be sure that racially equitable policies, procedures, and practices are in place which can only happen when there is a willingness to change and open, honest conversations.

These findings echo themes found in current research. Not spending time on “why” RP was being implemented allowed staff to miss the opportunity to reflect on their values and their interactions with students, an important component of successful training (McCluskey et al., 2008). For RP to truly address issues of disproportionality, issues of race and Whiteness need to be on the table (Wadhwa, 2010, Matias et al., 2014). To eliminate such racial disparities requires a thoughtful, critical process to develop an ongoing awareness and acknowledgement of how those were produced and a commitment to work through these issues (Castagno, 2008; Carter et al., 2016; Datnow et al., 2000). Understanding how teachers’ beliefs and ideology relate to their

practice and student outcomes may be the missing link between the call for a school reform and how teachers implement that reform (Gregoire, 2003). Ignoring race precludes the fact that schools are mired in a system in which race structures both how schooling operates and its subsequent outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

How did this one school negotiate the intersection of equity, race, authority, and RP? As discussed throughout this study, Emancipation Middle School was implementing RP as a districtwide initiative to address the racial inequity of past disciplinary practices as mandated by the state government. Although some of the more experienced staff members could say that disproportionate suspension data was the reason RP was introduced, many discounted that the statistics were valid. The issues of race that had led to the disparity were not discussed. My efforts to ask about race and RP were met by rejection that race was a concern, deflection to other more race-neutral social issues or reflections that primarily dealt with the deep frustrations White teachers felt about being considered racist.

The focus on the “how” of doing elements of RP while not spending time on the “why” resulted in an implementation meant to address race and equity attempted to do so without ever talking about race and equity. Difficult conversations about race were not held and the causes of this inequity were not directly addressed. Teachers felt that their authority was deeply compromised by the revised Code of Conduct and that students perceived there were few consequences for their misbehavior. In addition, the school still operated with many of the same authoritarian, punitive structures it had before RP. By maintaining traditional and hierarchical authority structures in the implementation of RP at Emancipation and in the MCSD, a sense of disenfranchisement and devaluing of the school community was felt which sabotaged the communal, consensus, agential model of shared decision making upon which RP are based.

Ideally, the intersections of race, equity, authority, and RP could and should be readily negotiated. As schools turn to RP as a means to address racial disparities, deep discussions about race must occur. Not only must deeply entrenched authoritarian structures be deconstructed and reimagined, but also the deeply entrenched practice of ignoring race. The reality is that schools are intrinsically part of a system in which race significantly affects both how schooling operates and its subsequent outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Without a race-cognizant approach, the potential of Restorative Practice is lost. To implement RP requires us to interrogate our identities truly and fully in multiple ways including what it means to be a good teacher. To ignore race, to deny inequitable practices, to change the subject, and to be silent, or to claim victimization is emblematic of Whiteness. However, to engage in conversations that acknowledge systemic racism, implicit and explicit bias, and to actively look for and be a part of solutions that address such evils is to be part of what Mr. Herbson says RP are, “justice that heals.” RP offer an avenue that allows us to actively seek to dismantle and reimagine authority structures that can eliminate disproportionality and build positive, proactive social skills. Surely, that is the essence of what truly being a good teacher for every student involves.

A Self-Reflexive Examination of Whiteness in this Study

This research took place in a tumultuous time in the United States where race was brought into the national conversation from multiple stances. The issue of racial disproportionality in school suspension numbers was of such concern that the government mandated school districts take actions to ameliorate such practices with programs such as RP. Repeated incidences of police brutality against Black Americans led to calls for defunding the police and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement. However, these actions that seemed an effort to proactively address issues of racial inequity were countered with others.

The 2020 election showed a deep divide between political parties that has only grown with the weaponization of Critical Race Theory and state laws that have called for the removal of what some considered divisive teaching about race and equity. There are disgruntled cries from conservative Republicans calling for teachers to be sued for teaching anything that might make their White children uncomfortable and the related banning of books. Calls against affirmative action and assertions that we need to live in a “race neutral society” fill the news. The first Black woman nominated to become a Supreme Court Justice was subjected to being read a children’s book about what an elected official called “racist babies” in her questioning despite having exceptional qualifications. Talked directly about or not, race remains at the forefront of our society and requires self-examination on both a personal and systemic level.

The need for self-examination, also called reflexivity, is an important part of the research process. Pillow (2003) defines reflexivity as “involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge in order to produce more accurate analyses” (p. 178). In research that involves White researchers studying Whiteness, it is important to know how Whiteness operates within the research process (Foste, 2020, p. 134) and for “White scholars to be transparent as to why they engage in critical studies of Whiteness” (Morales, 2022, p. 709).

Reflexivity allows a researcher to ask themselves how who they are, who they have been and who they think they are influences all stages of the research process. This includes the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and research findings and their implications (Pillow, 2003). It can seem almost impossible to unpack the implications of one’s social and racial positioning in the study of Whiteness, but it is needed (Foste, 2020). The

following sections provide a self-reflexive description of my racial location before, during and after this research study.

My Racial Self-Location Before this Study

As described in Chapter 5, the events leading up to the adoption of RP took place between 2010 and 2015 when I was a classroom teacher and then an instructional coach in the MCSD. Although I would like to say I was well aware of all the concern and controversy over the discovery of the inequitable disciplinary data and practices in my school district, in reality, I was not. I was consumed with the many demands of meeting the academic and affective needs of my students, and I participated in many school committees. I knew what was going on in the four walls of my classroom and in my school. I was aware that the Code of Conduct was being rewritten, and that there was an issue with the State Attorney General about something, but not any specifics. I am sure if I had not been White, I would have had a very different awareness of all the concerns and controversy about racial equity at that time. My White privilege and “willful ignorance” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) of the experience and concerns of people of color in my community kept me ignorant.

Just prior to my decision to pursue my doctoral studies full time, I became aware that the MCSD was about to implement RP and that initial training would take place in the summer of 2015. The more I heard about RP, the more I liked it. As discussed earlier, RP included many of the things I value for students; relationship building, student voice and agency, the use of circles, collaboration, and shared authority. I was intrigued by the process, and as I learned more, I decided that this would be a topic I would like to research

What is of note here is that I did not recognize that the implementation of RP in the MCSD was intended to address issues of race, equity, and disproportionality. In fact, I was not aware of this until (while doing my research apprenticeship) I asked MCSD teachers about the initial RP training. One teacher responded that until third rail issues such as race, ethnicity, and implicit bias were addressed, the RP implementation would not reach its potential. This spurred me to find out how RP and race were connected in the MCSD and later to research the history behind this RP implementation. I learned there was a whole back story that I did not know and knew I should have. I was troubled by my White ignorance again and determined to learn more. This resulted in my second research question and Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

My Racial Self-location during my Study Design

As I took graduate courses in Critical Whiteness Studies that included an historical examination on race in U.S. Education, I became more and more concerned with all that I did not know and found my ignorance appalling. In the design of my dissertation study, I knew I wanted to study the implementation of RP and the construct of change on an organizational level and to look at the belief systems of teachers about race, equity, authority, and RP. I determined that I would do a case study and use Critical Race Theory to help me design my study and analyze my findings.

I was, like Victoria in my study, grappling to understand, accept, and apply what I was learning about Whiteness in my research design. In retrospect, I see again my White ignorance and perhaps arrogance in my planning. I made a series of assumptions that affected my decision making. I thought I would see evidence of Whiteness and race in my observations and conversations without directly mentioning it. I decided to use a snowball method of initially connecting with participants at my research site for observations and self-selection within this

group to complete my end of study interviews. Unfortunately, in a study about race, I did not use race as a criteria in my selection of participants. I was focused on getting staff members who would work with me and not that having a diverse body of participants would have given me more well- rounded data.

As I planned my five semi-structured interview questions, I did not consider what I knew about White talk (McIntyre, 1997). I wrote questions that aligned with my research questions using a scaffolded structure. I provided no context or information because I assumed my interviewees would have a wealth of knowledge about RP and its implementation on a practical and systemic level that they would share with me. I looked forward to what I hoped would be a robust conversation. This was despite my own experience of being a teacher in the MCS and not knowing RP was intended to address issues of racial inequity.

My Racial Self-Location During my Case Study Research

As noted in my methodology chapter, I spent close to 250 hours shadowing and observing at Emancipation Middle School. Although there was racial diversity among my participants, this was from the nature of their roles such as the principal and two of the RP coaches and not in my criteria for participant selection. This focus only on the roles of my participants resulted in a lack of representation of Black teachers in my interviews. My criteria was that those I requested to interview be teachers I had built relationships with during my classroom observations. When some teachers did not respond, I understood it to be that they were too busy with all the demands on their time. The fact that my interviews would be almost entirely with White teachers didn't register with me as problematic.

I wonder if, like the interviews Foste (2020) conducted in his study of undergraduates and their perceptions of race, my shared racial positioning with my participants affected their responses. He suggested that the interview context may have “served as a form of backstage racism, a space in which participants could speak freely with another white person about race without much hesitation” (p. 139). Foste also suggests that White researchers consider how their interaction with White participants might serve to both normalize and perpetuate Whiteness, knowing that our reactions, both verbal and nonverbal, influence the proceedings (2020, p. 142).

As I reflect on how my question regarding if RP affects disproportionality was essentially “highjacked” by a number of my White participants; they chose to talk instead of their frustrations about being White teachers, and I realize, I did not understand that the question would have that trigger quality to it. It appeared that a question meant to garner a discussion about the systemic nature of disproportionality and if RP addressed it was taken as a personal affront to what Applebaum (2010) calls their “moral goodness”. Instead of answering the question I asked, they responded by doing what Ahmed (2011) calls self-referencing and talked not about how race affected their students but how race affected them. Would this have happened if I had been Black? I think that is unlikely.

In the time that these teachers were sharing with great passion about how hurt they were when called racist, how careful they felt they had to be at all times and how very misunderstood they felt, I was caught by a myriad of feelings myself. On one hand, they were not answering my specific question at all, and responded in a way that I did not expect. However, they were talking about race in a way that could be very relevant to my study and certainly were addressing Whiteness head on. I was caught by how emotional they were, how vulnerable they seemed, and

I let them talk as much as they chose to. I did not redirect, I did not probe, and I did not ask for clarification. I just let them talk.

I am, by nature, very conscious of being “nice,” polite, and considerate. This was a conversation I was not prepared for and in the moment I decided not to push, I did not seek to cause further discomfort, and fell short of asking harder questions. This was true for each of the participants who chose to respond in this way. DiAngelo (2018) warns that “Niceness will not get racism on the table and will not keep it on the table when everyone wants it off” (p. 152). I would like to have had the knowledge, skills, and foresight to have handled the interviews differently. However, in my self-examination, I recognize that I share many of the same feelings of my participants in these areas. I think I maintained a more neutral stance as they spoke, but I may have nodded and used other nonverbal discursive moves that could be seen as White complicity.

The truth is that I felt a level of empathy with these teachers as I have also been called racist and been very upset about it. I have also felt that I needed to be very careful about what I said and did so that students or families did not perceive me as racist and there have been situations where I have felt misunderstood. When in my analysis, I noted their use of White talk, White fragility, and White fear, I knew that it was just as much a statement about me and my Whiteness. That may well be another reason I did not extend those conversations or add my thoughts because I did not want to have any influence on their responses. However, it is very likely that whether I wanted to or not, I did,

My Racial Self-Location During Analysis

As I examined my data and looked for patterns, I found this experience compelled me to consider what I did not know about systemic racism and Whiteness. Applebaum (2008) says that White ignorance involves “not asking (having the privilege not to need to ask) certain questions, and it generates specific types of delusions — wrong ways of perceiving the world that are socially validated by dominant norms” (p. 297). She adds that it is more than just not knowing but “not knowing what one does not know while believing that one knows” (p. 297). I recognize this for example in how several of my participants denied the validity of disproportionality and their insistence that they were colorblind. I also recognize this “not knowing but believing that one knows” in myself, in the design of my study, in the structure of my interviews and in the way I conducted them. My Whiteness and, at times, my ignorance in how it is expressed is always present whether I am aware of it or not.

I have also considered why I did not include member checking of my study except for offering transcripts from interviews and observations for my participants to check for accuracy. I did not offer anyone in my study the opportunity to see my analysis. Like Foste (2020), I also knew that what I had written would “differ drastically from how the participants understood themselves as racial beings.. and that such an experience could cause more harm than good” (p. 143). I believe this decision, while under the guise of concern for my participants’ comfort, also was connected to my White fragility and lack of comfort in directly sharing my analysis with them. I realize in not doing a member check I missed an opportunity for discussion about Whiteness, and if within this study, I did not reinscribe Whiteness, I did not disrupt it either.

Berger (2015) defines reflexivity as a continual internal dialogue whereby a researcher critically self-evaluates their positionality and that it may affect the research process and

findings. Applebaum (2015) recommends that this process needs to be rooted in both humility and self-critique.

In this section on self-reflexivity, I have demonstrated an awareness of the problematics within my research due to my location as a White researcher (Pillow, 2003) and my positionality as a former White teacher in this school district. My analysis shows evidence of how the responses of my White participants and my own connect systemic privilege to practices of ignorance that can allow for complicity to safeguard our desire to be seen as morally good people (Applebaum, 2008). In addition, in a study about race and equity, I did not use a race-cognizant approach in many of my decisions about my study design. Even in my analysis, I initially saw my systemic analysis of change in the implementation of RP using Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform as **separate** from race, when of course, they are intrinsically linked. It is an ongoing challenge to maintain being race-cognizant when my Whiteness calls me to see things as "race neutral" and to normalize the hegemonic nature of Whiteness as can be seen in my study design and my conduct during my interviews. This exemplifies the need for vigilance as a White researcher studying Whiteness (Applebaum, 2015; Foste, 2020) and the need for self-reflexivity from the very start of such research projects.

Strengths Of this Study

One of the strengths of this study is that it was a fifteen-month case study that provided the opportunity to see change more fully over time as the RP implementation at Emancipation proceeded through the course of two school years. If I had only been at the school for either Year A or Year B, I would have observed a much more partial view. In addition, Ms. James allowed me remarkable access to the building throughout this case study to observe in classrooms and shared spaces, to attend meetings, and to shadow RP coaches and administrators. I was allowed

to attend PD at Emancipation and at the RP coaches' training. In addition, it was impressive how very open, and I believe, honest the staff were in their conversations with me. For the people I spoke with, having their voice valued, their opinions noted and sensing that I felt what they had to say mattered, was important. Multiple interviews and conversations went much longer than expected as people lingered to talk about the things that were of concern to them. Although some conversations were uncomfortable, all stayed engaged with me through the full interview sessions. My participants' generosity of their time, opinions, and wisdom is noteworthy.

Another strength is that, although unexpected, this study provided the opportunity to see how the Emancipation school community responded to a series of challenges to their RP implementation in Year B of this study. This was real life change that happens in schools everywhere: staff and schedule changes, new initiatives, changes in leadership and priorities that impact reform initiatives. It changed the trajectory of what I had expected to see but was valuable in what was learned.

Although I was only able to formally interview fourteen staff members, they came from a wide array of experience levels and roles within the building, which was a strength. They included administrators, RP coaches, the Behavior Intervention Specialist, special education teachers, content specialist classroom teachers, the dean of students, and a special area teacher. In addition, I was able to use information from less formal conversations with the Best Practices Organization leadership, the RP national consultant who oversaw the MCSD district wide RP plan, and others. I also observed broadly throughout the school in classrooms and common areas, seeing a wide array of morning circles and teachers in action. I spent many hours shadowing administrators and RP coaches, seeing what they called "restoratives" firsthand and was allowed to get a real feel for what was happening at Emancipation.

The final strength is that this research takes a critical look at the change that implementing RP at Emancipation requires from two stances. One is a systemic analysis using Fullan's Theory of Action for System Reform (2009a), the second, an exploration of how this school came to choose the change of RP implementation and the third, an examination of how this school negotiated the intersections of race, equity, authority, and RP. The latter explored the changes required to more traditional, punitive authority structures and to address the very reason the MCSD selected to implement RP, to change in a manner that allowed inequitable racial disparities in disciplinary practices to end. Although change is certainly a huge part of implementing RP, it was difficult to find literature that looked at change and RP directly.

Further Limitations of this Study

There were several additional limitations in the course of this research besides my positionality as a White researcher as discussed prior. Another limitation was the sample size of this study. I only looked at one urban middle school in the Northeast United States. Initially, I had considered looking at more schools but determined that an in-depth analysis of the interworking at one school would produce more in depth and meaningful data. In addition, I only formally interviewed fourteen staff members who were the ones who agreed when I asked them. None of the teachers I formally interviewed were African American. My classroom observations were also based on who said yes when asked. Those whom I asked were either staff I knew or those suggested to me by others. Using this process of self-selection meant that those I interacted with were interested in my study of RP and thus my data may be skewed rather than if I had done a more randomized or representational sample.

In the analysis of my interviews to respond to my first research question, I focused on the responses of the majority of my respondents, White teachers, and staff members. Although I did

have responses from more informal conversations with staff of color, I was not able to note patterns with such few participants. The very small sample of responses on race and RP I did receive from my participants of color showed either an extensive response of reflection on systemic racism or an unwillingness to engage on the topic or perhaps, more with me. The perspectives of these staff members are very important and not having a more equal voice from them is a limitation to this research.

Another limitation was that I only completed a single session of one-on-one interviews with one exception, when two teachers requested to be interviewed together. By not having focus group interviews, I believe, in retrospect, I missed an opportunity for deeper and richer discussions on race, equity, authority, and RP. In addition, as I went through my data, I saw many moments where I could have asked more delving follow-up questions that I missed and as discussed earlier found ways to talk about race more deeply. I also was unable to do a final interview with the school principal who a year into my study with two months left told me she was sure I had enough information after shadowing her close to a dozen times. I never knew what precipitated the change in her level of cooperation with me but honored her wishes as she asked. I had many hours of conversation with her from the multiple times I shadowed her but not a final interview.

Future Research Recommendations

This study suggests that there is still much to be learned about RP. Future research recommendations include expanding this research to do a multi-site study to look at race, equity, authority, and change. Also, adding a much more extensive set of interviews that include focus groups and individual interviews that delve much more deeply into race, equity, and RP with a much more diverse body of participants would be beneficial.

It would be valuable to take a more extensive look at why it is so hard for White teachers to talk about race, how to overcome such obstacles, and how and why the desire to see oneself as a good teacher, precludes the deeper conversations about race. Would it get easier over time and repeated practice? To encourage such dialogue, it would be helpful to create and to co-create “places where they (teachers) can talk to one another about hard issues, so they can become more aware of their beliefs and more comfortable with discussion, disagreement and debate” (Sapon-Shevin, 2010, p. 200).

Finally, further research on RP and change theory would be useful not just in the initial development phase to ensure all the essential components are in place, but also in the years that follow for how the initiative is maintained. It would be informative to explore how schools whose RP implementation is sustained over time and in settings where it has been, and what mechanisms can and should be put into place, so it is not derailed.

Significance and Implications of this Study

This study is significant because it addressed the call for further research on RP that explores issues of race (Gavrielides, 2014; Wadhwa, 2007; Hamer et al., 2013), on teachers’ perspectives about implementing RP (Hurley et al., 2015 Gregory et al., 2016) and components critical for RP sustainability (Hurley et al., 2015). Using a Critical Whiteness approach, this study focused on the racially dominant (Howard, 2004) and examined how White teachers responded to questions about race, equity, disproportionality, and RP. In addition, it extends the call for vigilance for White researchers such as me to maintain a heightened awareness, preparation, and reflexivity to be able to effectively talk about issues of race with White participants (Foste, 2020). It supports the importance of taking on the “epistemological stance of the researcher who is called to “know thyself” to counter personal bias and sustain rigor”

(Duncan, 2005, p. 161). In addition, it supports the need for the addition of race-cognizant elements to every facet of the implementation of RP when it is intended to address the racial inequity of disproportionality in school disciplinary practices.

Implications for School District Leadership

An important implication of this study for school districts is that change theory such as Fullan's (2009a) Theory of Action for System Reform offers a valuable means to not only develop and initially implement a reform initiative such as RP, but also to be used as a measure to sustain it. However, when used with an equity reform initiative such as RP with a very specific intent to reduce disproportionality, a modification is needed. RP, in this context, requires a race-cognizant approach in all areas. Thus, an additional column next to each of the six change components that provided space of an action plan that addressed issues of race would add immensely to the effectiveness of this theory of action.

In Year A, Emancipation was, by the measure of Fullan's (2009b) six change components, successfully in the midst of implementing RP. Over the course of a summer, changes were made that did not seem specifically intended to harm the implementation of RP, but they did. Without the creation of a change theory or theory of action in the development of an initiative such as RP and a true commitment to ensure each of the change components is maintained throughout the course of an initiative, then what happened at Emancipation as it has at many other schools, will continue and initiatives of great promise and great potential will not be fully realized. Again, the addition of a column that illustrates action plans for each component that address race is needed.

A second implication for school districts is to consider who is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of RP, particularly when staff changes. In this research study, perhaps it was Mr. Roberts but he was transferred to a different school. Perhaps it was the MCSD Office of School

Culture and Climate, but they did little oversight except to ask if everyone was doing morning circles. Perhaps it was Mr. Herbson, but he never visited Emancipation. Perhaps it was the RP coaches and Best Practices Organization, but Ms. James felt Lauren had overstepped her role and would no longer meet with her. Perhaps it was the School Climate and Discipline Committee but there was no longer time for them to meet and the committee was disbanded. Perhaps it was Ms. James, but she had delegated RP to her VP and the next year tried to delegate it to the dean of students but that did not work. Without the continued presence of a confirmed point person to facilitate and advocate for RP, actions and decisions happened that diminished its effectiveness. However, because there were still two RP coaches in Year B who did mediations and reentries, and because staff were told they could do morning circles if they wanted to, it was still possible to say RP was happening at Emancipation. However, the difference between Year A and B was significant and brings into question what “doing RP” really means.

A third implication is the importance of thoroughly unpacking the “why” of initiatives such as RP that are intended to address issues of disproportionality. School districts need to include in their professional development plans time to fully examine the disproportional data. Often there is such a focus on the “how” of running morning circles, mediations, and restorative circles, that the “why” is briefly covered if at all. This should include, in terms of racial disproportionality, a thorough explanation of how statistics are derived, deep discussions about why such disparities have happened and how to eradicate them. Staff needs to understand why the ideology and practice of punitive consequences have always been problematic and are a major cause of the very problems that led to not only to the disciplinary racial disparities, but also to exclusionary and harmful practices for all students. Without this foundation clearly in place, it can be far too easy for staff to discount the numbers as shown in this study and not fully grasp the accuracy and

urgency this data involves as well as the many harms authoritarian, top down, punitive systems of consequences cause. Each of these would fit perfectly in the race-cognizant action plan box for the appropriate component.

Finally, as school districts more frequently turn to outside consultants such as Mr. Herbson and local community-based organizations such as Best Practices Organization, it is important to ensure that they have the opportunity to communicate with each other and be on the same page for how to best support schools and students. Although in this study, both were deeply involved in the implementation of RP in the MCSD, the two had never met and operated without knowing what the other was doing. It would have been much more effective for the MCSD to bring all the agencies and consultants supporting RP together to make sure they had a common purpose and were working together effectively, not in isolation, toward the larger goal of the success of RP in the school district.

Implications for School Leaders

Similarly, to school district leadership, it is important that at the individual school level there is a continued commitment to build, sustain, and protect RP, as well as a system of accountability to ensure that happens. In the case of Emancipation, RP became more of a symbolic gesture than the robust, building-wide vision centered, capacity growing, continuous inquiry and evaluation model it had been.

This study suggests that schools would be well advised to follow Emancipation's Year A example but with the addition of a race-cognizant component. There was a strong leader in charge, the school's vision, and expectations about the mechanics of how to do RP were explicit and there were multiple means in place to build staff capacity.. The School Climate and Discipline Committee provided for the development of teacher leaders and communication back

and forth between the rest of the staff. The collaboration between BPO, school administrators, and staff was strong and competing agendas minimal. All these broke down in Year B. Levin and Fullan (2008) state that a huge challenge in education reform is to attend to a multitude of competing agendas and leadership changes while maintaining focus on the chosen reform initiative. It requires both strong leadership and continuous attention to communication to maintain the support needed for the key priorities and to stay the course. “It’s a kind of balancing act and indeed a fine art” (p. 297).

A third implication is that school leaders should ensure consistency and coherency throughout the school for both staff and students. RP require a school to “re-imagine” how authority is wielded. School leaders should model exactly what they are asking staff and teachers to do. Top down, authoritarian punitive practices such as having security guards removing students from class, watching staff on multiple cameras in a manner they felt was “Big Brother” oversight, and insisting on highly prescriptive, high pressure behavior expectations like HALLS, takes away from the importance of relationship building and treating all with respect. Opportunities for student and staff voice and agency are critical. High expectations for important RP practices such as morning circles should be continued instead of becoming optional.

A final implication for school leaders is to ensure that teachers and students understand that RP do not mean that there are no consequences for behavior, but that there is a move from punitive, exclusionary consequences to more restorative ones. Mediation is a restorative consequence, restoring the harm done is a restorative consequence, and a peace circle is a restorative consequence. When a student makes a plan to restore a relationship that has been broken with a peer, with a teacher, or anyone in the school community, it is essential that there is

follow up to ensure that the student follows through with that plan. Restorative consequences may also include skill building, being mentored, or a host of other possibilities.

What teachers in this study seemed to really want is to feel that their student's behavior improved, whatever the problem was had been resolved, and they could return to class and be successful. Ideally, teachers are directly involved in RP, and it is more than a pull-out program. By having RP done outside the classroom by a RP coach and not including the teacher in person or by close communication, many teachers, as shown in this study, felt nothing was being done and there were no consequences.

This is an important job for school leaders to ensure that this misunderstanding and source of much teacher angst is clarified throughout both RP training and, in the language and actions of the administration, the RP coaches, support staff, and others toward teachers, parents and especially students. If students return to class laughing and say nothing happened to them without changing their behavior or repairing the broken relationship, then the RP were not fully successful and need to be revisited. It is incumbent on school leaders and those they designate to take these steps and others like them, so teachers do not buy out of RP by saying, as many teachers at Emancipation did, that there were no consequences and students did whatever they wanted.

Implications about Race, Equity, and RP

An important implication from this research for those involved in RP is that it is critical to include a race-cognizant component within any implementation that has the intention of addressing issues of racial equity. RP or Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009b) is not sufficient to address such critical issues.

This study provides evidence that overcoming White teachers' resistance and defensiveness that is often rooted in a deep desire to be viewed as a good teacher is challenging. To talk about race opens the door to talking about racism and one's own ideology about race. It may be expected, as these Emancipation teachers gave evidence of, that there are multiple layers of White talk, White fear, and White anxiety to work through. However, without a deep commitment to do so, to fully examine the "why" of social justice initiatives as well as the "how," RP may not be able to reach its potential and inequities that are intended to be addressed are not.

Here is where the beauty of RP lives for in the negotiation of race, equity, authority, and RP; PD can include the use of circles to talk about the data and the causes, to talk about race and racism, why students feel White teachers are racist and what it truly means to be a good teacher. Solutions can be reached by problem-solving and consensus, and by the co-creation of schools that are responsive to their students, responsive to their teachers, and the highest goals they strive to reach. This would allow staff to experience RP as its intended to be inclusive, nonhierarchical, focused on acknowledging wrongs, problem-solving and making amends in a way that allows the participants to feel they have voice, are listened to, valued, and agential in a manner that builds relationships and a sense of community.

Final Note

The purpose of this study was to better understand change in the implementation of RP. It provides empirical evidence of how race, equity, and authority and RP were negotiated at this school. What emerged is that RP cannot deal with issues of race and inequity on its own. There needs to be as much focus on the "why" as there is on the "how" with deep conversations about racial disproportionality, understanding the statistics and how this is an issue of systemic racism.

Without this foundational understanding, it is too easy for White teachers to discount the facts through rejection or deflection. The conversation needs to continue and be held through discomfort, perceived and real, about race, about racism and about being a White teacher who teaches students of color. This needs to include feelings of being misunderstood, of having to be so careful, of being called racist, and the desire to be seen as a good teacher. A RP circle would be a wonderful vehicle for such reflective conversations.

In addition, it became clear that to implement RP effectively requires a reimagining of authority structures that allows all to have voice, to be heard, to problem solve, and to come to group decisions, in other words, a true culture change. It is counterproductive to have decisions made on state and school district levels that can sabotage, intentionally or not, a reform initiative such as RP and to have classroom teachers feel disenfranchised by feeling they have no voice in student behavior procedures and consequences. To be effective, RP needs to be a whole school initiative where all are involved in the creation of restorative structures and procedures that move away from punitive consequence ideology. It is critical that teachers understand the harms such ideology and practices cause.

This study also shows the history of the events that lead to the implementation of RP matter. In this case, there was a community uprising that resulted in legal action taken against the MCSD to ensure that steps to address the alarming disproportionality were taken. It is critical that their concerns are fully responded to with transparency. In the case of the MCSD of which Emancipation was a part of, although suspension numbers were down, disproportionality actually increased over the four years of RP implementation that were documented. Clearly this needed to be communicated to the community and as suggested in this study, a much more robust, race-cognizant plan be put in place.

Change theory or theory of change offers a valuable means to not only develop and initially implement RP but also to measure how well it is sustained. A critical caveat, however, is that if the goal of RP is to reduce racial inequity, then addressing issues of race must be integrated into every component. There needs to be a firm commitment for a plan to be in place using a format such as Fullan's Theory of Action of System Reform (2009b) that includes a dedicated person or entity to oversee the implementation over time. Importantly, they would provide the criteria that need to be in place so that there is consensus about what "doing RP" means. This would ensure that when decisions are made that would affect the integrity of the initiative (such as the staffing and funding decisions made at Emancipation between Year A and Year B), someone is there to safeguard the initiative. This person or entity would also provide oversight to ensure that issues of race were being addressed within each component of the plan.

This is not the story I wished to tell but it is the story that I saw. This study offers a cautionary tale of how a powerful, transformative reform initiative such as RP can go awry and suggests ways to prevent such a misfortune from happening again in the future.

Appendix A

Observation Consent



TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
150 Huntington Hall Syracuse, NY 13202
315-443-2685

Restorative Practices and the Reality of Implementation; Going from Ideal to Practice

My name is Theresa Neddo, and I am a doctoral candidate at Syracuse University working under the mentorship of Mr. Mara Sapon-Shevin. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study to you and please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any. I will be happy to explain anything in detail if you wish.

I am interested in learning more about restorative justice practices. You are being asked for permission to observe you during your implementation of restorative justice practices. All information will be kept *confidential*.

In any articles I write or any presentations that I make, I will use a made-up name for you, and I will not reveal details, or I will change details about where you work.

Your study data will be kept as confidential as possible, with the exception of certain information we must report for legal or ethical reasons.

I would like to take observation notes and I will use this information for data analysis purposes only. Only I will have access to the notes, and they will be erased when the study is complete.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to understand the implementation of restorative justice practices. This information should help us to improve how this initiative is implemented and allow for a better understanding of how the ideals of restorative justice practices are being met. By taking part in the research, you may experience the following benefit of knowing that your knowledge and implementation are valuable.

The risks to you of participating in this study are possible discomfort being observed. These risks will be minimized by allowing you to review the observation notes for accuracy and taking measures to ensure your confidentiality.

If you do not want to take part, you have the right to refuse to take part without penalty. If you decide to take part and later no longer wish to continue, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, contact Mr. Mara Sapon-Shevin (msaponsh@syr.edu) or Theresa Neddo (thneddo@syr.edu) If you have any questions

about your rights as a research participant, you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, if you cannot reach the investigators, contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered, I am 21 years of age or older, and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ I agree to be observed.

___ I do not agree to be observed.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix B

Interview Consent



TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
150 Huntington Hall Syracuse, NY 13202
315-443-2685

Restorative Practices and the Reality of Implementation; Going from Ideal to Practice

My name is Theresa Neddo, and I am a doctoral candidate at Syracuse University working under the mentorship of Mr. Mara Sapon-Shevin. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study to you and please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any. I will be happy to explain anything in detail if you wish.

I am interested in learning more about restorative justice practices. You will be asked to participate in an interview. This will take approximately 40 minutes of your time. All information will be kept *confidential*.

In any articles I write or any presentations that I make, I will use a made-up name for you, and I will not reveal details, or I will change details about where you work.

Your study data will be kept as confidential as possible, with the exception of certain information we must report for legal or ethical reasons.

I would like to make an audio recording of our interview which I will transcribe to ensure accuracy of what is said with your permission. I will use this information for data analysis purposes only. Only I will have access to your recording, and it will be erased when the study is complete.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to understand the implementation of restorative justice practices. This information should help us to improve how this initiative is implemented and allow for a better understanding of how the ideals of restorative justice practices are being met. By taking part in the research, you may experience the following benefit of knowing that your knowledge and opinions are valuable.

The risks to you of participating in this study are possible discomfort talking about race and equity and the efficacy of restorative justice practices. These risks will be minimized by allowing you to choose not to respond to any question you would prefer not to and taking measures to ensure your confidentiality.

If you do not want to take part, you have the right to refuse to take part without penalty. If you decide to take part and later no longer wish to continue, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, contact Mr. Mara Sapon-Shevin (msaponsh@syr.edu) or Theresa Neddo (thneddo@syr.edu) If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, if you cannot reach the investigators, contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered, I am 21 years of age or older, and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I agree to be audio recorded.

I do not agree to be audio recorded.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of researcher

Date

Printed name of researcher

Appendix C
Classroom Observation Protocol

Look Fors	Notes or can be incorporated into observation field notes
Classroom Space (Presence of student work, positive messaging, room arrangement, etc.)	
Teacher Behavior and Language Use (Interactions with students, how activities are introduced and ended, word use, response to student behaviors, use of student names etc.)	
Level of Student Engagement and Examples	
Restorative Practice Being Utilized/Structure of Activity	
Opportunities for Student Voice/Empowerment	
Sequence of Events and scripting of interactions during observation	
Prebrief/debrief with teacher if possible	

Appendix D

School Leadership Observation Protocol

Restorative Strategies	
Administrator's Language	
Continuous two-way communication* (Between the district and the school, the administration, and the staff)	
Capacity Bldg. linked to results* (Strategies and actions are used to mobilize the required new knowledge, skills, and competencies)	
Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry re: results* (About the implementation; what are effective practices and what can we learn from our successes.)	
Manage distractors* (Stay focused on the set goals, minimize ad hoc initiatives, and make time for professional development)	
Development of Leaders at all levels* (To support and propel the initiative)	
Direction and Sector engagement* (Direction from the top in partnership with the field in a blended strategy with an inspirational overall vision, a small number of ambitious goals, a leadership team, resources, and flexibility)	
Other	

(*from Fullan (2009a))

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1) How would you define Restorative Practices? Why is the SCSD implementing it and how?
- 2) How has Emancipation changed because of RP? Please include any changes in structures, belief systems, relationships, and school culture. Are there staff and student buy in? What has been the impact of RP on students? on teachers? Etc.
- 3) Do RP address the issue of racial disproportionality it is intended to? How do they impact issues of race and inequity? Could they? How and when does race play a role in disciplinary practices/RP?
- 4) How do RP and the authority of school staff intersect? Can there be both restorative and punitive responses to behavior?
- 5) Is there anything else you would like me to know about the RP implementation at your school?

References

- Abregú, L. (2012). Restorative justice in schools: Restoring relationships and building community. *Resolution Magazine*, 18 (4), 10-13.
- Ahmed, S. (2011). Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of anti-racism. *borderlands e- journal* 3(2).
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life* Duke University Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv1131d2g
- Ametepee, L. K., Tchinsala, Y., & Agbeh, A. O. (2014). The No Child Left Behind Act, the Common Core State Standards, and the school curriculum. *Review of Higher Education & Self-Learning*, 7(25).
- Anfara Jr, V. A., Evans, K. R., & Lester, J. N. (2013). Restorative justice in education: What we know so far. *Middle School Journal*, 44(5), 57-63.
- Anyon, Y., Jenson, J.M., Altschul, I., Farrar, J., McQueen, J., Greer, E., & Simmons, J. (2014). The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 44, 379-386.
- Applebaum, B. (2008). White Privilege/White Complicity: Connecting "Benefiting From" to "Contributing To". *Philosophy of Education Archive*, 292-300.
- Applebaum, B. (2010). *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy*. Lexington Books

- Applebaum, B. (2015). Flipping the script ... and still a problem: Staying in the anxiety of being a problem.” In *White Self-criticality beyond Anti-racism: How Does It Feel to Be a White Problem?* edited by G. Yancy, 1–20. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Atkinson, C. (2018). Final Report AOD Completion [PowerPoint slides]. Board of Education Meeting, Syracuse City School District. [AOD Final Update Final_public.pdf](#) ([boarddocs.com](#))
- Bahena, S., Cooc, N., Currie-Rubin, R., Kuttner, P., & Ng, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.
- Bailey, A. (2007). Strategic ignorance. In N. Tuana and S. Sullivan (Eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY.
- Bailie, J. (2017). Foreword. In A. Normore & A. Issa Lahera (Eds.), *Restorative Practice Meets Social Justice*, (p. xii). Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.
- Bassey, M. (1983). Pedagogic research into singularities: Case-studies, probes, and curriculum innovations. *Oxford Review of Education*. 9(2), 109-121.
- Bassey, M. (1991). *Case study in educational settings*. Philadelphia, Open University Press.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Bazemore, G. & M. Schiff. (2010). No time to talk: A cautiously optimistic tale of restorative

- justice and related approaches to school discipline. In R. Rosenfield, K Quinet & C. Garcia (Eds.) *Contemporary Issues in Criminological Theory and Research: The Role of Social Institutions*. United States: Cengage.
- Bell, D. (1980). Brown v. board of education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518-34.
- Bell, D. (1993). *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bell, M. (2019). Becoming white teachers: Symbolic interactions and racializing the raceless norm in predominately black schools. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649219885973>
- Billue, T. (2014). *Suspended for life: The road to unemployment crime and death*. United States: Xlibris Corp.
- Blackwell, R. (2014, Jan. 7). A young man's vision for Syracuse: Reflecting on suspension rates.
<http://www.cnyvision.com/fullstory.php?id=1616>.
- Body, P., Ruckdeschel, M., Bullen, B., Cecile, D., Dorsey, D., Mignano, M., & Swift, S. (2014, April 6). "Restorative justice" is the path to improving school discipline.
<https://www.syracuse.com/opinion/2014/04/syracuseschoolboarddisciplinerestorativejusticecommentary.html>
- Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to*

Theories and Methods. New York, Pearson, Allyn, and Bacon.

Braithwaite, J. (1989). Thinking harder about democratizing social control. In C. Alder & J.

Wundersitz (Eds.). *Family conferencing and juvenile justice: The way forward of misplaced optimism?* Canberra Australia: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Bryzzheva, L. (2018). "This is a white space": On restorative possibilities of hospitality in a raced space. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 37(3), 247-256.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/10.1007/s11217-018-9601-250>

Bullen, B., Corridors, C., & Strong, R. (2015, Sept. 2). Poor students and the school superintendent's work on their behalf.

<https://www.syracuse.com/opinion/2015/09/syracuseschoolsandpovertyyourletters.html>

Cabrera, N., Watson, J. E., & Franklin, J. D. (2016). Racial arrested development: A critical analysis of the campus ecology. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(2), 119-134.

Cairney, P. (2021) The future of education equity policy neoliberal versus social justice approaches. <https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2021/10/29/the-future-of-education-equity-policy-neoliberal-versus-social-justice-approaches/>

Capone, R. & Hulett, K.(n.d.). K-12 Education Reform: A New Paradigm.

<https://www.letsgolearn.com/resources/education-reform/>

Carter, P., Skiba, R., Arredondo, M., Pollock, M. (2016). You can't fix what you don't look at acknowledging race in addressing racial discipline disparities. *Urban Education*, 52(2),

207-235.

Castagno, A. (2008). "I don't want to hear that!" Legitimizing whiteness through science in schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39, 314-333.

Cavanagh, T., Vigil, P. & Garcia, E. (2014). Equity and excellence in education: A story legitimizing the voices of Latino/Hispanic students and their parents: Creating a restorative justice response to wrong-doing, *Conflict in Schools*, 47(4), 565-579.

Cobb, P., Confrey, J., diSessa, A., Lehrer, R., & Schauble, L. (2003). Design Experiments in Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 32(1), 9-13.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3699928>

Collins, J. 2001. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't*, New York: Harper Collins.

Connell, J., & Klem, A. (2000). You can get there from here: Using a theory of change approach to plan urban education reform. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 11(1), 93-120.

Contreras, S. (2014, September 9). *Code of Conduct, Character and Support*, Board of Education Public Hearing, Power point.

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/scsdny/Board.nsf/files/9NSPMV6556E8/\\$file/Code%20of%20Conduct%20Public%20Hearing.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/scsdny/Board.nsf/files/9NSPMV6556E8/$file/Code%20of%20Conduct%20Public%20Hearing.pdf)

Cornwall, Z. (1987). *Human Rights in Syracuse: Two Memorable Decades: A Selected History from 1963 to 1983*. Syracuse, NY. Human Rights Commission of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

Creation of a Fairy Tale. (2014, Nov. 17).

<https://scsdtakebackourschools.blogspot.com/2014/11/the-creation-of-fairy-take.html>

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., and Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. New York: The New Press

Daneshzadeh, A., & Sirrakos, G. (2018). Restorative justice as a double-edged sword:

conflating restoration of black youth with transformation of schools. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 17(4), 2.

Datnow, A. & Stringfield, S. (2000). Working together for reliable school reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 5(1-2), 183-204.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2022). Reimagining American education: Possible futures: The policy changes we need to get there. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103(8), 54–57.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217221100012>

Davison, M., Penner, A. M., & Penner, E. K. (2021). Restorative for all? Racial

disproportionality and school discipline under restorative justice. *American Educational Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312211062613>

- DeBray-Pelot, E., & McGuinn, P. (2009). The new politics of education: Analyzing the federal educational policy landscape in the post-NCLB era. *Educational Policy*, 23(1), 15-42.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904808328524>
- Decarr, K. (2014). Syracuse superintendent loses the confidence of 95% of area teachers.
<https://www.educationnews.org/education-policy-and-politics/syracuse-superintendent-loses-confidence-of-95-of-area-teachers/>
- Delgado, R. (1995). *The Rodrigo Chronicles: Conversations about America and Race*. NYU Press.
- DeWitt, D. M., & DeWitt, L. J. (2012). A case of high school hazing: Applying restorative justice to promote organizational learning. *NASSP Bulletin*, 96(3), 228–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636512452338>
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White Fragility: Why it's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Beacon Press. Boston.
- DiClemente, C.C., & Prochaska, J.O. (1982). Self-change and therapy change of smoking behavior: A comparison of processes of change in cessation and maintenance. *Addictive Behaviors*, 7(2), 133-142.
- Drewery, W. (2004). Conferencing in schools: Punishment, restorative justice and the productive importance of the process of conversation. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 14, 332-344.

DuBois, W.E.B. (1935). *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Free Press.

Dumas, L. (2013, June). SCSD suspension rates among the highest in the nation.

<http://cnyvision.com/fullstory.php?id=1399>.

Duncan, G. A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narrative, inequality and the problem of epistemology. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 93-114.

Durbin, J. (2016). Learning to switch gears. *American Educator*, Winter 2015-16, 17-21.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of management review*, 14(4), 532-550.

Feagin, J., Orum, A. & Sjoberg, G. (1991). *A Case for the Case Study*. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219- 245.

Foste, Z. (2020). Remaining vigilant: Reflexive considerations for white researchers studying whiteness. *Whiteness and Education*, 5(2), 131-146.

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: Systems thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Fullan, M. (2006, November). Change theory. In *Seminar Series. A force for school improvement*. <http://michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/13396072630.pdf>
- Fullan, M. (2007). Change theory as a force for school improvement. In *Intelligent leadership*. Springer, Dordrecht.
- Fullan, M. (2009a). Have theory, will travel: A theory of action for system change. *Change wars*, 275-293.
- Fullan, M. (2009b). Introduction In M. Fullan (Ed.) *The challenge of change: Start school improvement now!* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Fullan, M., Cuttress, C., Kilcher, A. (2009) Forces for leaders of change. In M. Fullan (Ed.) *The Challenge of Change: Start school improvement now!* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Galli, B. J. (2019). An engineering manager's guide for commonly used change management approaches—from one practitioner's experience. *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 47(3), 118-126.
- Garces, L, Ishimaru, A., Takahashi, S. (2017) Introduction to beyond interest convergence: Envisioning transformation for racial equity in education, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92(3), 291-293, DOI:10.1080/0161956X.2017.1324654
- Garrett, J., & Franklin, T. (2017). Cultivating restorative communities. *Restorative Practice Meets Social Justice: Un-Silencing the Voices of "At-Promise" Student Populations*, 139.
- Gavrielides, T. (2011). Restorative practices, From the early societies to the 1070's. *Internet*

Journal of Criminology 4. ISSN 2045-6743.

Gavrielides, T. (2014). Bringing race relations into the restorative justice debate: An alternative and personalized vision of “the other”. *Journal of Black Studies*. 45(3), 216-246.

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *The American Political Science Review*. 98(2), 341-354.

Gewertz, C. (2015, September 30). The common core explained. Edweek.

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-common-core-explained/2015/09>

Gillborn, D. (2013). Interest-divergence and the colour of cutbacks: Race, recession and the undeclared war on black children.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 34 (4): 477–491.

Giroux, H. A. (1997). White squall: Resistance and the pedagogy of whiteness. *Cultural Studies*, 11(3), 376-389.

Glaser, D. (1964). *The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill. Golann, J.W. & Torres, A.C. (2020). Do no-excuses disciplinary practices promote success? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 42 (4), 617-633.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1964). The social loss of dying patients. *American Journal of Nursing*, 64, 119-122.

Golann, J. W., & Torres, A. C. (2020). Do no-excuses disciplinary practices promote success? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 42(4), 617-633.

- González, T. (2012). Keeping kids in schools: Restorative justice, punitive discipline, and the school to prison pipeline. *Journal of Law and Education*, 41 (2), 281-335.
- González, T. (2015). Socializing schools: Addressing racial disparities in discipline through restorative justice in D. Losen (Ed.), *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Equitable Remedies for Excessive Exclusion*.
- Gorski, P. (2019). Avoiding racial equity detours. *Educational Leadership*.
- Grant, C.A., & Gibson, M.L. (2013). The path of social justice: A human rights history of social justice education, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(1), 81-99
DOI: [10.1080/10665684.2012.750190](https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.750190)
- Gregoire, M. (2003). Is it a challenge or a threat? A dual-process model of teachers' cognition and appraisal processes during conceptual change. *Educational Psychology*, 15(2), 147-179.
- Gregory, A. & Fergus, E. (2017). Social and emotional learning and equity in school discipline. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 117-136.
- Gregory, A., & Skiba, R. J. (2019). Reducing Suspension and Increasing Equity Through Supportive and Engaging Schools. In *Handbook of Student Engagement Interventions* (pp. 121-134). Academic Press.
- Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. S. (2008). The discipline gap and African Americans: Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom. *Journal of school psychology*, 46(4), 455-475.

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 and Psychological Consultation*, 25, 1-29.

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.

Griffin-Nolan, E. (2014, August 20). Safety in the schools. *Syracuse New Times*.

<https://www.syracusenewtimes.com/teachers/>

Hamer, L., Jenkins, M., & Moore, B. (2013). Toward a cultural framework for dialogue about justice. *Journal of Black Studies*, 44(4), 356-375.

Haney, K. G., Thomas, J., & Vaughn, C. (2011). Identity border crossings within school communities, precursors to restorative conferencing: A symbolic interactionist study. *School Community Journal*. 21(2),55-80.

Harrison, L. (2007). From authoritarian to restorative schools. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 16(8), 17-20.

Hashim, A.K., Strunk, K.O., & Dhaliwal, T.K. (2018). Justice for all? Suspension bans and restorative justice programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(2), 174-189.

Hess, F.M. (2011). *Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform*. Washington, DC, Brookings Institute Press.

Holt, A., Martin, D., Hayden, C., Nee, C. (2011). *Schooled in democracy? Promoting democratic*

- value as a whole-school approach to violence prevention. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 13(3), 205-217.
- Howard, P. S. (2004). White privilege: for or against? A discussion of ostensibly antiracist discourses in critical whiteness studies. *Race, Gender & Class*, 63-79.
- Harrison, L. (2007). From authoritarian to restorative schools. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 16(8), 17-20.
- Hurley, N., Guckenburg, S., Persson, H., Fronius, T., & Petrosino, A. (2015). *What further research is needed on restorative justice in schools?* WestEd.
- Inger, M., & Stout, R. T. (1968). School desegregation: The need to govern. *The Urban Review*, 3(2), 35-38.
- Issa, A. (2017). Connection to community to content. In A. Normore & A. Issa Lahera (Eds.), *Restorative Practices meets Social Justice* (pp. 107-122), Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.
- Kane, J., Lloyd, G., McCluskey, G., Maguire, r., Riddell, S., Stead, J. & Weedon, E. (2009). Generating an inclusive ethos? Exploring the impact of restorative practices in Scottish schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(3), 231-251.
- Kennedy, M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 945-980.
- Kincheloe, J. L., Steinberg, S.R., Rodriguez, N.M., and Chennault, R.E. (1998) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change. *Harvard Business Review*, 2(1), 1-10.
- Knight, D. & Wadhwa, A. (2014). Expanding opportunity through critical restorative justice Portraits of resilience at the individual and school level. *Schools*. 11(1), 11-33.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998) Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1),7-24, DOI: 10.1080/095183998236863
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206-214.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). The evolving role of critical race theory in educational scholarship. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 115-119.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). Race still matters: Critical race theory in education. In *The Routledge international handbook of critical education* (pp. 110-122). Routledge.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2019). Just what is critical race theory, and what's it doing in a nice field like education? In *Race is... race isn't* (pp. 7-30). Routledge.
- Ladson-Billings, G., and Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Hoffman Davis, J. (1997). *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Leach, T. & Lewis, E. (2013). Children's experiences during circle-time: A call for research-informed debate. *Pastoral Care in Education*. 31(1), 43-52.
- Lebens, C. (2015). On not making a labor of it: Relationality and the problem of whiteness." In

G. Yancy, ed., *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism: How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?* Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 69-83.

Ledesma, M.C. & Calderon, D. (2015). Critical theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 206-222. DOI: 10.1177/1077800414557825 qix.sagepub.com

Lempert, L.B. (2011). Asking questions of the data: Memo writing in the grounded theory tradition. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 245-264). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Leonardo, Z. (2007). The war on schools: NCLB, nation creation and the educational construction of whiteness. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 261-278.

Levin, B., & Fullan, M. (2008). Learning about system renewal. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 36(2), 289-303.

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method, and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 5-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674700100103>

Losen D. & Martinez, T.E. (2013). Out of school and off track: The overuse of suspensions in American middle and high schools.

<https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/out-of-school-and-off-track-the-overuse-of-suspensions-in-american-middle-and-high-schools.html>

Losen, D. J, Hodson, C. L, Keith II, M. A, Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). Are we closing the school discipline gap? *UCLA: The Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles*.

Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2t36g571>

Lustick, H. (2017). “What are we restoring?” Black teachers on restorative

discipline. In *The school to prison pipeline: The role of culture and discipline in school*.

Emerald Publishing Limited.

Lynch, M. (2014). Chapter One: What we already know about education reform in America.

Counterpoints, 461, 5-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42982179>

Malen, B., Rice, J.K., Matlach, L.K., Bowsher, A., Hoyer, K.M., Hyde, L.H., (2014). Developing organizational capacity for implementing complex educational reform initiatives.

Education Administration Quarterly. 51(1), 133-176.

Mallett, C.A. (2017). The school-to-prison pipeline: Disproportionate impact on vulnerable children and adolescents. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(6), 563-592.

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.

Martínez-Mesa, J., González-Chica, D. A., Duquia, R. P., Bonamigo, R. R., & Bastos, J. L.

(2016). Sampling: how to select participants in my research study? *Anais brasileiros de*

dermatologia, 91(3), 326–330. <https://doi.org/10.1590/abd1806-4841.20165254>

Mason, M. (2016). Is thorough implementation of policy change in education actually possible? What Complexity theory tells us about initiating and sustaining change.

European Journal of Education, 5(4), 437-440.

Matias, C. E., Viesca, K. M., Garrison-Wade, D. F., Tandon, M., & Galindo, R. (2014). What is critical whiteness doing in OUR nice field like critical race theory? Applying CRT and CWS to understand the white imaginations of white teacher candidates. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(3), 289-304.

Matsuda, M. J. (2018). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the first amendment*. Routledge.

Mayworm, A., Sharkey, J., Hunnicutt, K. & Schiedel, K., (2016). Teacher consultation to enhance implementation of school-based restorative justice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 26 (4), 385-412.

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.

McCluskey, G., Kane, J., Lloyd, G., Stead, J., Riddell, S. & Weedon, E. (2011). Teachers are afraid we are stealing their strength: At risk society and restorative approaches in schools. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 59(2), 105-119.

McIntosh, P. (1988). *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies*. Wellesley College Center for

Research on Women, Wellesley MA.

McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring Racial Identity with White Teachers*. State University of New York, Albany NY.

McMahon, B. (2007). Educational administrators' conceptions of whiteness, anti-racism and social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(6), 684-696.

Mediratta, K. (2012). Grassroots organizing and the school-to-prison pipeline: The emerging national movement to roll back zero tolerance discipline policies in U.S. public schools. In S. Bahena, N. Cooc, R. Currie-Rubin, P. Kuttner, & M. Ng (Eds.), *Disrupting the school to prison pipeline* (pp. 211–236).

Merriam, S. (1985). The case study in educational research: A review of selected literature. *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 19(3), 204-217.

Miles, R. (2015). Complexity, representation, and practice: Case study as method and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(3), 309-318.

Miller, S. (2013, November 13). Plans to decrease suspension rates in Syracuse are set into action. <https://www.bcfought.expressions.syr.edu/bdj204/archives/12197>

Milner, R. H. (2017). Where's the race in culturally relevant pedagogy? *Teachers College Record*, 119(1), 5-32.

Milner, R.H., Pearman, A., III, & McGee, E.O., (2013). Critical Race Theory, Interest Convergence, and Teacher Education, in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, eds. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson. Routledge, New York.

Morales, S. (2022). Locating the “white” in critical whiteness studies: considerations for white scholars seeking to dismantle whiteness within educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 35(7). 703-710
DOI: [10.1080/09518398.2022.2061731](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2022.2061731).

Morgan, H. (2021). Restorative justice and the school-to-prison pipeline: A review of existing literature. *Education Sciences*, 11(4), 159.

Morrison, B., Blood, P., Thorsborne, M. (2005). Practicing restorative justice in school communities: The challenge of culture change. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal*, 5, 335-357.

Morrison, B. & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: Pedagogy, praxis, and discipline. *Journal of School Violence*, 11(2), 138-155.

Mulcahy, M. (2021, April 30). Syracuse schools missed the opportunity to desegregate.

<https://cnycentral.com/news/the-map-segregated-syracuse/the-map-syracuse-schools-missed-opportunity-to-desegregate>

Mulder (2014, June 13). Syracuse has one of the highest student suspension rates in the nation.

<https://www.syracuse.com/news/2014/06/ygeneralsyracusehasoneofthehigheststudentsuspensionratesin.html>

Mulder (2014, June 14). Syracuse school officials say they are already addressing high student

Suspensionrate.<https://www.syracuse.com/new/2014/06/syracuseschoolofficialssaytheyarealreadyaddressinghighstudentsuspensio.html>.

Navarro, L. & Sesky, J. (2017). Creating a restorative community: The view from the principal's chair, In A. Normore & A. I. Lahera (Eds.), *Restorative Justice Meets Social Justice* (pp. 155-171). Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.

New York History. Net (n.d.). The jerry rescue. <http://nyhistory.com/gerritsmith/jerry.html>

New York State Education Department (2018). School Report Cards, <https://data.nysed.gov/>

Nguyen, H.O., Normore, A. (2017). The “at-promise” model minority student: Providing equity, restorative practices, and access to mental health supports In A. Normore & A. I. Lahera (Eds.), *Restorative Justice Meets Social Justice* (pp. 39-52), Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.

Normore, A. (2017). *Social justice and restorative processes in urban schools*. In A. Normore & A. Lahera (Eds.). *Restorative Practice Meets Social Justice*. (pp. 1-17). Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.

Nuamah, S.A. (2020). The paradox of educational attitudes: Racial differences in public opinion on school closure, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 42:4, 554-570.

DOI: [10.1080/07352166.2017.1360734](https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2017.1360734)

NY.gov. (2014, July 10). A.G. Schneiderman announces agreement addressing school discipline issues in Syracuse. Retrieved from <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2014/ag-schneiderman-announces-agreement-addressing-school-discipline-issues-syracuse>

NYS Department of Education. Violent and Disruptive Incidents. VADIR NYS Student Support Services. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/ssae/schoolsafety/vadir>.

Okilwa, N., Khalifa, M., & Briscoe, F. (Eds.). (2017). *The school to prison pipeline: The role of culture and discipline in school*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Payne, A. Welch, K. (2013). Restorative justice in schools: The influence of race and restorative Discipline. *Youth and Society*, 47(4), 539-564.

Payne, C. (2008). *So Much Reform, So Little Change; the Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard Education Press.

Pavelka, S. (2013). Practice and policies for implementing restorative justice within schools. *The Prevention Researcher*, 20(1), 15-17.

Pearson, M., Albon, S., Hubball, H. (2015). Case study methodology: Flexibility, rigour, and ethical considerations for the scholarship of teaching and learning. *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6(3), 80-94.

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 16(2), 175-196, DOI: [10.1080/0951839032000060635](https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635)

Porter-Magee, K. (2004). Teacher quality, controversy, and NCLB. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 78(1), 26-29.

Proschaska, J.O., DiClemente, C.C., & Norcross, J.C. (1992). In search of how people change:

Applications to addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist*, 47(9), 1102-1114.

<https://doi-org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/10.1037/0003-066X.47.9.1102>

Prusak, L., & Cohen, D. (2001). How to invest in social capital. *Harvard business review*, 79(6), 86-97.

Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), 65-78.

Ramlackhan, K. (2020). Restricting social justice practices in public education: The neoliberal stronghold. *Handbook on promoting social justice in education*, 193-212.

Ratick, L. (2014, Nov. 22). Syracuse residents express concern about discipline in city schools.

<https://bcfought.expressions.syr.edu/bdj204/archives/14006>.

Rector-Aranda, A. (2016). School norms and reforms, critical race theory, and the fairytale of equitable education. *Critical Questions in Education*, 7(1).

Reimer, K. (2011). An exploration of the implementation of restorative justice in an Ontario Public school. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration*, 119, 1-42.

Reinholz, D.L., & Andrews, T.C. (2020). Change theory and theory of change: What's the Difference anyway? *International Journal of STEM Education*, 7(1), 1-12.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594->

Restorative Justice Pocketbook (2011). Chicago Public Schools: Office of School Improvement.

Restorative Strategies (2020). About Mr. Robert Spicer, Sr.

<https://www.restorativestrategies.expert/biography>

Rideout, G., Roland, K., Salinitri, G., & Frey, M. (2010). Measuring the effect of restorative justice practices: Outcomes and contexts. *EAF Journal* 21(2), 35-60.

Riede, P. (2013, June 7). Syracuse superintendent Sharon Contreras talks discipline with Department of Justice mediator.

https://www.syracuse.com/news/2013/06/superintendent_sharon_contrera_1.html

Robinson, D. (1970, October 1). School clashes ease in Syracuse.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1970/10/01/archives/school-clashes-ease-in-syracuse-3-buildings-shut-by-racial.html>

Roediger, D.R. (2001). Critical studies of whiteness. USA: Origins and arguments. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*. 98. 72-98.

Romano, A., & Arms Almengor, R. (2021). It's Deeper Than That!: Restorative Justice and the Challenge of Racial Reflexivity in White-led Schools. *Urban Education*, 0042085921998419.

Ryan, T. G., & Ruddy, S. (2015). Restorative justice: A changing community response. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 7 (2), 253-261.

Sapon-Shevin, M. (2010). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building cooperative, inclusive classroom communities*. Corwin Press.

Sas Rubin, G. E. J., Good, R. M., & Fine, M. (2020). Unequal schools and communities: A

- critical examination of neoliberal education reform. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 42(4), 491-491.
- Schiff, M. (2018). Can restorative justice disrupt the “school-to-prison pipeline?”. *Contemporary Justice Review*. 212(2), 121-139. DOI: [10.1080/10282580.2018.1455509](https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2018.1455509)
- Seager, A., Madura, J., Cox, J. & Carey, J. (2015). A district’s use of data and research to inform policy formation and implementation. Boston, MA, *Education Development Center, Inc.*
- Sensoy, O. & DiAngelo, R. (2012). *Is Everyone Really Equal?* Teachers College Press. NY.
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case Study Research in Practice*. London: SAGE.
- Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
- Skiba, R.J., Arredondo, M.I., & Williams, N.T. (2014) More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(4), 546-564.
- Standing, V., Fearon, C. & Dee, T. (2012). Investigating the value of restorative practice: An action research study of one boy in a mixed secondary school. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 26(4), 354-369.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994) Grounded Theory Methodology—An Overview. In: Norman, K.D. and Vannaeds, S.L.Y., Eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications,

Thousand Oaks, 22-23.

Swadener, B. B., & Lubeck, S. (Eds.). (1995). *Children and families" at promise":*

Deconstructing the discourse of risk. SUNY Press.

Syracuse City School District Website (2020). Code of conduct, character, and support.

<http://www.syracusecityschools.com/tfiles/folder984/Code%20of%20Conduct%202019-20.pdf>

Syracuse Now and Then. Org (n.d.). Urban renewal and the 15th ward.

http://syracusethenandnow.org/UrbanRenewal/15th_Ward.html

Taylor, A. (2017). Putting race on the table: How teachers make sense of the role of race in their practice. *Harvard Educational Review*; Cambridge. 87(1) (Spring 2017): 50-73,157.

Terry, M. (2017). Restorative practices and English language learners: Language development in relational contexts. In A. Normore & A. I Lahera (Eds.), *Restorative Practices Meet Social Justice* (pp. 89-105), Charlotte, NC, IAP, Inc.

Theoharis, G, Haddix, M., Alston, K., Applebaum, B., Ashby C., Biklin, D., Biklin, S., Brown, R., Canino-Rispoli, D., Causton, J., Chandler_Olcott, K., Coggiolo, J., Columna, L., Dekaney, E., Eatman, T., Engstrom, C., Ensher, G., Ferri, B., Foley, A., Harbour, W., ... (2014, May 11). Syracuse should stay the course on dealing with school suspensions. <https://www.syracuse.com/opinion/2014/05/syracuseshouldstaythecourseondealingwithschoolsuspensionscommentary.html>.

Torres, C. A. (2005). No Child Left Behind: A brainchild of neoliberalism and American

- politics. *New Politics*, 10(2), 94.
- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.) Recovery act highlights <http://www.ed.gov/recovery>
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/recoveryact.html>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2014). Data snapshot: School discipline (Issue Brief No. 1).
- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Indicators of school crime and safety*, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Services.
- United States Department of Education (2016). *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*, <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf>
- Vaandering, D. (2011) A faithful compass: rethinking the term restorative justice to find clarity, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 14(3), 307-328.
- Vaandering, D. (2013) A window on relationships: reflecting critically on a current restorative justice theory, *Restorative Justice*, 1(3), 311-333,
- Vaandering, D. (2014a) Implementing restorative justice practice in schools: what pedagogy reveals. *Journal of Peace Education*. 11(1), 64-80.
- Vaandering, D. (2014b). Relational restorative justice pedagogy in educator professional development. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 44(4), 508-530.
- VanWynsberghe, R. & Khan, S. (2007). Redefining case study. *International Journal of*

Qualitative Methods. 6(2), 80-94.

- Villenas, S., Dehyle, D., and Parker, L. (1999). Critical race theory and praxis: Latino/a and Navajo struggles for dignity, educational equity, and social justice. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle and S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is ... race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Wachtel, T. (1999). Restorative justice in everyday life: Beyond the formal ritual. Paper presented at the Reshaping Australian Institutions Conference: Restorative Justice and Civil Society, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Wachtel, T. (2003). Restorative justice in everyday life: Beyond the formal ritual. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 12(2), 83-87.
- Wachtel, T. (2005, November). The next step: developing restorative communities. Paper presented at the Seventh International Conference on Conferencing. Circles and other Restorative Practices. Manchester, UK.
- Wadhwa, A.K. (2007). There has never been a glory day in education for non-whites: Critical race theory and discipline reform in Denver. *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 1(2), 21-28.
- Wadhwa, A. (2015). *Restorative Justice in Urban Schools*. New York: Routledge.
- Wald, J., & Losen, D. J. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. *New directions for youth development*, 2003(99), 9-15.
- Wallace-Wells, B. (2021). How a conservative activist invented the conflict over critical race theory. New York Times. (June 18, 2021). <https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-inquiry/how-a-conservative-activist-invented-the-conflict-over-critical-race-theory>

Warren, J. (2003). *Performing Purity: Whiteness, Pedagogy, and the Reconstitution of Power*.

Peter Lang. NY

Warren, M.R. (2017). Closing commentary for racial equity in education: Interest convergence

And movement building. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 92(3), 425-431. [020-0202-3](#)

We're Back Unfortunately. (2014, Nov. 3). Retrieved from

<https://scsdtakebackourschools.blogspot.com/2014/11/were-back-unfortunately.html>.

Welch, K., & Payne, A. A. (2012). Exclusionary school punishment: The effect of racial threat

on expulsion and suspension. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 10(2), 155-171.

Weiss, C. H. (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for

comprehensive community initiatives for children and families. *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts*, 1, 65-92.

Weissman, M., Wolf, E., Sowards, K., Abate, D., Weinburg, P., & Marthia, C. (2005). School

yard or prison yard: Improving outcomes for marginalized youth. *Syracuse, NY: Center for Community Alternatives Justice Strategies*.

Wilson, M.A., Yull, D.G., Massey, S.G. (2020). Race and the politics. of educational

exclusion: explaining the persistence of disproportionate disciplinary practices in an urban school district. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 23(1), 134-157.

DOI: [10.1080/13613324.2018.1511535](#)

What is Theory of Change? Retrieved on 6/15/22 from

<https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

Winn, M.T. (2018). *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice*.

Cambridge, MA, Harvard Education Press.

Yin, R. (1994). Case study research: design and methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing

Yin, R. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*. 19(3),

321-332.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research design and methods*. Washington DC. Sage.

Curriculum Vitae

Theresa H. Holtsbery (Neddo)

Phone: (315) 395-8193
thneddo@syr.edu

605 Libby Street
Liverpool, NY 13088

Education

- PhD** Syracuse University, Teaching and Curriculum December 2022
Dissertation: Restorative Practices: Race, Equity, Authority, & Change
Committee: Dr. Mara Sapon-Shevin (chair),
Dr. Barbara Applebaum, Dr. George Theoharis
- MS** Syracuse University, Urban Education December 1987
Advisor: Dr. Gerald Mager
- BS** SUNY at Cortland, Elementary Education December 1981
Graduated Summa Cum Laude
Minored in Science

Certification

- NYS Permanent Professional Certification, N-6* January 1981

Honors and Awards

- Syracuse University Graduate Assistantship* 2015-2019
Syracuse University Travel Grant Award 2018

Research Experience

- Syracuse University Research Apprenticeship* 2016-2017
Teachers' Perspectives on the Training and Implementation of Restorative Practices
Advisor: Dr. Mara Sapon-Shevin

University Teaching & Field Supervising Experience

Field Supervisor Syracuse University 2020-present

- EED 328 Block 2: Second Professional Block Practicum in Mathematics, Social Studies Integrating Differentiations
2020-present
- EDU 508 Undergrad Childhood Special Ed Student Teaching
2021

Graduate Teaching Assistant Syracuse University 2015-2019

- EED 316: Block 1 Seminar and Practicum in Elementary and Special Education (Fall 2018, Spring 2019)
- EED 336 Elementary Social Studies Methods and Curriculum (Fall 2017, Spring 2018)
- EED 314: Strategies of Teaching for Inclusive Education (Fall 2015, 2016, Spring 2016, 2017)

Public School Teaching Experience

5th and 6th grade Elementary Teacher Syracuse City School District 2004-2012

- Differentiated math, ELA, and content area lessons to meet the needs of all learners including ENL and Special Education students
- Implemented Responsive Classroom program to address social-emotional needs
- Participated in SU Math and Literacy Research Study for four years that included multiple lesson studies, extensive feedback cycles and professional development
- Wrote math curriculum and assessments in 6-8th grade vertical teams
- Co-planned and co-taught with support staff and team members

3rd and 4th grade Elementary Teacher Syracuse City School District 1981- 2004

- Differentiated math, ELA, and content area lessons to meet the needs of all learners including ENL and Special Education students
- Collaborated with team to “Walk to Read” and use of literature to teach reading
- Piloted Investigations to Math Inquiry Program
- Implemented continuous progress models that included grouping 8–10-year-olds together, looping 3rd to 4th grade, and grouping half 3rd and half 4th graders together.
- Utilized Integrated Thematic Instruction and Whole Language Instruction
- Co-planned and co-taught with ENL and Special Education teachers

School Leadership Experience

District-wide Trainer of Foundations of Effective Teaching 2013-2018

- Certified by American Federation of Teachers
- Component of Education Research and Dissemination Initiative
- Provided professional development to SCSD new teachers

Mathematics Instructional Coach Syracuse City School District 2012-2015

- Provided curriculum and instructional support for 25 K- 8 teachers
- Led data analysis cycles of formative and summative assessment to drive instruction
- Organized New York State Testing Implementation Grades 3-8
- Analyzed district and building level data to plan yearly professional development plan

Mathematics Content Advisory Panel NYS Department of Education 2010- 2015

- Met in Albany three times each year with representatives from around NYS
- Reviewed materials and policies the State Education Department is working on
- Gave input on efficacy of what is currently in use and what is proposed
- Drafted and edited mathematics policy statements and materials
- Assisted in development NYS math scoring protocols

Service-Learning Grant Facilitator 1992-2006

- Facilitated annual \$20,000 Learn and Serve America grant at Frazer for 14 years
- Assisted in the development and implementation of over 25 Service-Learning Projects annually involving over 800 students and 100 staff members
- Trained staff, monitored funding, optimized student engagement, and completed reports
- Co-planned annual Service-Learning Overnight to build student leadership, community and civic engagement led by middle school students for 75 1st-6th graders

Presentations and Invited Lectures

Sapon-Shevin, M., Morgan, C.A., Murphey, E.D., & Neddo, T. (April 2018). *Americans Who Tell the Truth—Bridging critical pedagogy from university to schools*. Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, New York, NY.

Dranchek, M. & Neddo, T. (July 2013). *Foundations of Effective Teaching*. Syracuse City School District Summer Training, Syracuse, NY.

Castrello, A. & Neddo, T. (June 2011). *Ways to Enhance Student Engagement*. Say Yes Conference, Syracuse, NY.

Castrello, A, Coles, C, Mullen, A, & Neddo, T. (April 2006). *How Can a Literacy Approach to Teaching Mathematics Benefit All Students?* National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri.

Coles, C., Doerr, H., Neddo, T., & Martin, S. (April 2005). *The Literacy Demands of Reform-Based Curricula in an Urban Middle School*. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Meeting, Anaheim, California.

Neddo, T. (June 2005). *How to Successfully Implement Service Learning*. Regional Service-Learning Conference, Albany, NY.

Neddo, T. (October 2001). *How to Organize a School-Wide Service-Learning Program*. New York State Service-Learning Conference, Syracuse, NY.

Professional Training

Syracuse City School District

Collaborative Coaching and Learning -20 hours	2013
Cognitive Growth Model- 30 hours	2012
Honeywell Science Institute - 60 hours	2011
Courageous Conversations about Race - 30 hours	2010
Formative Assessment - 10 hours	2008
Community of Caring - 10 hours	2007
Math and Literacy Strategies -150 hours	2005-2009
Positive Behavior Intervention Systems - 30 hours	2005
Responsive Classroom - 30 hours	2004
Discipline with Dignity - 15 hours	2003
Cooperative Learning - 25 hours	2001
Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol - 30 hours	1998
Inquiry Based Instruction - 20 hours	1995
Writing Workshop - 30 hours	1993

Service to School Via Committee Work

School Climate and Discipline Committee*	2010-2015
School Improvement and Leadership	1982-2015
Family Involvement*	2008-2015
School Turnaround Team	2010-2012
Community of Caring*	2007-2011
Academic Leadership Team*	2005-2010
Multicultural Committee*	1988-1997
Renovation Committee	1988-1990
Mission Writing Committee	1990-1991
Social Committee*	1982-1992

*Chair or co-chair

Community Service

<i>Election Inspector</i>	2020-present
Onondaga County Board of Elections, Syracuse, NY	
<i>AB+ Elite Plasma Donor</i>	2020-present
American Red Cross, Liverpool, NY	
<i>Eucharistic Minister</i>	2005-2021
Church of the Assumption, Syracuse, NY	
<i>Leader/Service Unit Manager</i>	1994-2002
Central New York Girl Scouts, Syracuse, NY	