RESTORATIVE PRACTICES COORDINATORS IN K-12 EDUCATION: AN

EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Restorative Practices Coordinators in K-12 Education: An Exploratory Study

Restorative practices (RP) have been shown to decrease the number of suspensions and expulsions being used in schools and increase positive school climate and culture, thus reducing the negative effects on students' personal and academic achievement (Losen, 2015; Skiba et al., 2000, 2015). RP is still relatively new in the K-12 setting, however, and the implementation is sporadic and slow. Many districts have created staff roles, such as RP Coordinators, to assist in implementation of practices, yet there is minimal research and guidance on how the role should be utilized within schools. In this mixed methods dissertation, the role of an RP Coordinator in a large urban school district was examined. Findings indicate that how the school district promotes the role to be used in schools is not the current reality. Despite district and school leader investment in implementation (both critical to the fidelity of the RP work), the roles of the RP Coordinators were undefined in the job descriptions provided, leading to unclear understanding of how people in these positions should be utilized day to day in schools. With the large variation in use coupled with low pay, equity concerns have surfaced.

Recommendations for the use of RP roles in school are provided to improve practice and

guide further research.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

Since the 1970's, schools have increased the punitive nature of disciplinary

policies (Losen, 2015). A variety of legislation has been passed to demonstrate the

public's intolerance of certain behaviors, such as violence. This legislation has its roots in

the "tough on crime" agenda that has grown out of the war on drugs. Educational settings

began to mirror the disciplinary structure formed within the justice system. The mirrored

policies created standards of increased punitive punishments and limited alternatives to

resolving conflicts that arise in schools. The paradigm shift focused more on the

punishment and less on the individual and their rehabilitation (Skiba et al., 2015). Since

the enactment of the new policies, nearly 3.5 million public school students were

suspended at least once in the 2011-2012 school year; twice as many as were suspended

prior to the tough on crime movement (Skiba et al., 2000).

The aftermath of the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado caused an

increased call for widespread applications of school security (Skiba et al., 2000).

Many schools not only continued to use the zero-tolerance approaches, but also

increased their use of punitive methods. Schools have been much more supportive of

harsh approaches to preventing and identifying student behavior, as evidenced by the

growing presence of surveillance cameras, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs,

School Resource Officers (SROs), and even armed police (Gottfredson &

Gottfredson, 2001; Simon, 2007). Some schools are also including involvement from

the justice systems to address serious offenses (Beger, 2002).

In the 1990's and early 2000's researchers began to investigate the impact of exclusionary discipline. Research shows that while schools intensify their actions to address student conduct, school crime and delinquency were already decreasing from year of the murders at Columbine. The zero-tolerance policies and strategies that were included, do not positively impact schools in any ways (Beger, 2002; Devoe, Peter, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2005; Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2008).

Negative Effects of Exclusionary Practices

Our current school disciplinary systems are causing disadvantages for students of color (Simson, 2012). Although the percentages of students who receive at least one suspension in a school year has increased for all races, the increase has been most dramatic for historically disadvantaged groups, resulting in widening the discipline gap (Schiff, 2013). Macready (2009) reported that race continued to be a significant predictor of school exclusion even when poverty was being controlled for.

Equity and Discipline

Race intertwines with the way US schools mete out discipline. "Latino American, Indian, and Black students—particularly black males in special education—are significantly more likely to be punished by out of school suspension, expulsion or referral to law enforcement" (Gregory et al., 2017, p. 262). Further analysis shows that black students are consistently suspended and expelled at threetimes the rate of white students, while students with disabilities are twice as likely toreceive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers (Fabelo et al., 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014).

Studies conducted by Fabelo et al. (2011), Losen (2014), and Losen and Gillespie (2012) reported that black students are more likely to be punished more harshly for comparable or less-provoking infractions than white students or students of any other race. Black students are punished more for subjective offenses like insubordination, disrespect, or noncompliance with school rules. Such infractions are widely overlooked for white students. Ardino (2012) reported that White students are disciplined for infractions that are considered more objective and observable (i.e., student threw a chair and was sent to the office).

School-to-Prison Pipeline

School expulsion carries substantial risk for both short-and long-term negative outcomes. It is associated with lower academic achievement at the school and individual level (Skiba et al., 2000). This correlates with dropping out of school or failing to graduate. Failure to graduate in turn leads to fewer employment opportunities, decreased salary potential, and increased encounters with law enforcement (Gil, 2006). Making the choice of using out-of-school discipline options has drastic and impactful consequences on the students punished (Skiba et al., 2000).

Over the last two decades, suspension and expulsion have been recognized as a concern in both education and the juvenile justice system (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Losen & Martinez, 2019; Stinchcombe, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). The use of discipline that excludes students from the school day increases the likelihood of risky behavior. The number of arrests increase substantially during the school day hours for minor nonviolent infractions (Advancement Project, 2010). Now popularly termed the school-to

prison-pipeline, or even worse the home-to-prison pipeline, schools are losing their students to the justice system more than ever (Schiff, 2013).

There is a significant correlation between exclusionary practices and the number of students entering the justice system. As students of minority groups are being suspended and expelled at higher rates, more males, people of color and individuals with disabilities are being overrepresented (Drewery, 2004). Minority students make up over 60% of the children occupying cells in the justice system across the United States. They are more than eight times as likely as their white peers to be housed in criminal facilities (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009).

New Directions

In the past two decades, educators and researchers have begun to connect punitive school disciplinary practices with negative impacts on students. Research has increasingly questioned the effectiveness of exclusionary practices, and educators have started looking for other answers for behavior management within K-12 schools. Less punitive approaches have started to surface through the nation, as researchers have introduced alternative methods to address student behavior in schools.

Restorative practices (RP) decrease the number of exclusionary practices being used in schools and increase positive school climate and culture; thus, reducing the negative effects on students' personal and academic achievement (Losen, 2015; Skiba et al., 2000, 2015). Within K-12 education, RP have gradually begun to be implemented around the United States. To support the whole child and close the opportunity gap, creating equitable spaces and promoting positive school culture and community are

essential. Through the use of RP, schools will also be able to proactively plan and respond to community needs in a less punitive way (Losen, 2015).

What are Restorative Practices?

RP are inspired by indigenous values and are based on a philosophy of justice that emphasizes bringing people together to build and maintain relationships, address needs and responsibilities, and heal the harm to relationships as much as possible. RP is a philosophy that is being applied in multiple contexts, including schools, families, workplaces, the justice system, global conflict, and as a tool to transform structural and historic harms (Zehr, 2004). Many people mistakenly assume RP is solely a conflict resolution process that comes into play after harm has occurred. However, 80% of the work in RP is preventative, intended to alleviate the need for resolving conflicts. School-based RP offers proactive strategies to create a culture of connectivity where all members of the school community feel valued and thrive (McCold & Wachtel, 2001).

A school is a community Relationships are the heart of our school communities, and we must work diligently to build, strengthen, and restore these relationships. This means we must first use restorative practices pro-actively by providing all members of the community with voice, respect, and acceptance. While we often focus on how to respond after harm is done, we cannot "restore" a community when the community was not built in the first place. (Chicago Public Schools, 2015, p. 5)

RP offers a more equitable and respectful alternative for dealing with disciplinary infractions. RP is a profoundly relational practice (Skiba et al., 2015).

Shifting Toward "With"

An important tenet of RP is that we must approach learning, community building, and conflict resolution in partnership. The social discipline window, created by McCold and Wachtel (See Figure 1), is a graphic that illustrates the shift in thinking that must occur to create restorative culture.

With the vertical scale of accountability and the horizontal scale of support, the window demonstrates the various ways we interact. Punitive, or "to," is a top-down approach where individuals do not receive choice but are told what to do. When approaching situations from a punitive perspective, there is high accountability and

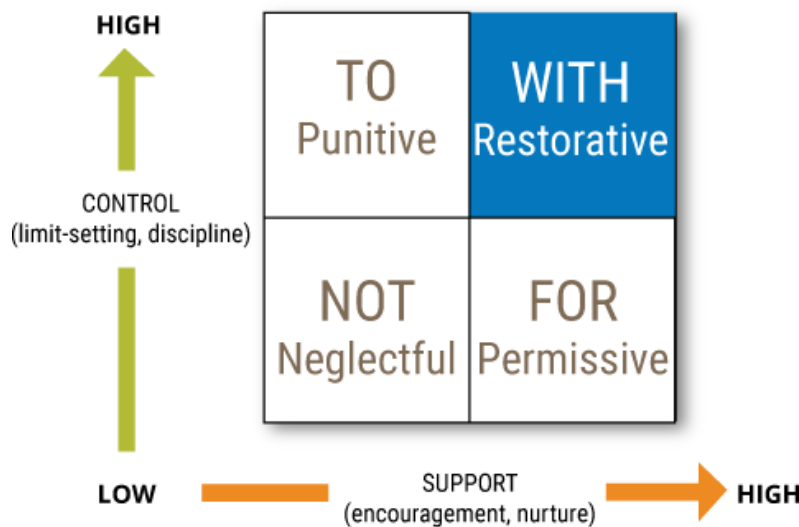*Figure 1: Social Discipline Window Adapted from Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel*

little to no support. Neglectful, or "not," is avoiding addressing what it is at hand. There is no accountability or support. Permissive, or "for," does not hold the individual accountable and may provide reasons for the behavior instead of addressing it. This approach is high on support and low on accountability. Those practicing this approach

may simply do something for another person, lowering their expectations and assuming the other person cannot do the task at hand. Ultimately, the person on the receiving end of a permissive approach is not learning new skills.

The last quadrant of the figure is restorative, or "with," and includes high accountability and high support. In the context of responding to a challenging behavior or situation in a school, it addresses root causes to the behavior so that harm can be repaired. In the restorative school, staff work with peers and adults who approach conflict with this mindset. They work to dive deeper into needs and to find out what support is required to succeed. They not only hold peers accountable for their actions, but also help learn new skills to use in the future.

In order to address harm, when approached from the "with" category, RP brings people together to reconcile and build relationships when harm has been done. RP respond to the fact that harm affects everyone in the community, including the "who was affected by the harm," "whoever does the harm," and the larger community. Therefore, decisions about how to repair the harm must be determined by the people affected, as they are the only people who truly know how to make things right. RP aims to build understanding, explore the wrongdoing and how it has impacted those involved, and to develop agreements that increase trust, safety, relationship and skills of all involved to create better outcomes in the future.

RP Continuum

This continuum, also created by McCold and Wachtel (See Figure 2), is used to demonstrate the range in which RP can be used. The continuum includes both proactive and responsive practices. Proactive strategies make up 80% of the work, and without

proactive work (i.e., building culture and community) the other 20%, or the responsive strategies, are less likely to be effective. It is imperative that trust and relationships are built and maintained in order to use responsive strategies to repair. In both proactive and responsive work, there are strategies that are less formal (e.g., require less time or less preparation) and there are those that are more formal (e.g., more time consuming, require more preparation, and involve more parties).
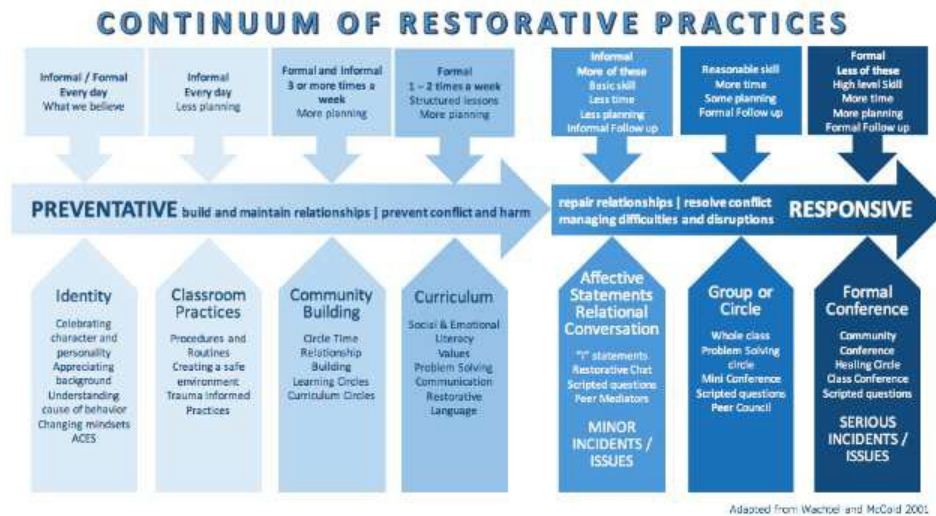
CONTINUUM OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

| Informal / Formal Every day What we believe | Informal Every day Less planning | Formal and informal 3 or more times a week More planning | Formal 1 – 2 times a week Structured lessons More planning | Informal More of these Basic skill Less time Less planning Informal Follow up | Reasonable skill More time Some planning Formal Follow up | Formal Less of these High level Skill More time More planning Formal Follow up |

PREVENTATIVE build and maintain relationships | prevent conflict and harm → repair relationships | resolve conflict managing difficulties and disruptions **RESPONSIVE**

| Identity | Classroom Practices | Community Building | Curriculum | Affective Statements Relational Conversation | Group or Circle | Formal Conference |
| Celebrating character and personality Appreciating background Understanding cause of behavior Changing mindsets ACES | Procedures and Routines Creating a safe environment Trauma Informed Practices | Circle Time Relationship Building Learning Circles Curriculum Circles | Social & Emotional Literacy Values Problem Solving Communication Restorative Language | "I" statements Restorative Chat Scripted questions Peer Mediators **MINOR INCIDENTS / ISSUES** | Whole class Problem Solving circle Mini Conference Scripted questions Peer Council | Community Conference Healing Circle Class Conference Scripted questions **SERIOUS INCIDENTS / ISSUES** |

Adapted from Wachtel and McCold 2001

Figure 2: RP Continuum adapted from Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel

Proactive RP might include celebrating student successes and greeting students when they arrive at school, reminding them that they are part of a community that cares for them; creating classroom values and guidelines with inputs from students and using these to guide classroom interactions every day. When community members are part of building norms, they better understand their impact when they break them. With this approach, educators might build time into the day or week for community-building circles, not just use circles when there has been harm. Circles are spaces that students and staff understand and use to learn about, support, and celebrate each other; and

intentionally include social emotional learning strategies in lesson plans. When schools

use the proactive practices described above in an intentional way, the responsive practices

can be effective.

Responsive RP might include using elements of restorative dialogue such as

affective statements and relational conversations to guide difficult conversations; using

circle practice to reset classroom expectations after guidelines have not been followed;

and using formal conferencing to address harm and determine solutions for repairing the

harm and holding parties accountable.

Equity is the Key

Promoting equity within a community begins by recognizing that the life of each

community member is not the same, fair, or standardized. Although some of the

opportunity gap is due to long-standing social systems, inequality is still perpetuated in

schools today (Ardino, 2012, de Rouen, 2020). As creating shared power and equitable

environments is the foundation true RP work, centering equity is a key component to

recognize and consider when beginning implementation. When we do not begin by

recognizing unstandardized, inequitable reality of all school community members, we

cannot serve our diverse student populations well or be a part of the change needed to

shift toward a more equitable educational system that will actualize its stance to prepare

all students to succeed.

To support all of our students, the adults in schools must be willing to do the

personal, private and internal work to combat the prejudice and bias that currently exists

within our constructed spaces. Without integrating the reality of the 'power over'

dynamics that exist within our spaces and our internal beliefs and behaviors, and then

9

committing to unrooting the bias and prejudice we each carry; we cannot truly create

restorative spaces. Studies show that if we put biases related to race and other prejudices,

on the table and talk about them instead of ignoring them, we can overcome implicit

racial bias (de Rouen, 2020). Conversely, if we do not have conversations about it, bias

will continue. It is important to create safe spaces in districts and schools where topics we

can talk about biases related to race, gender, and other characteristics in a non-threatening

and productive way. RP provides a framework to build a less harmful climate and culture,

that is a reflection of its community members and encourage policies and procedures that

promote self-reflection and emotional, interpersonal skill development. However, without

centering 'power with' and the need to create equitable education and development

experiences for all students, RP becomes a mere rewording for 'power over' structures

and cannot be done with fidelity (de Rouen, 2020).

What Restorative Practices are Not

RP can be used as an intervention and system to address many situations in

schools from classroom environment to working with students who are having

challenging behavior. At times, RP can be seen as a catch-all. It is just as helpful to

understand what RP is not, as it is to know the fundamental components of what it is.

RP is Not Used in Every Behavior Situation

It is important to also acknowledge that RP has limitations and may not always

be an appropriate strategy to use. In situations that present severe power dynamics, such

as bullying or sexual misconduct, RP should not be used due to the nature of the incident.

In fact, it may be more harmful than helpful. In addition, if parties are unable to take

accountability, RP should not be used. As accountability is a key component to be able to

resolve the situation, without it the process would not be successful. In some cases, once other strategies have been used to address the behavior, RP can be used to rebuild relationships, or reintegrate the student back in the school community.

RP is Not a Discipline System

 RP can be used as an alternative to discipline and should always embody the "with" mindset discussed in the social discipline window. When RP is only used to respond to harm, without being used to shape the community and establish proactive, positive practices, it will be easy for students and staff to only equate it with harm, or students "getting in trouble" (Chicago Public Schools, 2017; RJ Partnership, 2020). Often, when RP and discipline responsibilities are overlapping in a staff role or school environment.

RP is Not a Permissive Alternative to Discipline

RP does not mean being "soft" on students or eliminating accountability. It is a way to authentically engage with harm that has been created and to create systems of accountability that repair the harm. RP is also an individualized process that will look different depending on who is involved. When it comes to responding to incidents that have caused harm, responsive practices, such as a harm circle or formal harm conferencing, should never be forced. Each person involved must be a willing participant. Responsive RP are not a one-time intervention, but part of an ongoing process of building culture and community with follow-up support for students who need to build skills (RJ Partnership, 2020).

Misaligned Practices

Within restorative work, there are often times that districts or schools

think they are doing RP implementation; however, practices are misaligned or missing. By identifying these misalignments, districts and schools will be able to have a better understanding and of implementation, thus better fidelity.

Need for Full Adherence

District and school-wide implementation require efforts to determine readiness. Full adherence to implementation takes considerable time, commitment from parties in the community involved, and adequate planning and resources (Durlak et al., 2011). One study showed that *partial* implementation of a comprehensive restorative initiative differed little from *no* implementation (Rogers, 2003). When districts mandate change with little consideration that people and schools vary in their readiness and openness toward innovation, there is a risk for poor fidelity (Wadhwa, 2019). Once it is decided that implementation is starting, it is critical to have investment and support for RP initiatives from district and school administration (Augustine et al., 2018). "Even fully implementing schools can lose gains over the years without sustained commitment and adequate resources, including a full time [RP] coordinator" (Gregory et al., 2020).

Need for Collaboration

Top-down district and school-level initiatives that mandate quick changes are philosophically misaligned with restorative practice and its values of fair process, voice, and collaboration of all parties involved. Collaborative decision-making among all stakeholders, is a key component of RP. RP cannot be the sole responsibility of one person in the building. For fidelity, RP must be owned by all community members to ensure community and culture is being created among all positions. (Barton Institute, 2015; Oakland Unified School District, 2020; RJ Partnership, 2020). Changes are jointly

developed among all staff, iteratively improved, and clearly communicated and instituted by all (Thorsborne et al., 2019).

Need for 80% Preventative Strategies

"A singular focus on reducing suspension is narrow and fails to capture the prevention-oriented and systemic reform goals of [RP]" (Gregory et al., 2020). Without the preventative work, schools are missing building relationships with students and staff, focusing on trauma-informed and social emotional learning interventions, and focusing on the culture of the building to represent those in the community to promote equity and safety. When implementation overemphasizes addressing student behavior and participation in responsive circles and conferences, it minimizes the importance of whole community participation (Marsh, 2017). With a singular focus on changing student behavior, there is the possibility of neglecting addressing deeply held beliefs about the effectiveness of punitive responses (Gregory et al., 2019). When the deep-rooted beliefs of punitive responses to challenging behavior are not addressed and the focus is kept on responsive rather than preventative strategies, implementation is not done with fidelity. In such situations, poorly implemented RP actually perpetuates the inequities found in punitive practices (de Rouen, 2020).

Need for Equity

Despite the alignment between RP and social justice initiatives, too often implementation of RP fails to address policies and practices related to oppression, abuses of power, and silencing of voices (Gregory et al., 2020) There is a lack of intentional discourse and data disaggregated around gender, race, ability, or other identity categories. This continues the inequities in the rates of certain demographics of students (i.e., Black

and Latinx students) sent out of class, participating in some variation of exclusionary practices. RP work that does not recognize these disparities and actively work to reduce them does not truly address the needs to repair harm. A key element of designing authentic restorative climate and culture is the foundational emphasis of equity for students, staff, and community (de Rouen, 2020).

The RP Coordinator Role in K-12 Education

Several large urban districts have worked to implement the restorative role in schools. The restorative role is seen to be the champion of RP throughout the building (Chicago Public Schools, 2015; RJ Partnership, 2020). Successfully championing RP requires a full-time position to work on the time-intensive school-wide implementation (RJ Partnership, 2020). The basis of this role is building relationships and promoting positive school community. Restorative roles will work alongside discipline, social emotional learning, and other school teams to ensure RP are implemented at each level. For example, a restorative coordinator may lead circles during an advisory period connected to social emotional learning each day of the week (Oakland Unified School District, 2018). The role includes using a model-mentor-transfer process that provides professional development, coaching, and observations in the classroom to check for understanding (Chicago Public Schools, 2015; Oakland Unified School District, 2018). "A school is ready to commence implementation when school leadership is prepared to hire a full time RP Coordinator, dedicate professional learning time to RP and strategies that support it, convince staff to transform school culture, and adhere to this new philosophy despite resistance and obstacles" (RJ Partnership, 2020, pg. 5).

Guiding Framework

To conduct RP in K-12 settings, many districts have created positions for RP Coordinators to assist with the implementation of the program in the school. The role of an RP Coordinator is relatively new, and not every school that is implementing RP is utilizing this position. As many aspects of restorative processes are not yet standardized, the expectations of this role are not either. This lack of standardization and uniform expectations hinders the fidelity of implementation. There is a gap in educational literature that provides guidelines for standardization, or even best practices for the RP Coordinator role. Because of this gap, there is an opportunity to explore the work that is currently happening for districts that are utilizing the position to, in turn, provide recommendations.

Because so little empirical work has been conducted to date on RP Coordinators, I draw from the literature on instructional coaching (a heavily researched area of practice that is professionally similar to the work done by RP Coordinators) to help provide a framework for my dissertation. The research on instructional coaching provides information about the foundational components needed for effective coaching in general. The purpose of instructional coaching is to provide an ongoing process of expanding the individual and collective expertise of teachers or other staff (Rodriguez, 2018).

History of Coaching

Instructional coaching has been a role in educational institutions for over 40 years (Rodriguez, 2018). Instructional coaching models began in the early 1900s through the views of Frederick Taylor, whose principles began to explore the impact of coaching in an educational setting. Taylor believed the observation and measurement of specific

behaviors was the most effective way to improve production (Rodriguez, 2018, Taylor, 2011). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) caused a nationwide surge in the use of instructional coaching models to improve quality instruction. As schools aimed to make adequate yearly progress, also mandated by NCLB, instructional coaching models became increasingly adopted as a professional development strategy for educators, and models were heavily researched for effectiveness (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Key Concepts

Research on instructional coaches demonstrates consistent key components of effective coaching: instructing, facilitating, collaborating, and empowering (Slater & Simmons, 2001; Wang, 2017; White, Howell-Smith, Kunz, & Nugent, 2015).

Instructing. The use of instruction provides an opportunity to teach educators, and other staff, concrete strategies through professional development. More specifically, effective instruction presents ideas using evidence-based texts to model how to teach a specific objective or skill. By providing professional development, the educators are able to see the instructional coach as an expert and ally in the work. This is also an opportunity to answer questions about the practical application of theories. By learning from others in the workspace, it creates relationships and a collaborative community (Slater & Simmons, 2001, Wang, 2017).

Facilitating. Instructional coaches will work with or alongside staff to apply what is learned in the professional development trainings. Effective instructional coaches will be able to model the skills, provide feedback and, support teachers through their own thinking when implementing content to increase understanding. This can be be done by co-facilitating a lesson that was collaboratively put together, or an observation in the

classroom where feedback can be provided afterward. In order to facilitate, it is imperative that the instructional coach have knowledge and experience with the topic, in both theory and practice, for which they are providing feedback. Without such expertise, the effectiveness of the coaching is decreased (White, Howell-Smith, Kunz, & Nugent, 2015).

Collaborating. This skill provides an important tool, and perspective, of working *with* the educators instead of doing something *to* them. When a coach works alongside the person they are coaching, figuratively or literally, it allows there to be support and companionship while the person learns the objective at hand. To collaborate, it is important that the coach have strong interpersonal skills and be relationship oriented (White, Howell-Smith, Kunz, & Nugent, 2015). When a collaborative approach is use in learning, people feel more comfortable to ask questions and continue to invest in learning the objective (Slater & Simmons, 2001).

Empowering. When coaches focus on empowering educators, it provides an opportunity to build confidence, competence, and agency. To empower while coaching, effective coaches are aware of how to support educators in developing their professional identity and personal agency and voice. Empowerment stems from building a collaborative and positive relationship with others to better understand the needs of that person or the community. Thus, by encouraging voice, educators are able to advocate for themselves and others to continue to promote what is important to them (Slater & Simmons, 2001; White, Howell-Smith, Kunz, & Nugent, 2015).

Research Questions

The following four research questions guided my exploratory:

■ Do the expectations of RP Coordinators align district-wide?

■ Do the expectations of RP Coordinators match the reality of how RP Coordinators are being used in schools currently?

■ Do the current job descriptions provide qualified candidates for the RP Coordinator positions?

■ How do the expectations of the RP Coordinator role align with the key components of Instructional Coaching?

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Because the adoption and use of RP is a relatively new approach to supporting students in schools, little prior empirical work can be found on this topic. In addition, contextual factors related to the community in which a school is located, the local history of discipline practices in the district, and the demographics of students and their families make it important to address this topic at the individual district level rather than trying to generalize from other settings.

Setting

This study was conducted in School Year 2020 – 2021 in a large urban school district in the Western region of the United States. The district serves over 90,000 diverse students in over 200 schools. White students are the majority (54%), followed by Latinx students (31%), African American (9%), Asian (4%), and students who identify as two or more races (2%). (National Center of Education Statistics, 2017). The demographics of the school district are comparable to Portland Public Schools, Chicago Public School District, and Oakland Unified School District.

District RP History

The district-wide RP initiative began about fifteen years ago. The first school-based RP Coordinator was introduced about five years into implementation, with many other schools following suit in subsequent years. A year after, the first system of restorative schools was set up to feed into one another to create a succinct flow of students from kindergarten through twelfth grade (Barton Institute, 2015).

The district's initiative for implementation of RP has grown to fruition in many areas of the district including the central office. As part of this initiative, the district created a department specifically to oversee and advise the RP work happening across the schools. This department is paired with personnel focused on Trauma Informed Practices (TIP) to be able to look at both the "why" and the "how" for addressing behavior in a more supportive and less punitive manner. Within the department, five people—two RP District Coordinators, two TIP Specialists, and one Program Manager—oversee both RP and TIP.

There has also been work within the district to shift the discipline policies over the past ten years. In 2008, the discipline matrix was revised with RP named as the primary intervention to be used. The discipline matrix specifically called on RP as an alternative avenue for resolving behavior instances. In 2017, expulsions were eliminated for early child education (ECE) through third grade, unless required by law. The creation of this policy drastically reduced suspensions for the youngest learners (Barton Institute, 2015).

In comparison with the 2007-2008 school year, as of the 2017-2018 school year, the district had reduced all out-of-school suspensions by 60.6%, in-school suspensions by 18.1%, and expulsions by 61.8%. Over the same 10-year period, reductions were even more drastic for ECE through third grade students. ECE out-of-school suspensions were reduced by 91.7%, and kindergarten out-of-school suspension were reduced by 87.7%. The district also saw reductions in suspensions in grades 1-3 (Barton Institute, 2017).

RP Coordinators. Today, there are over 100 RP Coordinators in the district, and 95% of schools report using RP. However, RP looks different in each school, and the

fidelity of implementation varies. The goal in this district is to continue growth and consistency of work to build a cohesive restorative climate within all schools in the district. This includes proactive culture building, not just responsive practices; building safe and trusted relationships between students, staff, families, and the community; setting standards for accountability and repairing harm; providing skills, support, and resources to interrupt behavior; and seeking to meet the needs of all community members. As an early adopter of RP, the district has worked to build positive community and create restorative policies to become a front runner in RP interventions for schools throughout the country. Many schools employ an RP Coordinator, and understanding their work and how best to leverage this position is important. Currently, about 35% of district schools employ an RP Coordinator in their building, but this can change each year due to funding and school focus (Barton Institute, 2017). Like other entry-level positions, RP Coordinators are often cut when schools evaluate budgets each year.

Research Design

I conducted an exploratory mixed-methods case study to gather information about the role of an RP Coordinators in a large urban school district, with the goal of being able to provide useful information to district leadership to guide future implementation planning. An exploratory case study was warranted because of the importance of understanding the context in which the coordinators work as the starting point of a much longer program of study in which the impact of particular RP and approaches to providing services and support will be evaluated. To gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of RP in the district, I included a variety of data sources including

surveys and focus groups, and an artifact analysis of current RP job descriptions posted by the school district.

This topic has been identified by district leadership as an important issue. There is little to no research to describe how the position *should be* utilized throughout a typical school day or what the requirements are for this position. This exploratory study was intended to begin to document the role of an RP Coordinator and identify current realities. In addition, this study provides recommendations to guide school districts implementing the role of an RP Coordinator. Both extant data (in the form of responses to surveys conducted by the District) and data collected in the current school year (artifact analysis and focus groups) were used in this study.

Research Participants

The number and demographic make-up of participants varied by data collection method, with the largest number of participants completing a survey and a smaller group participating in the focus groups. The artifact analysis did not require participants.

All 134 RP Coordinators in the District were asked to complete the survey from which the extant data are drawn as part of a regular part of their assigned work. For the focus group data collected this year, I recruited a convenience sample of RP Coordinators, school leaders (e.g., principal, assistant principal, or dean), and central office staff. Participants for the RP Coordinator focus group were recruited from the same 130 employed RP Coordinators who responded to the survey that was the source of the extant data also analyzed in this study. Participants for the school leader focus group were recruited from 19 schools participating in an RP Cohort created by the RP district team in the 2019-2020 school year. Lastly, participants for the central office staff focus

group were recruited from specific departments aligned to RP. The departments from which participants were drawn included: Discipline, Behavior Barriers Team, Restorative Practices, Trauma-Informed Practices, Culturally Responsive Education, and Student Equity and Opportunity Department Leadership.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

I used three sources of data for this study: surveys, artifact analysis, and focus groups.

Surveys

The surveys used in this study provided data from the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year. The surveys consisted of 12 questions, two of which solicited information about respondents' demographics. The other 10 questions addressed a variety of topics, such as amount of experience with RP and amount of training completed, and the expectations of the role of an RP Coordinator in their school. Constructed response questions asked respondents to identify supports needed to be successful in the role of RP Coordinator at their school. See Appendix A for the full survey.

The survey was collected by district administration as part of their regular practice and thus provided extant data. All information was de-identified prior to analysis. Survey data were collected by means of an online Google Form, sent to all RP Coordinators via email. In the 2019-2020 school year, 124 RP Coordinators received the survey, and in the 2020-2021 school year, 134 RP Coordinators received it. The email sent included a brief description of the intent of the survey and a deadline by which it was due, as well as a link to the online Google Form. See Appendix B and Appendix C for the full email that was sent to participants. Participants were initially given 14 days to complete the survey.

One week before the survey was due, a calendar reminder was sent to all participants to remind them of the deadline. Those who had already filled out the survey were deleted from the email list, so they did not receive any further invites.

Artifact Analysis

Finally, I collected and analyzed job descriptions and hiring announcements for RP Coordinators in the district in which this study is set. The job descriptions were collected from Indeed.com. The job descriptions on this interface were used as this is the description potential candidates will apply from and use to guide the hiring process. Job descriptions are categorized under two titles: "RP Coordinator", or "Educational Counselor, Restorative Justice". Each job description was collected from the 2019-2020 school year, and any updated versions made afterward. To see the full job descriptions, please see Appendix D for the RP Coordinator job description and Appendix E for the Ed Counselor job description.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were conducted via video conference using the platform Zoom. A consent form was provided through a link via Google Forms before the interview started so that participants were aware that the information would be used in a research study. See Appendix F for the full consent form. The focus groups were recorded so they could be played back for later coding and analysis. Names of participants in the focus groups were de-identified in all materials associated with the research study.

Once I welcomed people to the focus group, I guided participants through a series of five to eight questions, designed to solicit their thoughts on the ideal skills and experiences needed to qualify for the position of RP Coordinator, ideal duties and

responsibilities for daily routines, and what role the RP Coordinator should, ideally, play in the school community. Additionally, I asked participants to discuss ideals compared to reality. See Appendix G for the full list of questions.

Data Analysis

I followed Creswell's (2009) suggestions for qualitative data analysis. Namely, I first organized and prepared the data for analysis, sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information. Then, I read through all the data to get a general sense of the information and reflect on possible meanings. During this process, I took notes about themes that appeared to be emerging. Third, I coded the data to enable me to identify the themes and ideas conveyed, assigning them to categories and selecting a descriptive name for each of the categories identified. Fourth, I organized the data by category and sought interconnected themes. Fifth, I developed ways to represent the themes that emerged, through visuals, selected quotations, and illustrative examples. Finally, I used these emergent themes and representations to interpret the data and draw conclusions that were collected and analyzed through coding. For each form of data collected, themes were identified.

Survey Data

Each question on the survey was coded individually and themes were identified. Once each question's themes were found, I further coded to identify larger themes carried throughout the entire survey.

Artifact Analysis

The information provided by the job descriptions was used to examine the identified skills, duties, and other components that RP Coordinators and Educational

Counselors need to be qualified for their positions. The information from the job

descriptions was used to compare and contrast from each other, and with the themes

identified in the surveys and focus groups.

Focus Group Data

   I listened to the recordings from the three focus groups to build themes within the

one recording, and then, across the focus groups and, ultimately, between the surveys and

job descriptions.

<center>**CHAPTER III**</center>

<center>**RESULTS**</center>

In this chapter, I present the results of my study. I begin with a summary of the results from the surveys administered in the district and then move to the results of my artifact analysis. Finally, I present the results of the focus groups.

Survey Data

The 2019-2020 *Restorative Practices Coordinator Survey* received 46 total responses. Three entries were duplicate submissions, so they were removed from the dataset. This left a total of 43 entries to be evaluated. The 2020-2021*Restorative Practices Coordinator Survey* received 26 total responses. There were no entries provided after the deadline, and no duplicates. Therefore, the total number of entries was 26.

2019-2020 Survey Data

Respondents included people with a variety of prior experience with RP. Of the 43 respondents, 11 (26%) indicated that they had *no prior experience* with RP prior to starting their current position, 13 (30%) indicated that they had had *one to two years of experience*, 14 (33%) indicated that they had *three to five years of experience*, and 5 (12%) indicated that they had *more than five years of experience* with RP prior to starting their current position.

Respondents also varied in terms of their participation in training on RP. When asked, "When was the last time you attended a training on RP (from DPS or any other organization)?", 3 (7%) indicated they had never attended any RP trainings, 16 (37%) answered *one to three months ago*, 7 (16%) answered *three to sixth months ago*, 4 (9%)

answered *six to nine months ago*, 3 (7%) answered *nine to twelve months ago*, and 10 (23%) answered *over a year ago*. When asked more specifically about the last time they had attended a RP training provided by the school district, 13 (30%) said they had *never attended* a RP training provided by the district, 10 (23%) said *one to three months ago*, 3 (7%) said *three to six months ago*, 5 (12%) said *six to nine months ago*, 4 (9%) said *nine to twelve months ago*, and 8 (19%) said *over a year ago*. When asked to identify the trainings they had attended, 15 (35%) indicated "Relate," 15 (35%) indicated "Repair," and 13 (30%) indicated "Reintegration." In addition, 17 other trainings were noted. The other trainings indicated were RP trainings from outside organizations, previous training series from past District RP Coordinators, and various other behavior management related meetings. In all, 39 (91%) of respondents indicated that they were interested in receiving more information about the school district's RP trainings.

When asked if they attended the RP Coordinator monthly meeting, 24 (56%) said yes, 14 (33%) said no, and 5 (12%) said they did not know there was a meeting each month. RP Coordinators were asked to check all boxes that applied to which restorative strategies they are using. Of the respondents, 32 (74%) indicated that they use reflection sheets, 38 (88%) restorative questions, 19 (44%) school-wide community building events, 28 (65%) formal conferencing, 22 (51%) harm circles, 29 (67%) classroom circles, 16 (37%) public apologies, and 42 (98%) restorative dialogue. In addition, there were 7 responses to the "other" option. These responses included providing professional development for staff and building community.

Participants were asked to write about what a typical day looked like for them and to describe their responsibilities. Respondents provided a variety of answers to this

constructed-response question. The ten most mentioned themes were identified as: RP interventions with students and staff ($n = 44$), supervising duties ($n = 37$), classroom supports ($n = 21$), responding to behavior concerns from staff ($n = 20$), student check-ins ($n = 13$), discipline only ($n = 8$), teaching restorative approaches to staff ($n = 7$), parent connections ($n = 7$), social emotional learning ($n = 6$), and culture and community ($n = 3$).

RP Coordinators were asked to explain how they were tracking their work in RP through a constructed response question on the survey. Responses included using a form of Google including Google Docs, Calendar or Sheets ($n = 10$); the district-wide behavior and discipline information data tracker ($n = 13$); data sheets ($n = 4$); paper copies ($n = 5$); no tracking occurs (n = 3), ABC forms ($n = 2$); other software tracking systems ($n = 2$), secretary tracked "calls to office" ($n = 1$), and "sign-in, sign-out ISS sheet" (n = 1).

2020-2021 Survey Data

Respondents included people with a variety of prior experience with RP. Of the 26 respondents, 3 (12%) indicated that they had *no prior experience* with RP prior to starting their current position, 1 (4%) indicated that they had *less than one-year experience,* 9 (35%) indicated that they had had *one to two years of experience*, 5 (19%) indicated that they had *three to five years of experience*, and 8 (31%) indicated that they had *more than five years of experience* with RP prior to starting their current position.

Respondents also varied in terms of their participation in training on RP. When asked, "When was the last time you attended a training on RP (from the school district or any other organization)?" 1 (4%) indicated they had never attended any RP trainings, 15 (58%) answered *one to three months ago*, 4 (15%) answered *three to sixth months ago*, 2

(8%) answered *six to nine months ago*, and 4 (15%) answered *over a year ago*. When asked more specifically about the last time they had attended a RP training provided by the school district, 3 (12%) said they had *never attended* a RP training provided by the district, 8 (31%) said *one to three months ago*, 8 (31%) said *three to six months ago*, 1 (4%) said *six to nine months ago*, 1 (4%) said *nine to twelve months ago*, and 5 (19%) said *over a year ago*. When asked to identify the trainings they had attended, 17 (65%) indicated "Relate," 18 (69%) indicated "Repair," and 15 (58%) indicated "Reintegration." In addition, 1 other training was noted as previous trainings with past District RP Coordinators. In all, 23 respondents (89%) indicated that they were interested in receiving more information about the school district's RP trainings. When asked if they attended the RP Coordinator monthly meeting, 17 (65%) said yes, 5 (19%) said no, and 4 (15%) said they did not know there was a meeting each month.

RP Coordinators were asked to check all boxes that applied to which restorative strategies they were using: 12 (46%) use reflection sheets, 22 (85%) use restorative questions, 16 (62%) use school-wide community building events, 9 (35%) use formal conferencing, 8 (31%) use harm circles, 14 (54%) utilize classroom circles, 5 (19%) use public apologies, and 21 (81%) use restorative dialogue. In addition, 6 responses were given for the "other" option. These responses included: checking in with students and creating student-led restorative work.

Participants were asked to write about what a typical day looked like for them and to describe their responsibilities. Respondents provided a variety of answers to this constructed-response question. The ten most mentioned themes were identified as: RP interventions with students and staff ($n = 9$); supervising duties ($n = 8$); classroom

supports ($n = 3$); responding to behavior concerns from staff ($n = 7$); student check-ins ($n = 10$); discipline only ($n = 2$); teaching restorative approaches to staff ($n = 3$); parent connections ($n = 8$); social emotional learning ($n = 6$), and culture and community ($n = 3$).

RP Coordinators were asked to explain how they were tracking their work in RP through a constructed response question on the survey. Responses included using a form of Google including Google Docs, Calendar or Sheets ($n = 10$); the district-wide behavior and discipline information data tracker ($n = 6$); data sheets ($n = 4$); paper copies ($n = 3$); email ($n = 2$); Microsoft Word ($n = 1$); secretary tracked "calls to office" ($n = 1$), and progress reports from teachers ($n = 1$)

Job Description

Each job description included four categories of information: Job Logistics; Essential Functions and Objectives; Knowledge, Experience and Other Qualifications; and Education Requirements.

Restorative Practices Coordinator

The *logistics* associated with the job of RP Coordinator include being employed on a 184-workday schedule per year at 1.0 FTE. The salary range for the position is $18.35-$21.92 per hour.

Eleven different *essential functions and objectives* were listed for RP Coordinators These include: (a) supervises groups of students with behavior problems who have been suspended from the regular classroom; (b) assists students with assignments, (c) obtains and organizes resource materials from student, and assist with clerical tasks and other interventions that support student learning, attendance and

positive behavior; (d) conducts home visits, phone calls, and prepares, edits and distributes written materials; (e) develops and plans recreational activities; (f) locate resources to provide crisis intervention; (g) creating reports for Administration, Teachers, and Parents; (h) compile culture expectation infraction trackers and support refocus/college prep initiatives; (i) manage all behavior referrals and coordinate SIT process; (j) attend restorative justice trainings, provide direct restorative justice support to teachers and students; (k) train employees on behavior management techniques; (l) and facilitate restorative justice interventions according to the discipline matrix and ladder and uses best RJ practices in responding to student behavioral concerns.

A total of 17 different qualifications were listed under *Knowledge, Experience & Other Qualifications*. These included: (a) one or more years of related experience; knowledge with Microsoft office products including Word, Excel, and Outlook; (b) effective time management and organizational skills; (c) effective communication skills; (d) strong attention to detail; (e) effectively handle multiple demands and competing deadlines; (f) the ability to take responsibility for one's own performance; (g) work collaboratively with others on the team; (h) high degree of integrity in handling confidential information; (i) demonstrated working knowledge of school-based programs that support students, families, parents, community, and homeless interests in an urban, K-12 environment; (j) demonstrated hands-on experience leading and coordinating the work of project teams and user groups; (k) demonstrated effective and diplomatic oral and written communication skills, with an emphasis in communications with students, parents, collaborative decision making teams, and the community; (l) demonstrated experience performing as a team player, and recognizing and resolving conflicts or

potentially controversial situations through diplomacy; (m) demonstrated current knowledge of a Macintosh and Windows computer operating systems and related hardware and peripherals, plus software and emerging technologies; (n) direct knowledge of and experience with a high poverty population attached job description; (o) and Spanish bilingual preferred.

Education Requirements include having a high school diploma or equivalent required, with a bachelor's degree preferred.

Educational Counselor, Restorative Justice

The *logistics* associated with the role of an Educational Counselor Restorative Justice include being employed on a 200-workday schedule per year at 1.0 FTE. The additional 16 days included are at the beginning of the year before students are back for school. The salary range for the position is $25.35 - $30.79 per hour.

The *Essential Functions and Objectives* includes two functions: (a) the educational counselor collaborates with schools, parents, and community organizations to identity and provide the support direct services and advocacy needed for students and families; (b) and evaluates students' abilities interest, talents, and personality characteristics in order to develop appropriate academic and career goals, increase student achievement, and improve graduation rate.

The *Knowledge, Experience, and Other Qualifications* includes four qualifications: (a) three years minimum experience and demonstrate success in working collaboratively with other professional student on instructional improvement issues; (b) experience and proficiency with Microsoft Office like Excel, Word, and PowerPoint; (c)

experience working with at-risk youth; (d) and bilingual language ability (English and Spanish) preferred.

Educational Requirements include a bachelor's degree in education or related field.

Focus Groups

Each focus group started with participants receiving a link to the consent form to sign before recording. The *RP Coordinator* focus group consisted of nine participants and was conducted for 93 minutes. The participants ranged from RP Coordinators in their first year in the role working at schools in the first year of RP implementation to RP Coordinators working in teams of RP Coordinators with eight or more years of experience in the job working at schools that had been implementing RP for 15 years. Because the *School Leader* focus group ended up with only one participant (an assistant principal whose school had been part of an RP implementation cohort for the past two years), it was conducted as a semi-structured interview. This interview lasted 37 minutes.

The *Central Office* focus group consisted of eight participants who all came from the student equity and opportunity department. The roles included trauma-informed practices specialists, behavior specialists, discipline managers, RP Coordinators, special education instructional specialist, and department director. The focus group was 91 minutes long.

In the following sections, I present the results of the focus groups, organized by the different themes that emerged. For each theme, I begin with a quotation from a participant that captures the thoughts conveyed by the group.

RP Coordinator Focus Group

> *The role of an RPC Coordinator regarding climate and culture is to be the "eyes and ears' of the school and advocate for a safe and inclusive community."*

The first theme identified was that the role of an RPC is to support the climate and culture by advocating for what is needed to make each student successful. One participant stated, "We are the beacon of healing for the community: a pillar of the culture." To be successful at implementing a restorative climate and culture in the school, participants indicated, RP Coordinators should be spending a majority of their work on preventative strategies, professional development and coaching for all school staff, and restorative responses to challenges that may arise around the school (staff and student related).

One participant said, "Preventative strategies in schools are 80% of the work to be a restorative school." The key to preventative strategies is relationships—with both students and staff. RP Coordinators are responsible for having connections with the school community to best support the structures that promote skill development in an inclusive way. RP Coordinators support social emotional learning for students by teaching, or co-facilitating lessons in the classroom. "I am able to create and lead lessons about social emotional learning through a social justice curriculum," one RP Coordinator explained.

To spread the knowledge and responsibility of being a restorative space, it is important for RP Coordinators to provide professional development and coaching to staff. "Professional development should be had at least once a month," one RP Coordinator stated, "and not just at the beginning of the year, if we even get that." Consistent

professional development is needed for staff to be able to not only implement restorative tools but build a mindset of how to work with students. Coaching staff goes hand in hand with professional development. RP Coordinators are responsible for classroom observations, one-on-one support for teachers to implement preventative strategies and understand how to management Tier 1 behaviors.

RP Coordinators are the people responsible for providing restorative interventions when harm has occurred. Interventions could be check-ins, conferences, or harm circles. One participant explained that RP Coordinators are, "…keepers of relationships. Providing alternatives to punitive practices help repair relationship, acknowledge need and support in skill development."

In order to do the work correctly, there is a need for adequate staffing. When schools have roles to support students one-on-one in the classroom, or manage discipline only, the role of an RP Coordinator can fulfill its intended purpose. "When schools are staffed correctly, the role can be done with fidelity. When it is not staffed correctly, we do [everything]."

> *"Every aspect of the RP Coordinator or Restorative Ed. Counselor role is undefined and inconsistent"*

The inconsistencies in the role start with what the daily duties are. Generally, the RP Coordinator will meet with students, consult with teachers, teach social emotional learning lessons, and provide interventions as needed. However, the reality is work that this position is supposed to do is not happening all the time, and at many schools.

The biggest theme with inconsistencies in the role were the blurred lines between RP and discipline. Much of RP Coordinators' time is spent with calls from teachers to respond to Tier 1 interventions in the classroom, provide one-on-one support for a student struggling in the classroom, or supervise the in-school-suspension (ISS) room. "Much of my time is spent putting out fires and just rushing students back to class," one RP Coordinator reflected. "Ideally, I would have liked to spend some of that time planning classroom circles, and not getting called for type one interventions that teachers are able to handle." Other tasks often assigned are several hours of monitoring duties (i.e., lunchroom duty, hallway patrol, or recess supervision), covering for a teacher, secretarial duties, or "filling in wherever the administration asks you to be that day."

The undefined and inconsistent nature of the restorative roles raises issues around professionalism and how people in this role are treated. Many participants shared feeling like their passion for supporting kids was often taken advantage of in their role. One RP Coordinator explained, "I am just the help and put in a position to say yes only." The District, and many schools speak highly of their restorative nature; however, those in the position feel, "valued in speech, but not in action or compensation".

There is an inconsistency around the job titles themselves. One participant explained, "If you are an RP Coordinator, your goal is to become an Educational Counselor because it's the same job, but more money and better title." In the district and in schools, the positions of RP Coordinator and Restorative Educational Counselor are seen as the same; however, one is paid considerably less. Schools often hire the RP Coordinator role over the Restorative Educational Counselor role to save money. "The job descriptions don't say what the difference in the work is, or really what the work is,

so they choose to pay the lesser amount," one participant stated. Many participants advocated for there to be one position regarding RP in schools, and to have it be on a pay scale like most positions in the district. The pay is to reflect the depth and complexity of the work. "This is an administration position, like a Dean or Assistant Principal, and should be treated and paid like one," one of the participants said.

> *"We are treated like the help, and it's no coincidence that this position is filled by majority people of color."*

The inconsistencies in the role, and whom the roles are filled by, created a discussion around inequities that are perpetuated in this type of role. One RP Coordinator reflected, "There is an equity issue, the [RP Coordinator] role is created to pay Black and Brown people a lesser wage than an admin but [have them] do an admin job. It's a way to keep us down." Several participants noted that RP Coordinators are not only paid much less to do the work of many roles in the school building, but that they are often expected to take on work that might otherwise be handled by an administrator: a person with a lot more power in the system. Others mentioned issues related to the lack of definition and on-the-job training related to the position. "When I was hired," one RP Coordinator shared, "I had no experience, and no training was provided to me, so I was told what to do." Without clear guidance and training to do the work, people in the position of RP Coordinator are told on a day-to-day basis what to do. A common suggestion that came up in focus groups was the idea to elevate the value of the role through defined duties and responsibilities, adequate pay, and voice at the table. Participants explained that this approach would mean addressing the harm that has been caused to individuals in this role

and working to provide equitable opportunities to develop and grow in the RP work, and job trajectory.

> *"Without School Leader buy-in, RP and the RP role cannot be done with fidelity".*

In order to fulfill the true duties of a restorative role, it is imperative to have school leader buy in. Without the buy in and investment of the principal, one participant explained, "there is almost no point to the role. You will spend all your time doing other duties and pushing back to try and do the work with fidelity." The school leaders are needed to introduce the role to other staff members and help them understand the role and responsibilities of the RP Coordinator and how it is not the only person focused on building climate and culture of the school. If there is no school leader investment, RP Coordinators are alone in their work on creating climate and culture, which limits the work. "The school leader is who makes this a team effort," one participant shared. "When it is not set up this way, I am completely alone in my efforts."

> *"We are missing a lot of good people for the role because of what is listed for a qualified candidate on the job descriptions."*

Participants shared that the role really requires a variety of knowledge and personal characteristics rather than a certain degree. Of the knowledge needed to do the work of a restorative role, there is a need for experience with student populations, understanding the skills needed in mediation (i.e., active listening, neutrality, and agreement making), equity awareness, and comprehensive understanding of trauma-informed practices. Other soft skills indicated were flexibility, passion to help others,

patience, someone who seeks to understand, self-awareness and regulation, and someone who is a 'servant leader'.

School Leader Focus Group

> *"This position is the pulse of the school and should be able to advocate for what is needed to make positive change."*

Restorative roles are able to be in all areas of the school, which can help bring to light the positives and area of opportunity. RP Coordinators are able to work alongside students and staff and advocate for what is needed to build, or continue, an inclusive culture. "This is a position that is really in the students' court, and there may be a need to have hard conversations with teachers and administration to advocate [for restorative work]." Not only is this position about advocating, but it is "…a unique position to truly work with students." There is a need for this position to teach, or reteach, skill development like social emotional learning.

> *"There may be times where they are needed to help, be the firemen, but there is never a time where they should be the sheriff."*

RP Coordinators should not be disciplinarians, but rather fulfill a support role to promote skill development and relationships for staff and students. However, staff at schools have a big impact on how this plays out. A school leader explained, "Each school in [our district] is staffed very differently. If they do not have other roles for discipline, all of discipline tends to fall on this role."

> *"The district hasn't provided clear job descriptions for the position."*

The way that this position is portrayed currently, through the job description, includes a lot of components regarding school discipline and others that read as clerical. This makes defining the duties and responsibilities of this work difficult. Essentially. the job is up for interpretation and is able to fit whatever need the school leaders see fit for a low salary. There is a need for the role to be seen as a professional one with well-defined responsibilities.

> *"The position is getting paid like an entry level paraprofessional position, so you can't expect a lot."*

` The school leader suggested restructuring the position of RP Coordinator to include RP Coordinator 1, RP Coordinator 2, 3, etc. with each step requiring more training, responsibilities, and, in turn, earning more money. They noted that with the current set up, there is not an opportunity to grow to other positions like a Dean or Assistant Principal. This restructuring would provide incentive to learn and train more to move up in education.

> *"...there is a need for both [hard and soft] skills in this position."*

No particular degree was required for this role; however, the school leader thought that the education of either a psychologist or social worker would provide more accurate knowledge. They noted that it is important to understand child development and how the brain develops, along with understanding and the ability to implement trauma-

informed practices. In addition, the knowledge of social emotional learning is critical to the role and a foundation of RP. Other soft skills that needed are being able "to take initiative, be a constant learner, organized and able to plan out student interventions, trainings, and coaching."

> *"There is a need for RP Coordinators to be consultant /coaching for teachers and other staff."*

There is a need for RP Coordinators to take what they are learning and experiencing to teach other staff and teachers what RP really are and how they can be used to create an inclusive and positive school culture. RP cannot be done by only one person; there is a need to spread the knowledge and investment across the whole staff throughout the whole year.

Central Office Focus Group

> *"When it comes to climate and culture…the restorative coordinator is putting the systems and structures in place [with administration] that are universally used. They are involved in the overall decision making and work heavily on the preventative side."*

In the view of the school leader, the position of the RP Coordinator should be used to build a community where students feel safe and included; where the focus is on setting up strategies to help students be successful, instead of focusing on being reactive when things go wrong. "I've seen schools that utilize their RP Coordinators great! You see relationships build and huge decreases in suspensions…instead of disciplining

students, we are repairing harm through conversations." This is a position that evaluates, observes and can provide insight into what is needed to make sure there is a positive morale in the school community. The role should be, "helping students have voice and agency to help problem solve, helping teachers run restorative classroom circles, and support where help is needed to conduct difficult conversations." Restorative work consists of being the, "keepers of healing and culture. They make sure that everything [done in the school] is grounded in a restorative approach to better support staff and students." The restorative role should be the leader of the longitudinal plan needed to be restorative. This includes understanding each step of implementation, how to track progress, and determine when to move to the next step in the process.

> *"Rarely are they being used the way we would like to see them used, which is the expert in their schools in climate and culture…they are seen as additions, not assets"*

Much of the time that RP Coordinators are utilized for restorative work, it is only in a time where there is a need to respond. Many schools are utilizing the RP Coordinator role to provide one-on-one support for a student who is having challenging behavior, or to discipline the student. In addition, many other duties are seen as responsibilities of this role such as hallway monitoring, lunch supervision, or running the ISS room. One participant who used to be in the role of an RP Coordinator shared, "In my own experience from being an RP Coordinator, I have seen everything from running all recess programming, to full time disciplinarians, to substituting for PE teachers." Because of the numerous duties and responsibilities being given to this restorative role in the

building, a majority of their time is not used to build climate and culture, or truly repair harm.

> *"Being able to disenfranchise from discipline allows [RP and] RP Coordinators to be seen of value in many other ways."*

As RP and discipline are seen by many to be the same thing, there is a need to separate the work and the people who do it. Separating the position would allow those in the RP Coordinator role to align with whole child approaches like social emotional learning, trauma informed practices and mental health specialists. By re-aligning with other initiatives, the framework of the role, and the work itself shifts away from punitive, and supports preventative strategies. With the current state of restorative work being seen as another, less punitive, form of discipline, this also causes equity concerns. "Often [the RP Coordinators] are the only people of color in their building. That's very intentional when its connected back to the large focus still on discipline and dealing with behavior we don't want to deal with."

> *"There is a need for clearer messaging of this role because I don't think many leaders really know what restorative work is."*

Many school leaders, who are the "gatekeepers to the [RP] role" do not know what RP are, or how they are implemented within a school community. Because of the lack of understanding from building leaders, the position is being misused in many ways. When school leaders are hiring positions for their schools, often they see the restorative role as a disciplinarian role, and it is paid much less than a dean of students or dean of

culture. Administrators often have the impression that hiring an RP Coordinator is a way to fill the role needed around discipline at a much lower salary. The concern continues when the role is hired, but duties and responsibilities are determined by the school leaders. Much of the issues stem from not having a clear understanding of the job description and the district messaging of the position. "There is a need for a job description that is very specific to the duties and responsibilities needs for this particular role. Until this happens, then we bump against the ceiling of what the position should be and what principals want it to be." Many suggestions were made to require training for school leaders who hold the restorative role at their school. "If you have this role, this means you believe in the ideals and practices of a restorative process."

> *"The district needs to change things that aren't working. To do this the right way, with RP, requires us to change a lot of what we are currently doing. There is a need for better messaging because I am not even sure if the Senior Leadership Team knows what RP is."*

For school leaders to continue to get the training and information needed to implement RP and the RP Coordinator role, there is a need for more modeling from the district. Within the district office, there is little consistency in the use of RP. There is a need for a large mindset shift from the district to direct systems and structures with the restorative lens applied. However, many staff, district and school-based, feel as though they know RP. "I think this goes back to things like being a knower and a teacher instead of a learner. It has been shocking to me to see how that is just a wide-spread regular attitude amongst educators, that they aren't learners anymore and there isn't time to be a

learner. So as the district, we have [to] start with ourselves to model that." There is time needed to address past harm from the district to schools and show the value of RP from the top down. "I think accountability is an issue overall. For the district to hold itself accountable, for it holding schools accountable, for schools themselves to holding themselves accountable. I see this as a huge issue top to bottom." As one central office employee stated, "There is a need to change everything. Our current system isn't working… [we need] to change from child monitoring spaces to stepping into modeling and work[ing] through the real inequities we see for our students, we see on a day-to-day basis. This means [the district] needs the ability to understand mental health, wellness, culturally responsive education, and social emotional learning so that the entire culture is built from that frame of truly supporting students and staff.

> *"In all my years of consulting with schools around challenging behavior, I have never seen an RPC at the meeting."*

Often times, RP Coordinators are not part of the policy making of the schools; however, the policies impact how they interact with students all day. RP Coordinators are often sent to respond to the policies currently in place, which are often punitive. Having the restorative role at the table, would allow for reflection and development in climate and culture changes around the school. The RP Coordinator's perspective would be representing the student voices and promoting equity in policies and decision making. In addition to being at the table, this would create an RP team within administration. "Each school should have a multitiered system of administration that meets weekly to go over what is happening in the school; the RP Coordinator is the crux of this."

The work of being or maintaining a restorative school must be a team effort and cannot be the sole responsibility of one individual in the school. However, what we see is the one person is responsible for all RP related elements but then is not invited to the table to collaborate or share what is happening when they are meeting with students and staff. Many central office staff commented on the inconsistencies of the work by sharing, "there is a need for each school to have this position, and not a choice. This would show value and a united front on the philosophy our district gives. How it is set up now it a barrier to [to the work]."

> *"This role should be considered admin, should be paid like an admin, and have the skill set to do that…"*

One member of the Central Office focus group commented that in their schools, the restorative role takes on the role of a member of the administration, like a dean or assistant principal, but does not have the skill sets or the pay to match. "Often people in this role have much less education and the lowest amount of pay than almost any other position in the building."

Some staff shared that a tiered system may be helpful for the restorative role in schools, and each would take on different levels of responsibility. "Maybe it is RP Coordinator 1, 2 and 3…" position 1 would be more of the basic RP 101 duties with lower pay and less education required. Each step would be more responsibility, pay and decision making. "3 would be your admin, your restorative Dean, if you will." And they should be reflected in pay and the skills and abilities needed to do the job. "Think of systemic racism. Our lowest-level positions are typically people of color that are not

treated at the same level as admin and given these jobs with no understanding of the work. There is a lot to look at here." Central office staff shared that the two different job descriptions set up a system where a "RP Coordinator" is not as good as an "Educational Counselor' One (role) reflected, "To even hear that there is literally no difference in the job, other than the title, I think that speaks to how restorative process is seen just within our district as a whole. Because how does the name, just the name, add value or remove value… simply changing the name from Restorative Coordinator to [educational] counselor, there is a perception, that being a RP Coordinator, isn't as valuable as something else. I think that in and of itself is a problem."

> *"Soft skills are needed over hard skills. Training [before and on the job] would be needed, but not necessarily a degree."*

This role typically focuses on passion and desire for helping students and their families. The restorative role should be the leader in trauma-informed practices, social emotional learning, and culturally responsive education. Desired skills would include someone who is open minded and willing to try new strategies, is an innovative thinker, models vulnerability, demonstrates the ability to be an advocate, and has relational skills to work with students and staff. Several central office staff discussed the barriers put in place for many people of color when there is an educational requirement for work. "[There is] a macro injustice for those who have barriers in place to go to college. They can't even get their foot in the door." There is a need for a mindset shift around hiring, and this would help create boundaries for this role and others. There is a need to focus on supporting and valuing soft skills when hiring and knowing the benefit of that for this

line of work. "They may be a perfect candidate; you will need to teach them something like Excel." The District RP Coordinator indicated that such a shift would begin to create opportunities and an equitable approach to who is hired for this role and how the role continues to function.

> *"To have [RP Coordinator] training, modeling and coaching would be really*
> *huge…and an advocacy piece, that takes a lot of courage."*

There is a need for the restorative role to consult, coach/train, model and advocate for the RP. To have a universal narrative in the school of what RP is, RP Coordinators should be providing professional development at the beginning of the year, and various sessions throughout the year. In addition, RP Coordinators should be utilized to observe, consult and coach teachers in RP for their classrooms and how to manage tier one interventions on their own. Much of the RP implementation is done working with adults. "They are there, most importantly, to work with and model with adults how to do this throughout the school." RP Coordinators can lead and co-facilitate social emotional learning lessons in the classroom with teachers and run school-wide assemblies to demonstrate how to use RP to build climate and culture. Advocacy encompasses many levels: advocacy for student voice, implementation fidelity, and ultimately, inclusive climate and culture. "…it's a super unique way for the adult to be given the flexibility, to really be at the student level in a genuine and authentic way," one Trauma Informed Specialist commented. In connection to advocacy, data collection was shared as a tool that RP Coordinators can use to show professionalism in their work. This is a way to show what interventions have been tried, who is participating in RP, and outcomes of the

work. With data to demonstrate patterns and trends in the process, this can create more

buy in and investment.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Because they are so closely related to one another, I discuss the findings related to

my first three research questions (*Do the expectations of an RP Coordinator align*

district-wide? Does the expectation of the RP Coordinator match the reality of how RP

Coordinators are being used in school currently? and *Do the current job descriptions*

provide qualified candidates for the RP Coordinator positions?) together. The discussion

of findings related to my final research question (*How do the expectations of the RP*

Coordinator role align with the key components of Instructional Coaching?) is handled

separately.

Philosophical Misalignment from the Top Down

The results found in this study demonstrate the misalignments of the expectations

of RP, and an RP Coordinator to the practices in place. The disconnected implementation

begins with district leadership and trickles down to the school communities, and

ultimately the RP Coordinator position.

District Leadership

In order to begin the RP implementation, there is a need for investment from the

district office to ensure full adherence. Both the Durlak et al. (2011) and Wadhwa (2019)

studies show there is a need for considerable understanding of the topic, time,

commitment from all parties involved and adequate time for planning and developing

resources for sustainability. The investment steps taken at the leadership level will

determine how the implementation of RP continues to school leaders and their school communities. When districts order changes with little consideration of community readiness, access to resources, and sustainability of implementation, there is a large risk for poor fidelity. My study provides evidence from people working in a variety of roles (from RP Coordinators to District administrators) to suggest that the district where my study was set lacks implementation fidelity. One such finding was that there were minimal efforts in place to determine readiness. Another was that the majority of implementation across this district is poor. Both of these examples highlight the need for more consistency in understanding of RP and a cohesive narrative from senior leadership to guide school leaders and their teams in the work to implementation with fidelity.

School Leadership

The RJ Partnership Implementation Guide, indicates that school leaders are expected to know how to commence implementation, including utilizing the role of an RP Coordinator. In my study, the foundational steps missing from the district are reflected at the school level through the school leader and the administration teams. Based on the data collected for this dissertation, the majority of school leaders in this district are unaware of what true RP is and the extent it takes to implement the long-term change. Given the range of understanding and readiness for implementation, the inconsistent practices and unclear utilization of RP Coordinators prominent in this district are no surprise.

RP Coordinators

Based on all the data collection and analysis, it appears that the expectations of the RP Coordinator role focus on building and leading climate and culture. These

expectations coincide with the RP Continuum from McCold and Watchel (2003) where RP is 80% preventative and 20% responsive through preventative strategies. In my study, I found that RP Coordinators work to build communal relationships amongst both students and staff, create an environment that reflects the identities and backgrounds of students, and lead foundational components of RP work such as social emotional learning and trauma informed practices. RP Coordinators are essential to schools and are highly focused on preventative strategies to increase safety and equity and reduce the number of responsive strategies needed. These findings reflected the guidance from McCold and Watchel.

Bringing a Chair to the Table. Like Chicago Public Schools (2015) shows that the restorative work, and role, would be paired with those whose work includes social emotional learning, mental health, and wellness (i.e., school psychologists and social workers) to be the champion of RP implementation. In the expectations of this role found in RJ Partnership (2020), the position would be cohesively aligned and working alongside the administration team to collaborate on decision-making, policy and procedure implementation, and fidelity of practices throughout the school. The norm of duties would include attending administrative meetings to discuss and actively participate in decision making for policies and procedures that impact the school community. The position of the restorative role is to provide student voice and choice within the decision-making processes to promote working alongside students in their journey through education. According to Oakland Unified School District (2018), the role of a RP Coordinator would be distinct from those who lead discipline in the school. In my findings through the surveys and focus groups, the role of an RP Coordinator often

overlaps or is consumed by the role of being a disciplinarian. Although, viewed as a disciplinarian in many cases, RP Coordinators are not currently collaborating with administration to review or adjust policies in schools.

Undefined Role. In many schools, the disconnect between the duties RP Coordinators are expected to fulfill in this district and those that the literature suggests they should fulfill are sometimes quite stark. Whereas the intention of an RP role is to model, mentor and transfer skills to promote building relationships and positive school communities (Oakland Unified School District, 2018). I found that RP Coordinators in the district where my study was set were often focused more on responsive strategies and discipline. Based on my analysis, it appears that lack of clarity about the expectations for the role might contribute to this disconnect. Restorative roles are being utilized as hall monitors, one-on-one student support, or disciplinarian. Much of the work indicated in both the survey data and each focus group, the duties of current RP Coordinators are highly focused on responsive strategies (i.e., classroom interventions, conferencing, reflection sheets, etc.) and implementing discipline, a more punitive approach. At times, the restorative role is blended with, or mistaken for, the role of a Dean or Assistant Principal. The position of the RP Coordinator is often used incorrectly, thus doing partial implementation. From the Rogers (2003) study, partial implementation is almost the same as no implementation.

Low Pay and Lack of Opportunity. The role of a RP Coordinator is one of the lowest paid positions in this school district. Many participants shared it is similar to the role of a paraprofessional. The position is considered entry level and is categorized as a 'Protech" position which is not protected by a union. This role tends to be one of the first

positions considered to be cut when schools are looking at budget adjustments or reductions. The RP positions have little room for growth and opportunity to move forward in a career in education. A small growth can be made from the RP Coordinator position to the Educational Counselor, Restorative Justice position. However, this opportunity is an advancement in pay and title, but does not require high levels of duties and responsibilities. The opportunities to advance to a Dean position requires higher levels of education to be considered.

Concerns of Inequities

One of the themes to emerge from my analysis was the perception of inequities based on the current processes in place regarding RP and the restorative roles within the schools themselves. These concerns were expressed in the surveys and were reinforced through the focus groups.

Perpetuating the School to Prison Pipeline. The current lack of fidelity and distinct understanding of RP found in the majority of the schools in this district causes great concerns of continuing 'tough on crime' policies that sustain the use of exclusionary practices disguised under a different name. Simson (2012) discusses the large disadvantages to students of color when these types of practices are used. Thus, the greatest concern lays in the possibility that the schools are perpetuating the historical cycle of inequities toward minority students in school rather than fully realizing the potential of RP for addressing such systemic inequities (Losen, 2015). With misaligned practices, we are not working with adults and students in the buildings to truly shift away from punitive practices and work toward individual skill development and rehabilitation (Skiba et al., 2015).

Systemic Inequities in the Structure of the RP Role. There are concerns of systemic inequities through the design and procedures that are in place regarding the restorative role. In the district where my study was set, the role is currently undefined in title, duties, and responsibilities. The unclear nature of the position provides no level of authority and is dictated by those with more power. The role is hired with low education and experience regarding the work, along with a lack of training and support to build confidence and value into the position. This position is often hired in place of a Dean but paid significantly less to do the same, or similar, work. The opportunity for promotion is almost non-existent due to the educational requirements between each proposed pathway. Often the position is filled by a person of color, and they are the only person of color on staff. The design of this position doesn't allow for authority in the school and amongst an administration team. It doesn't allow for development in understanding, growth in responsibilities, or opportunities for promotions or higher compensation.

The RP Coordinator description is highly focused on responsive strategies, discipline, and supervisory or clerical work. The Educational Counselor position was severely undefined based off of the job description. In both roles, restorative roles and responsibilities are not determined by the job description, or district, but by the needs determined by the leader of the school where the RP Coordinator or counselor works. The difference between the two titles is also unclear. From the collective data analysis, the roles are being utilized the same in schools; however, the educational counselor position pays considerably more. Therefore, the title of an Educational Counselor is held at a higher value than that of RP Coordinator. The lack of clarity from the district was identified by a number of participants in my study as a potential issue in terms of clear

implementation practices in the different schools. Each school is utilizing this position based off of the needs of their particular school.

Research Question #4

The expectations of the RP Coordinator role align in many ways with the key components of Instructional Coaching. Each key component of Instructional Coaching (e.g., instructing, facilitating, collaborating, and empowering) was identified in the expectations for the restorative role (Slater & Simmons, 2001; Wang, 2017; White, Howell-Smith, Kunz, & Nugent, 2015). The themes identified in the duties of the RP Coordinator were training, coaching, consulting, and advocacy.

Instructing: Providing Professional Development Training

A key responsibility of instructional coaches is to provide professional development for other educators (Slater & Simmons, 2001, Wang, 2017). In a similar way, the RP Coordinator is expected to be responsible for professional development for staff to increase the understanding of what RP are and how to implement them (Oakland Unified School District, 2018). As with the literature on instructional coaches, my study suggests that professional development around RP was needed throughout implementation; it is not a one-time training. By providing regular, ongoing professional development opportunities, each step of RP implementation can be taught to the school community. This approach would help to create a standardized narrative and universal understanding of the work.

Facilitating: Coaching Peers by Modeling Theory to Practice

My study provides evidence of the need for RP Coordinators to serve as coaches for their peers, modeling theory to practice. Although such practices appear to be rare in

the district where my study took place, participants indicated that such work would enhance the implementation of RP in their schools. Both the Chicago Public Schools and Oakland Unified School District materials related to RP indicate the expectation that RP Coordinators would model the use of practices by facilitating or working alongside staff to co-facilitate the content. As staff work to facilitate on their own, RP Coordinators will observe and provide feedback on strategies. Supports will be offered to increase fidelity. Based on the evidence gathered in my study, adopting this practice, where RP Coordinators will work with staff on the implementation of practices in their spaces (i.e., classrooms and offices) would improve implementation in the district.

Collaborating: Working "With" Peers in a Consultant Role

As a key to restorative process shown by McCold and Watchel (2003), the RP Coordinator will ensure high accountability and high support through partnership with others. The work of the RP Coordinator is in collaboration with those in other departments like discipline, social emotional learning, and mental health. In collaboration with other teams, RP Coordinators will continue to build relationships with team members and aligning initiatives to develop cohesive policies and procedures.

Empowering: Serving an Advocacy Role

Through my findings, the role of a RP Coordinator incorporates multiple levels of advocacy work. Within the strategies and practices of the work, the restorative role is an advocate for students. The processes included in RP work to hear the voices of student that is not typically included in punitive practices. Through these strategies, RP Coordinators empower students to use their voice to share what is going on for them.

When advocating for students, there is an opportunity to look at the needs of the student to support the development of skills needed to address the incident at hand.

RP Coordinators are also advocating for the work itself. To continue to build fidelity of implementation, there is a need to continue to advocate for high accountability and support to ensure correct practices. When building investment and fidelity in the process, it is imperative to empower staff to know they are able to do the work. Empowering staff to use their voice to advocate for students, or themselves, is a key skill needed in RP implementation. When staff are feeling empowered, like students, they are able to advocate for their own needs and support to be successful (Slate & Simmons, 2001). I found that RP Coordinators who felt empowered in their role, were able to advocate for practices to be put in place to increase the fidelity of their school's implementation.

Limitations

There are many threats to internal validity to consider within this exploratory research study. The primary threats include selection bias and instrumentation. To reduce the threats to validity in the study, I triangulated both sources and types of data collected (Carvalho and White, 1997) to explore the role of an RP Coordinator. The data sources, including the questions asked on the survey and within the focus groups, were aligned directly with the research questions identified (Norris, 1997).

Sample Size and Selection

This study used a convenience sample of participants who volunteered to participate in the focus groups. This approach resulted in a small, self-selected sample, which limits generalizability. Because participants self-selected into the focus groups, it

is possible that participants who were included in the focus groups differ in important ways from RP Coordinators who did not volunteer to participate. Thus, they might not be representative of the larger population of RP Coordinators in the district, much less RP Coordinators in different districts. The convenience sample did not naturally provide a diverse sample of individuals in the population of RP Coordinators, so selection bias reduced internal validity. Out of the 17 participants, only four identified as male. Once participant identified as non-binary, and the rest identified as female. However, the people who self-selected were diverse in terms of the level of experience they had in their role as RP coordinator or counselor. In addition, the self-selected participants came from schools that are in a variety of stages within the implementation of RP. In addition, the small, self-selected sample does not generalize to the larger population in some ways, presenting a threat to the external validity of the study. To help address this threat and ensure I had collected a more representative perspective, I also analyzed extant data from the District survey, which all RP Coordinators were asked to complete in both SY 2019-2020 and SY 2020-2021 to triangulate the information collected through the focus groups.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation was another threat to internal validity in this study. The survey was administered by the district at different times of the year due to late hiring of RP district team staff in the 2019-2020 school year. The first survey was administered in November of 2019. For the 2020-2021 school year, the survey was administered the week that school started, in August 2020. The different times of the school year might have impacted the responses shared, so it is important not to interpret changes in responses

without considering the different timeframe in which the data were collected. Also, although participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous, it is possible that some people provided socially desirable responses even if their personal opinions differed from the response they gave. It is important to note that I am a district employee who works within the RP team for the district. My role in the district might have impacted the responses people shared in the focus groups and on the surveys, due to the knowledge of who would be reading or hearing the responses.

History

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many additional limitations to consider in this study. The outcomes of the 2020-2021 RP Coordinator Survey had almost half as many responses (26 compared to 43) as the 2019-2020 survey. At the time the survey was administered in SY 2022-2021, schools in this district were fully remote, and it is quite possible that this shift also caused a change in what was required of people working in the RP role, to fit the needs of their school.

With continued shifts from remote learning to in person and then back, school staff covered many responsibilities for which they normally would not be responsible. The lower number of participants for the school leader focus group is a reflection of the additional responsibilities given to school leaders during this time. Originally, 14 school leaders indicated interest in participating in the focus group. When the group was scheduled, this number dropped to four people who accepted the invitation via Outlook with the Zoom link and consent form. By the time the focus group was actually held, however, only one participant showed for the focus group; therefore, what was planned as a focus group became a one-on-one semi-structured interview.

In addition, the research that was originally intended for this dissertation included school observations conducted with the school-based RP Coordinator and the District RP Team to identity what the duties and responsibilities within a day of the role would look like. Observations would have allowed insight into the environment and how the school's climate and culture were set up in terms of posters, guidelines and values, and general policies or procedures. Because of the pandemic, schools were operating remotely for the duration of this research and observations were unable to be conducted.

Implications of the Findings

Despite the limitation, this research may have important implications for the fidelity of RP implementation in K-12 education systems. As RP becomes more widely known and utilized, actions must be taken at all levels within school districts to make significant change to ensure that the reliability of RP is intact through all steps of implementation. Therefore, my findings have implications not only for school districts, but also for individual sites and school leaders.

Recommendations for This School District

In order to address the current inequities in the district, there are two key components to the recommendations below: (a) understanding RP and what is needed to fully adhere to implementation, and (b) restructuring of the RP Coordinator role in the district to reflect nation-wide expectations and promote equitable practices. The recommendations for this school district are heavily directed at the senior leadership teams that influence the policies, procedures, and messaging around the implementation of RP in their district. Although there is an emphasis on the district leadership, in order to

implement RP district-wide, each central office and school-based employee are involved to promote equity and fidelity in implementation.

Senior leadership teams and district staff should build cohesive knowledge on the philosophy and practices within restorative work through training and expertise. Through extensive equity and RP training for skill development, district leaders and staff will understand the inherent centering of equity and need to address inequities in the current practices of RP. To commit to the longitudinal nature of RP, trainings and development will be done throughout the school year and expected to be done on a regulated schedule to ensure consistency in completion. Once the senior leadership and district level has clear understanding and guidance for implementation, school leaders and staff members will also be required to complete the same training and skill development to understand how RP is implemented.

As RP implementation began many years prior to this study, there isn't an initial determination of readiness to be done. However, an understanding of where schools and educators are currently in each school is essential. By assessing the current climate, district leaders can determine a longitudinal plan for implementation that centers around fidelity and sustainability (at the district and each school level). District leaders should consider evaluating policies and procedures, such as discipline matrixes, to reflect that of a restorative school community. As policies and procedures are adapted, school leaders will be required to apply changed into their schools and update school staff on new practices.

District leadership should also rewrite the job description for those serving RP roles into one position to reflect RP preventative and responsive strategies that would

utilize their time. To reflect the new role and responsibilities of the work, adequate pay, alongside a determined pay scale, are needed to promote and support the continued professional growth of qualified candidates. Considerations for a pay scale and promotion within the role, may resemble a tiered system based off professional development and increased skill development relevant to the position. As new job descriptions are written, school leaders should be informed and trained on the utilization of the RP Coordinator in the building. By rewriting the job description and working with school leaders, the RP Coordinator position becomes elevated. Coordinators will be able to spend time focusing on RP and demonstrate their professionalism through impacts made working with staff and students. This includes providing professional development to staff, coaching and collaborating. Lastly, the job description will provide an outline of pay that reflects the role and responsibilities of the RP Coordinator role.

Lastly, to continue the longevity of implementation, it is recommended that the school district collect data from RP Coordinator observations, school surveys, discipline data, and behavior tracking to identify the areas of success and opportunity to continue to grow application of practices to ensure fidelity. Analysis of data will provide the schools evidence in where each school is at in the implementation process.

Future Research

There is a need to continue further research on the role of RP Coordinators in K-12 education. Future research will continue to bring awareness to the newly developed RP Coordinator role and how it is utilized in schools. Due to the adaptions needed to be made because of the pandemic, RP observations in schools with the restorative role would be a natural next step. Other future research may include analysis of systemic set

up of RP from the district, RP implementation rubrics, and RP Coordinator evaluative tools.

Conclusion

The implementation of RP in K-12 education is still fairly new, and the role of an RP Coordinator even newer. RP Coordinators are a crucial role needed to assist in the implementation of RP strategies, both preventative and responsive. In my study, I found that the expectations of the restorative role did not align with the reality of the utilization or structure of the role in the participating district. This exploratory study highlights the nuances still found in the field. It highlights the need for more research and underscores the considerations to elevate and standardize key components of RP to increase fidelity.

APPENDIX A

1. Name *

   [   ]

   Your answer

2. School Name *

   [   ]

   Your answer

3. How many years of experience did you have with restorative practices before starting your current position? *

   - None

   - Less than one year

   - 1-2 years

   - 3-5 years

   - 5+ years

4. When was the last time you attended a training on restorative practices (from DPS or any other organization)? *

   - 1-3 months ago

   - 3-6 months ago

   - 6-9 month ago

   - 9-12 months ago

   - Over a year ago

- I have not attended any restorative practices trainings

5. When was the last time you attended a RP training from Denver Public Schools (Relate, Repair, or Reintegrate)?

   - 1-3 months ago

   - 3-6 months ago

   - 6-9 months ago

   - 9-12 months ago

   - Over a year ago

   - I have not attended any DPS restorative practices trainings

6. Are you interested in receiving more information about Denver Public Schools restorative practices trainings? *

   - Yes

   - No

   - Which RP training(s) have you attended from Denver Public Schools? *

   - Relate Training

   - Repair Training

   - Reintegrate Training

   - None

   - Other [   ]

7. What does a typical day look like for you? What responsibilities do you have? *

   Your answer

[text box]

8. What restorative strategies are you using? *

- Reflection Sheets

- Using the restorative questions

- School wide community building events

- Formal Conferencing

- Harm Circles

- Classroom Circles

- Public Apologies

- Restorative Dialogue

- None

- Other: [text box]

9. How are you tracking data for the use of restorative practices? *

Your answer

[text box]

10. Do you attend the restorative practices coordinator monthly meetings? *

- Yes

- No

- I didn't know there were RPC monthly meetings

11. What supports do you need in your role as a RP Coordinator? *

Your answer

APPENDIX B

Date: 11/07/2019

Good Afternoon,

I am Deanna Goodrich, a new District Coordinator for Restorative Practices (RP). I recently joined the RP team at the district and will be providing training and support to our schools and RP coordinators. To provide the best support, resources, and training possible, we would like to know more about your background, experience, and support needs.

Please complete this brief <u>survey</u> to help us understand where to start. We plan to use the survey results to find more ways to support RP Coordinators with tools for best practices. Please have the survey completed by end of day <u>Friday, November 15, 2019.</u>

Best Regards,

Deanna Goodrich

Date: 08/20/2020

Hello RP Champions,

      Happy almost Friday--It is time for the annual RPC Survey! The purpose of this quick survey is to collect data and will inform the district on how to best assist the school-based position, and RP implementation district wide. This year, there are a few addition questions regarding remote learning to better understand immediate needs. Your feedback is extremely valuable!

Please complete the survey by: End of day September 3, 2020.

 Link to the 2020-2021 RPC Survey

Thank you for your participation

Best,

Deanna Goodrich

APPENDIX D

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES COORDINATOR

Traditional 184 workdays per year - FTE: 1.0

Salary Range: $18.35 - $21.92 per hour

Essential Functions and Objectives:

- Supervises groups of students with behavior problems who have been suspended from the regular classroom.
- Assists students with assignments, obtains and organizes resource materials for students, and assists with clerical tasks and other interventions that support student learning, attendance and positive behavior.
- Conducts home visits, phone calls, and prepares, edits and distributes written materials.
- Develops and plans recreational activities.
- Locates resources to provide crisis intervention.
- Creating reports for Administration, Teachers, and Parents.
- Compile culture expectation infraction trackers and support Refocus / College Prep initiatives.
- Manage all Behavior Referrals and Coordinate SIT Process.
- Attend Restorative Justice trainings. Provide direct Restorative Justice support to teachers and students.
- Train employees on Behavior Management Techniques.
- Facilitates Restorative Justice Interventions according to the DPS discipline Matrix and Ladder and uses best RJ practices in responding to student behavioral concerns.

Knowledge, Experience and Other Qualifications:

- One (1) or more years of related experience.
- Knowledge with Microsoft Office products including Word, Excel and Outlook. Effective time management and organizational skills
- Effective communication skills
- Strong attention to detail
- Effectively handle multiple demands and competing deadlines
- The ability to take responsibility for one's own performance
- Work collaboratively with others on a team
- High degree of integrity in handling confidential information

- Demonstrated working knowledge of school-based programs that support students, families, parents,
- community, and homeless interests in an urban, K-12 school environment.
- Demonstrated working knowledge of project management methodology and implementation techniques.
- Demonstrated hands-on experience leading and coordinating the work of project teams and user groups.
- Demonstrated effective and diplomatic oral and written communication skills, with an emphasis on communications with students, parents, collaborative decision-making teams, and the community.
- Demonstrated experience performing as a team player and recognizing and resolving conflicts or potentially controversial situations through diplomacy. Demonstrated current knowledge of a Macintosh
- and Windows computer operating systems and related hardware and peripherals, plus software and emerging technologies.
- Direct knowledge of and experience with a high poverty population attached job description
- Spanish bilingual preferred.

Education Requirements:

- High school diploma or equivalent required. Bachelor's degree preferred.

APPENDIX E

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELOR, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Traditional 200 workdays 7 Flex – Protech FTE: 1.0

Starting Salary: $25.35 - $30.79 per hour

Essential Functions and Objectives:

- The Educational Counselor collaborates with schools, parents and community organizations to identify and provide the support, direct services and advocacy needed for students and families in the Denver Public Schools.
- Evaluates students' abilities, interest, talents, and personality characteristics in order to develop appropriate academic and career goals, increase student achievement, and improve graduation rate.

Knowledge, Experience, & Other Qualifications:

- Three (3) years minimum experience and demonstrated success in working collaboratively with other professional staff on instructional improvement issues.
- Experience and proficiency with Microsoft Office (e.g. Excel, Word, and PowerPoint).
- Experience working with at-risk youth.
- Bilingual language ability (English and Spanish) preferred

Education Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in education or related field.

WELCOME TO THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES COORDINATOR ROLE FOCUS GROUP!

You have been invited to participate in this survey because you are a Denver Public School employee working with, or participate as, a Restorative Practices Coordinator (RPC) within a district that uses Restorative Practices (RP) as part of their core intervention to behavior management. Participating in this survey will help us understand the expectations of the job duties and responsibilities of a RPCs coincide with what is currently happening in the district.

My name is Deanna Goodrich, and I am a doctoral candidate in the department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership at the University of Oregon. I am conducting this survey under the supervision of Julie Alonzo, Ph.D. It has been approved by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board and Denver Public School Research Review Board.

This focus group will take approximately 90 minutes of your time. It is 100% online and can be completed on a computer, tablet, or smartphone via Zoom. The Zoom conference will be recorded for further analysis. In addition, there will be note taker(s) during the meeting. This focus group will be facilitated by myself.

RISKS AND ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE RISKS:
The risk to you is minimal, but you will be asked to reflect on your perceptions, practices, and current functioning. You might feel uncomfortable if you are unsure how to answer some questions, or if questions bring forth reminders of stressful situations.

As with any research study, there is a risk of loss of confidentiality. Demographic questions are included in this focus group. The following precautions will be taken:
- Researchers are trained (and required) to protect your confidentiality.
- Any information you provide will be de-identified, and minimal demographic information is included. If desired, you can opt-out of questions, including demographic ones.
- All information will be kept in password protected files. Only authorized research personnel will have access to the information.

BENEFITS TO YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION:
There are some benefits to completing this focus group. You will be contributing to the educational community by helping us understand the expectations of the role of an RPC, and the current status of how they are being used in schools. This information will

be used to create recommendations for the role and advance the research surrounding the role of a RPC.

REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION OR CONCERNS:

Your questions or concerns about this research can be directed to Deanna Goodrich (deg@uoregon.edu) or Dr. Julie Alonzo (jalonzo@uoregon.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, call the Research Compliance Services office, University of Oregon, at 541-346-2090 or email them at researchcompliance@uoregon.edu.

YOUR RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PROJECT:

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw, none of your previously completed survey items will be saved.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
By clicking "I agree" below, you are indicating that:
(1) you have read and understand the information provided above,
(2) you willingly agree to participate

APPENDIX G

1. I want you to think about climate and culture (pause)
   Tell me about the role of a RP Coordinator as it relates

2. What are the expectations for a RP Coordinator in the context of behavior management or discipline?

3. Think for a moment about the community and their needs (pause)
   Describe the RPCs role in supporting this.

4. When thinking about the skills it takes to do the RPC role, what are the ideal qualifications that are important for an RP Coordinator to have? (soft or hard)
   Provide examples, if needed

5. Think about the ideal situation, describe the duties and responsibilities of an RPC on a day-to-day basis?

6. Think about the current RPC role in our district/school, how does the ideal situation you've described match and/or disconnect from the reality of what you are seeing?

7. Describe what we could do differently to match the reality to ideal?

8. If you were going to advocate for the position of RPC across the US, what would be your elevator pitch?

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