

Evaluating Restorative Justice in Three Secondary Schools:

Fidelity of Implementation and School
Climate, Equity, and Safety Outcomes

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Urgency for connection, repair, and racial justice today





SWEET RIVER

Imagining New Forms of Justice

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**A Comprehensive Vision of RJ
Using a Racial and Social
Justice Lens**

Insights from the RJ Coordinators/Directors

Ashley Ellis

Skye Roper-Moses

Nicole Lavonne Smith

Suzanne Hitchman

Special recognition: Students shared how they valued their RJ coordinators.

“*The RJ Coordinator... I've never seen somebody so committed to making the school so much better.*”

Finding: A Comprehensive Vision of RJ Using a Racial and Social Justice Lens

RJ coordinators' equity initiatives were broad in scope:

- Increasing student agency and leadership opportunities;
- Changing policies/practices that have an unfair impact on some student groups;
- Engaging students and adults in open dialogue about marginalizing institutional practices;
- Implementing social justice education and culturally responsive instructional practices.

“ The circle is the container or the platform for the conversation...its mission is to end racism.”

“ Circling and other RJ practices “are the tools for what’s underlying, which is the racial justice lens and the relationship building.”

Finding: Trust and relationships were key to advance the work

“...once you have that foundation of trust you’ll be able to have open and honest conversations about any and everything.”

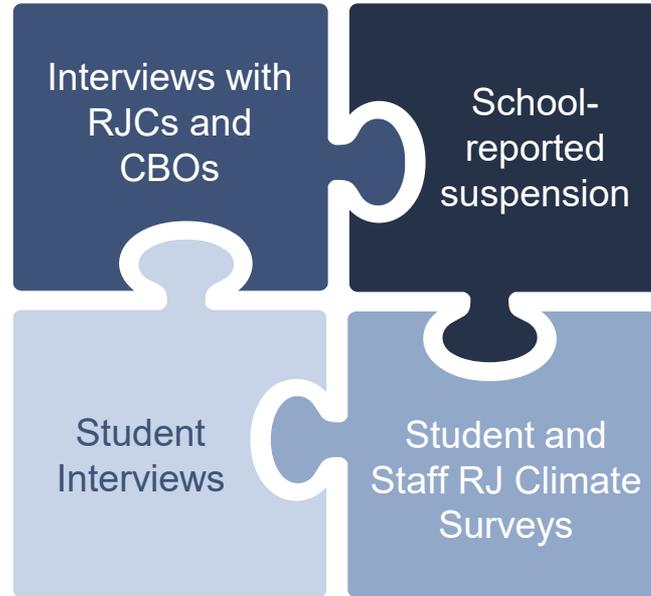
Adults themselves need time to reflect on “...where they’ve been hurt” and “how we perpetuate that on our students, especially our black and brown students...”

Offered “teachers a restorative process” to engage in “conversation around racism and white supremacy.”

2

Fidelity of Implementation

Multiple methods over time



Tracking fidelity of implementation through RJ Coordinators' comprehensive vision of change

- Infrastructure (4 indicators)
- Capacity-Building (4 indicators)
- Tiers of Support (3 Indicators)



Three schools made progress in implementation.

Yet, schoolwide efforts included
striving, set-backs, and triumphs.

3

Findings: Increasing Equity in Schools



Compared to the three years prior, schools in the RJ Project had more than a 53% reduction in the average number of suspensions across the last three project years.

In fact, two schools reduced the average number of suspensions by 73%.

Note: We see a pattern over time, but RJ and/or many other factors could explain this trend.

Students increasingly experienced more equitable school environments

By 2019, in all three schools, Black students, students in special education, and LGBTQI+ students reported similar:

- suspension rates
- sense of safety
- and sense of community

Fair access to RJ

RJ Use Scale:

- "My teachers use circles as a time for students to share feelings, ideas, and experiences." (*circles*)
- "My teachers take students' thoughts and ideas into account when making decisions." (*fair process*)
- "When someone misbehaves, my teachers have the person talk to who they hurt *and* asks them to make things right." (*restorative questions*)

Open ended themes

“If you participated in a conference and/or circle, what did you *like* about the process?”

- Self-expression
- Everyone has a voice
- Positive quality of interactions
- Content of the circles
- Sharing and learning together
- Good listening and respect
- And, room for improvement.

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School Safety

Staff sense of safety

The rates of staff-reported threats from students

- decreased in one school,
- maintained low levels in another school,
- increased in the third school.

Student sense of safety

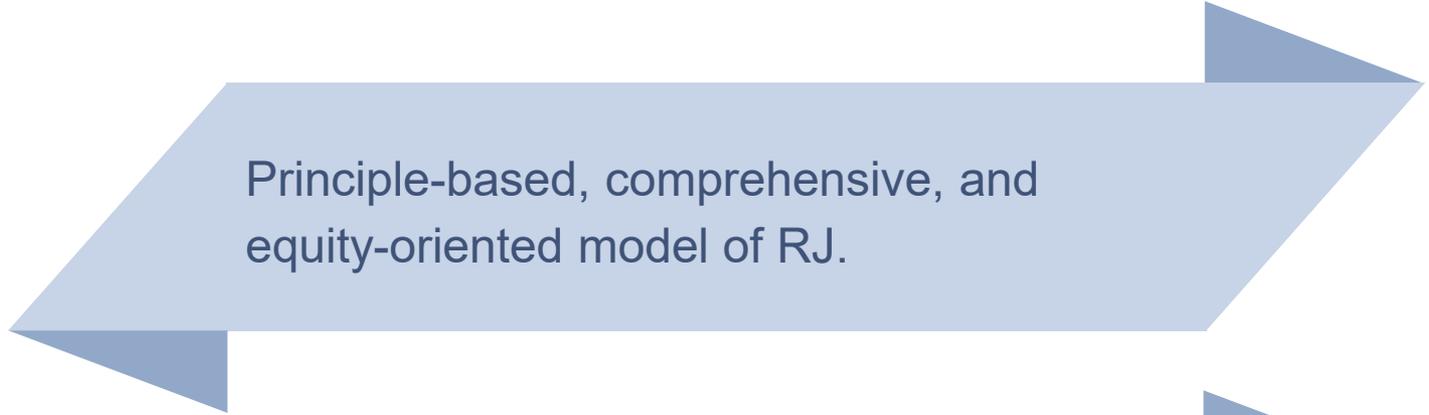
Student sense of safety improved or was maintained.

In two of the schools, a slightly lower percentage of students reported being threatened and being hit, pushed or attacked.

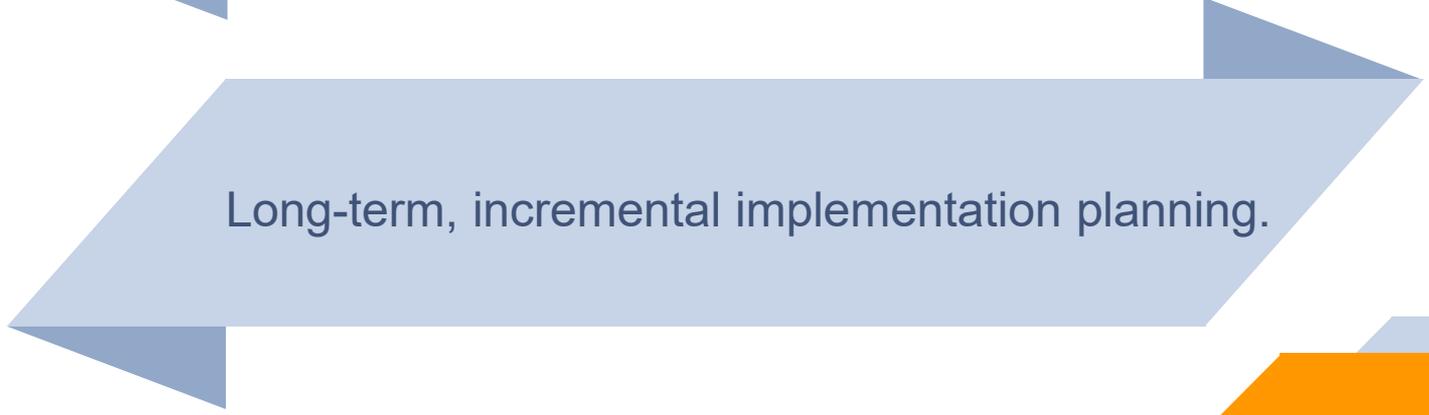




Implications for NYC DOE roll out:



Principle-based, comprehensive, and equity-oriented model of RJ.



Long-term, incremental implementation planning.

Implications for NYC DOE roll out: Where to begin the work?

Build Community First.

The place to start is not on the reactive end of the RJ continuum (mediation, conferencing), but on the preventative end (community- and relationship-building).

In one practitioner's words, "The base of RJ is building community."

- Start with adults or adults/students together
- Make it relevant to stakeholders
- Engage in capacity-building and policy change for sustainability



Recommendations

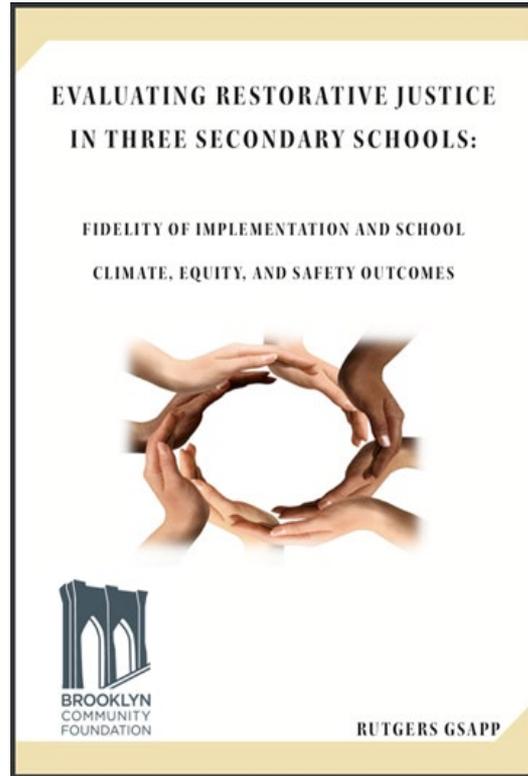
To assist in such planning, we wrote 12 Indicators of Restorative Practices Implementation: Checklists for Administrators.

Gregory, A., Ward-Seidel, A., Carter, K., & Kotamraju, V. (2019). 12 Indicators of Restorative Practice Implementation: Checklists for Administrators. Unpublished report, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.

(Also see Gregory & Evans, 2020, RJE NEPC brief)
<https://nepc.colorado.edu/newsletter/2020/01/restorative-justice>



Evaluating RJ in Three Secondary Schools



This summative report covers:

- Fidelity of Implementation
- School Climate
- Increasing Equity in the Schools
- School Safety and Exclusionary Discipline
- District-recorded Suspension



Thank you.

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