ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS AS A MEANS TO REDUCE DISPROPORTIONATE OFFICE DISCIPLINE REFERRALS FOR SUBJECTIVE OFFENSES FOR BLACK MALES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Alice Lorraine Swift, Doctor of Education, 2022

Dissertation directed by:

Dr. Douglas Anthony, College of Education

In middle schools, Black males receive disproportionate numbers of office discipline referrals (ODRs) for the subjective offenses of disrespect, insubordination, and disruption. Black males are also more likely to receive excessively punitive and exclusionary school disciplinary action. Middle school teachers and administrators face many challenges as they are most often responsible for managing these subjective behaviors and for choosing disciplinary responses. Research indicates that implementing Restorative Practices in middle schools can decrease the number of subjective offenses and help to reduce the disproportion in ODRs. However, little research exists concerning the use of Restorative Practices within middle school settings across a district.

This study evaluated Restorative Practices implementation in the classroom and school setting in one school district. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, the study examined the impact of the implementation of Restorative Practices on the number of and disproportion in ODRs for subjective offenses, and the selection by teachers and administrators of Restorative

Practices as a first-choice option to address subjective offenses by 6th-8th grade Black and White males in two district middle schools. The study also examined teacher and administrator perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the district's expectations for the implementation and use of Restorative Practices in schools.

The analysis of the categories of disciplinary response options in unduplicated ODRs for the two middle schools showed a lack of similar response options for 6th-8th grade White and Black males and a lack of implementation of Restorative Practices in the schools. Furthermore, following the issuance of an ODR, the administrators' decisions to impose out-of-school suspension only for Black males suggest both disparity by race and gender and a lack of equity in the decision process. The analysis of teacher and administrator perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs demonstrates support for Restorative Practices, but the analysis also shows limited implementation of Restorative Practices by teachers and administrators. This contradiction suggests the need for further research and evaluation of how schools implement Restorative Practices in order to increase teacher capacity and reduce the numbers of ODRs.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AMONG MIDDLE
SCHOOL TEACHERS AS A MEANS TO REDUCE DISPROPORTIONATE OFFICE
DISCIPLINE REFERRALS FOR SUBJECTIVE OFFENSES FOR BLACK MALES IN
MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Alice Lorraine Swift

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2022

Advisory Committee:

    Dr. Douglas Anthony, Chair
    Dr. Donald Bolger
    Dr. Margaret McLaughlin
    Dr. Christine Neumerski
    Dr. Pamela Shetley

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my son Jordan Pink Lewis Howard. You are an amazing child and the heartbeat of our family. Thank you for your unconditional support throughout this process. Always remember that success is the result of arduous work and the support you receive from others. I am so proud of you. To my parents Robert and Beatrice Swift, you are role models for achieving a successful life and marriage. To my sister Sheila Johnson and my friend for life Angela Sator, thank you for your encouragement throughout this process. I would not have pursued this degree without your support. Finally, I dedicate this work to Richmond Myrick, my mentor, who believed in me and always told me to be ready when the call for duty presents itself and to pay it forward.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Linda Poole, Dr. Margaret McLaughlin, and Dr. Douglas Anthony for their guidance throughout the dissertation process. You personify the characteristics of a gifted educator: patience, lofty expectations, a sense of humor, and an ability to push others to achieve their full potential. I would also like to thank the Advisory Committee. Your critical feedback greatly enhanced the quality of this work.

Table of Contents

Dedication ii
Acknowledgements iii
Table of Contents iv
List of Tables vii
List of Figures ix
Section I: Introduction 1
    Statement of the Problem 1
        Importance of the ODR 2
        Role of Restorative Practices 5
    Scope of the Problem 7
        National Scope 7
        National Efforts to Address the Problem 8
        State Scope 11
        State Efforts to Address the Problem 12
        District Scope 17
        District Efforts to Address the Problem 22
    Consequences and Impact of Not Addressing the Problem 30
        Loss of Academic Instruction 30
        Social and Emotional Impacts 31
        Injustice and Labeling 32
        Increased Dropout Rates 32
        School-to-Prison Pipeline 33
        Lower Graduation Rates 34
    Theory of Action 35
        Causal System Analysis 35
            Discipline Policies and Procedures 36
            Teacher Capacity 40
            Racial Stereotyping and Profiling 43
            Cultural Mismatch 44
        Drivers for Improvement 47
            Primary Driver: Increase Teacher Capacity 48
            Secondary Driver: Revise School and District Discipline
            Policies and Procedures 49
        Theory of Improvement 49
        Implementation of Restorative Practices in ECSD 51
Section II: The Study 54
    Purpose Statement 54
    Research Questions 54
    Design 55
    Study Sites 56
    Interview Participants 57
    Office Discipline Referral Data 60
    Interviews 61
    Methods and Procedures 64

List of Tables

List of Figures

An Investigation of the Use of Restorative Practices Among Middle School Teachers as a

Means to Reduce Disproportionate Office Discipline Referrals for Subjective Offenses

for Black Males in Middle School

Section I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

For decades, across the nation, Black students have been overrepresented in exclusionary disciplinary actions including office discipline referrals (ODRs) and suspensions (Bickel & Qualls, 1980). ODRs are defined as events in which a teacher or staff member observes a student violating a school rule or exhibiting behavior deemed unacceptable and submits documentation of the event to the administrative leadership who then deliver a consequence to the student (Irvin et al., 2006). The teacher makes the decision whether to issue an ODR and remove the student from the classroom or to manage the behavior within the classroom. Figure 1 demonstrates the process and consequences of the teacher's choice.

Figure 1

Process and Consequences of a Teacher's Decision to Issue an Office Discipline Referral (ODR)
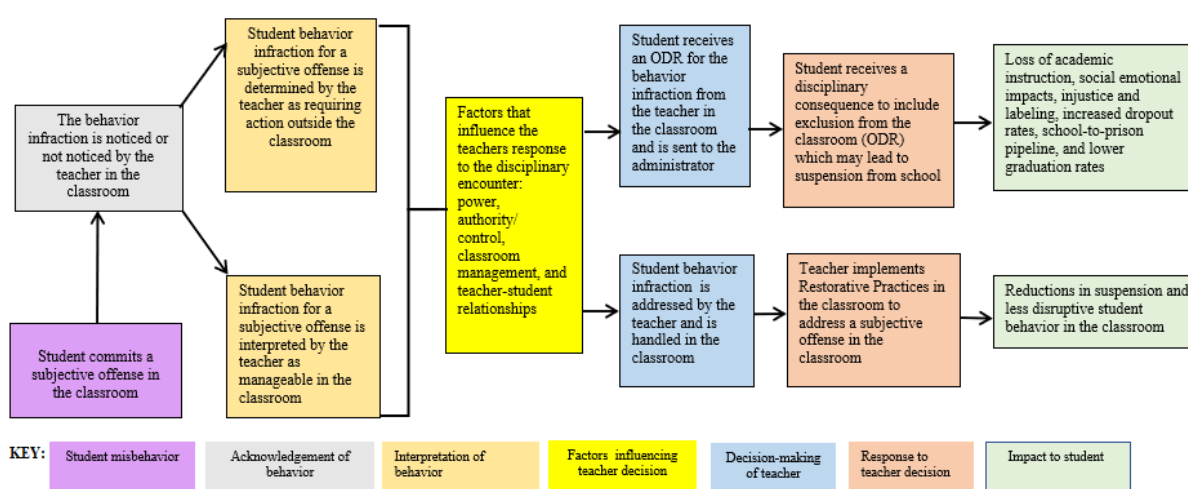
Importance of the ODR

Focusing on the ODR is critical because the ODR is the first step in exclusionary discipline. Reducing the number of and disproportion in ODRs should lead to reductions in number and disproportion at the levels of suspensions and expulsions.

ODR data are increasingly used to monitor student behavior problems and the impact of interventions, but there has been limited research examining the justification for issuing an ODR. The disproportionate representation of Black students in the assignment of and consequences for ODRs, however, is well-documented. Black students incur ODRs up to 2.8 times as often as their peers (Rausch and Skiba, 2006). Skiba, Michael, et al. (2002) found that for Black males, disciplinary consequences such as an ODR most often tend to be for subjective offenses. The category "subjective offenses" encompasses infractions such as disrespect, disruption, insubordination, and threatening behavior. Ritter and Anderson (2018) reported that even after controlling for the nature and number of ODRs, Black males are more likely than White males to receive ODRs for common subjective infractions.

Once sent out of the classroom, Black students often receive harsher punishment for subjective or minor offenses including cell-phone use, public display of affection, gum chewing, and failure to change for gym class (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Crenshaw et al., 2015). Narrowing their investigation to males only, Skiba, Michael, et al. (2002) found that Black males receive harsher consequences than White males for similar offenses. Black males across all grade levels, but particularly in middle schools, who receive ODRs have been suspended from school for subjective offenses more than any other student group (Morgan et al., 2014).

Although ODRs may be resolved at the school level without further exclusionary action, many lead to suspensions and expulsions. At both the national and state level, data collection on

discipline actions does not usually include ODR data, reporting only suspensions and expulsions. ODR data is compiled at the school district level by East Coast School District (ECSD). However, since the process toward suspension or expulsion begins with an ODR, disproportion revealed in the data on suspensions and expulsions is indicative of disproportion in ODRs.

Since 1968, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) monitors the application of disciplinary actions in schools and disaggregates the data by various student subgroups including race and gender. In 2018, the USDE issued a report at the request of the U.S. Congress that analyzed data from the OCR for school year 2013-2014. The report shows that for school year 2013-2014, although Black students in K-12 public schools across the nation represented 7% of all students enrolled, they accounted for 33.4% of the students who received one out-of-school-suspension, 43.2% of students who received more than one out-of-school-suspension, and 30.2% of students who received more than one in-school-suspension.

The problem of disproportionate discipline actions is also evident in Maryland both for the state and for ECSD. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) does not track ODRs but does track suspensions and expulsions reported by Maryland school districts. In 2019, MSDE reported that in the state's public schools, suspensions and expulsions in grades K-12 had decreased by 50% from 8.7% in the 2005-2006 school year to 4.3% in the 2018-2019 school year. Over that same period, secondary school suspensions decreased from 10.4% to 6.9%. However, when Maryland state discipline data is disaggregated by student group, it becomes apparent that the impacts on individual student groups have not changed. In 2019, Buckheit reported that in Maryland, Black students are still removed from the classroom more than twice as often as their peers.

ECSD does compile ODR data. A review of the ODR data for Black males in middle school (grades 6-8) confirms that racial and gender disparity exist at the district level. For the 2017-2020 school years, Black males represented an average of approximately 21.1% of the total K-12 enrollment in ECSD and White males represented an average of approximately 53% of the total enrollment. For that same period, 2017-2020, Black males in middle school received an average of 30.4% of ODRs for subjective offenses and an average of 16.7% of out-of-school suspensions. White males in middle school received an average of 24.3% of ODRs for subjective offenses and an average of 16.2% of the out-of-school suspensions (Office of Student Data, 2017-2020). (Note that statistics for school year 2019-2020 were affected by changes in the delivery of instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The most immediate consequence of an ODR is a break in learning. When students receive an ODR, they are sent out of the classroom. Students may be detained in a variety of settings including the main office, a supervised timeout, a decision-making room, an in-school intervention, or suspension. Regardless of where the student is held, the ODR leads to exclusion from the classroom for some period resulting in loss of academic instruction.

Although ODRs are given at all levels, the rates of ODRs for subjective offenses for Black students, especially males, begin to increase in middle school (Rafaelle-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Robers et al., 2013; Theriot & Dupper, 2010). In 2003, Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff determined that Black males in middle school were overrepresented in disciplinary actions even for relatively minor infractions and that almost half of all Black male students at the middle school level experienced a suspension. Skiba, Horner, et al., (2011) reported that Black males in middle school were 3.78 times more likely to be referred for problem behavior than other student groups and more likely to receive more severe consequences for subjective offenses. It is not

surprising that ODR rates tend to rise in middle school because at that age students become less likely to comply automatically with adult demands (Dunbar & Taylor, 1982). In fact, defiance, "the refusal to obey;" insubordination, "refusal to obey authority;" and disrespect, "showing a lack of respect" are the most frequent disciplinary infractions in middle school (Gregory and Weinstein, 2008).

Disproportionate numbers of ODRs for subjective offenses for Black males in middle school is a recognized problem in ECSD, one with significant consequences. ODRs interfere with student learning, cause disengagement from school, may result in further exclusionary discipline, and can lead to even more behavior problems (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In addition, when Black students perceive differential treatment from teachers, such as receiving an unfair ODR, their feelings of connectedness to school decrease and they are at additional risk for school dropout (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Since Black students receive exclusionary discipline more frequently than their White peers, they are subject to a greater cycle of academic failure due to lost instructional time (Skiba, 2010). The negative effect on learning is even greater for students who are already experiencing academic or behavior difficulty (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Further, students who are disengaged from the flow of instruction are more likely to experience alienation from school (Stewart, 2003). These negative impacts create a particularly significant problem for Black male middle school students who receive disproportionate numbers of disciplinary actions at national, state, and local levels.

Role of Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices was developed in response to the inadequate punitive measures used in the disciplinary system (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Studies of the implementation

of Restorative Practices confirm that the use of Restorative Practices has a positive impact on teacher capacity. Grossi et al. (2012) found that there was significant improvement in classroom environments and student behavior as a result of the reparative dialogue established through Restorative Practices between the teacher and the students. Other research shows that effective implementation of Restorative Practices dramatically reduces student misconduct and the use of exclusionary discipline such as ODRs and suspensions. Teachers who incorporate Restorative Practices with fidelity report a wide range of positive outcomes including dramatic reductions in suspensions; greater teacher job satisfaction; and more respectful, less disruptive student behavior (Gregory & Evans, 2020).

Since 2017, ECSD has been a proponent of Restorative Practices, advocating for Restorative Practices as a means to increase teacher capacity in schools and decrease the disproportion in ODRs assigned to students, specifically Black males in middle school. However, despite strong efforts by ECSD to implement Restorative Practices, evidence from a review of ECSD Reports of Multi-tiered Systems of Support Restorative Practices data for school years 2017-2020 indicates that many teachers are not fully utilizing the strategies (Alternative Education Office, 2020). Progress has been made in implementation of restorative conversations, thinking plans, and teacher-student conferences; but teachers continue to use and issue ODRs that do not prevent or change student behavior. Determining next steps in the ECSD efforts to reach the district goals for reductions in number and disproportion in ODRs requires in depth examination of conditions and factors affecting the implementation of Restorative Practices with a particular focus on addressing disproportion for Black males in middle school.

Scope of the Problem

National Scope

In 2013, Losen and Martinez estimated that nationally, Black students were two to three times more likely to be suspended than students of other racial and ethnic groups. A 2019 OCR report on discipline actions in school year 2015-2016 indicates that about 2.7 million (5-6%) of all K-12 students received one or more out of school suspensions. The disparities become evident when that number is disaggregated by race and gender. Although Black male students represented 8% of enrolled students in K-12 public schools in the 2015-2016 school year, they accounted for 25% of students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions. In comparison, the proportion of White male students in K-12 who were suspended was about the same as their proportion of enrollment. White males in K-12 public schools comprised 25% of total student enrollment in 2015-2016 and represented 24% of students who received one or more out of school suspensions. Table 1 graphically demonstrates the differences in suspensions by race and gender for K-12 students.

Table 1

Percentage of Distribution of K-12 Students in the United States Receiving One or More Out-of-School Suspensions by Race and Gender, 2015-2016
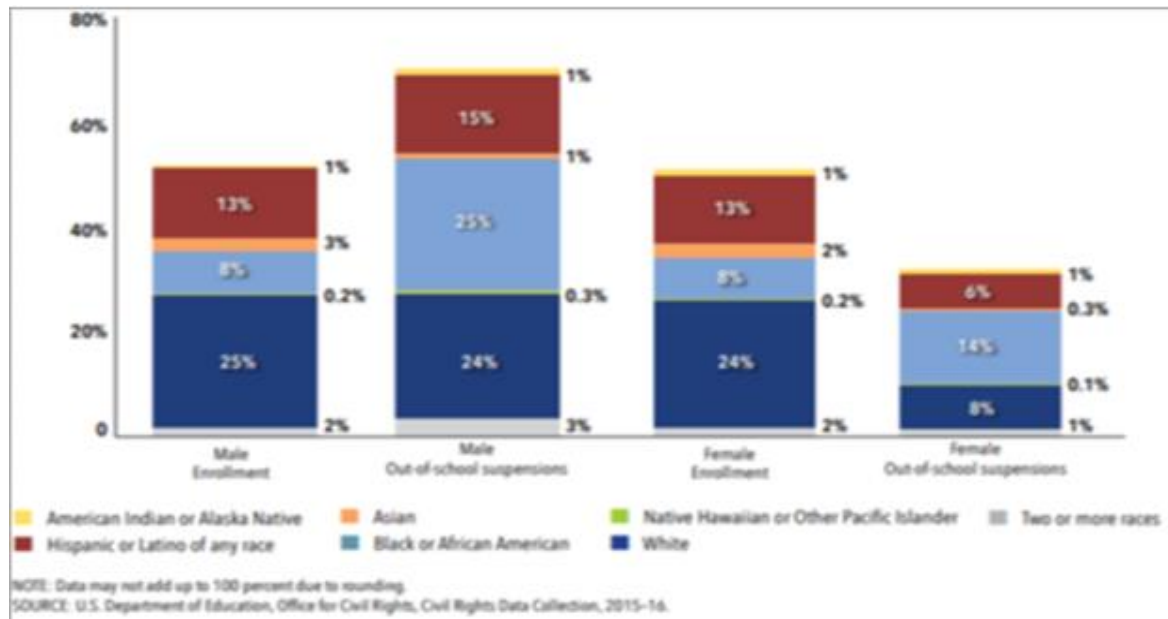
Note. Reprinted from Office for Civil Rights (2019), p.13.

Data on 2015-2016 expulsions also reveal a significant gap for Black male students. Black male students, 8% of the total student enrollment, received 23% of all expulsions for males, more than any other student group. Again, for White male students, the proportion who were expelled was about the same as their proportion of enrollment. White males comprised 25% of total student enrollment, 27% of students who were expelled (Office for Civil Rights, 2019).

National Efforts to Address the Problem

There have been several initiatives at the national level to address the problem of racial and gender disproportionality in school discipline actions. A 2013 survey administered by the American Association of School Administrators in partnership with the Council of State Governments before the federal guidance was issued found that 56% of district leaders had recently revised their student codes of conduct, made changes in policies related to exclusionary

discipline such as suspensions and expulsions, and developed graduated systems for responding to misbehavior (Blad, 2018).

In 2014, the American Association of School Administrators surveyed 950 district leaders in 47 states regarding whether they had made changes to their district's discipline policies; just 16% of the respondents said their districts had made modifications. Of the districts that reported making changes because of the federal directive, 4.5% of those respondents (less than 1% of all respondents) indicated the 2014 discipline guidance had a negative or very negative impact on the ability of school personnel to address student disciplinary issues, particularly to remove students who were disruptive, aggressive, or abusive to students or staff. However, 44% of the respondents indicated that their districts made changes based on the guidance (7% of all respondents) and reported that the changes had been a positive experience and/or had led to positive outcomes for the district (Blad, 2018).

In January 2014, the USDE issued *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* to encourage schools and school districts to examine and revise their discipline policies. The following year, in July 2015, the USDE and the Department of Justice spearheaded the Rethink Discipline campaign. The departments hosted a conference with school administrators and teachers from across the country to advance the national conversation about reducing the overuse of unnecessary out of school suspensions and expulsions by replacing these practices with positive alternatives that keep students engaged in learning (Jackson & Gordy, 2018).

In response to a national dialogue around school discipline policies and practices, the USDE and the Department of Justice issued joint federal policy and legal guidance to provide public schools with a roadmap to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices and clarify

the civil rights obligation of schools to eliminate discrimination based on protected classes, specifically race and gender, in the administration of school discipline (Office for Civil Rights, 2016). Additionally, the Department of Justice launched a National Resource Center for School Justice Partnerships with the aim of advancing school discipline reform efforts and providing training and technical assistance portals for juvenile courts, schools, law enforcement agencies, and others to support school discipline reform efforts at the local level (Jackson & Gordy, 2018).

In 2016, the White House released a capstone report, *The Continuing Need to Rethink Discipline* (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) with updates about projects launched and progress made in response to the administrations' actions. As part of their continuing efforts, the USDE developed a resource guide with a set of potential action items to assist school leaders to implement safe and supportive school climates. School administrators raised concerns about parts of the 2014 federal guidance and noted that some aspects were unnecessary or redundant because many school districts had already begun to implement change.

More recently, the guidance issued at the national level has been amended. A report released in December 2018 by the Federal Commission on School Safety led by the U.S. Secretary of Education recommended rescinding previous guidance that was jointly issued by the USDE and the Department of Justice. The earlier discipline guidance document had suggested that schools could potentially be violating federal civil rights law, specifically the standard of "disparate impact," if they disciplined Black students at higher rates than they disciplined students in other groups. In rescinding the past guidance, the Trump administration assured states and local school systems that they were not being forced to act, but that changes may require districts that have adopted new discipline programs in recent years to review those discipline policies for potential disparate impact on students (Blad, 2018).

State Scope

  Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that Black students remain over-represented in the use of all school disciplinary sanctions even after weighing their achievement, socioeconomic status, teacher, and self-reported behavior. Statistics for the state of Maryland exemplify this over-representation. Since 2008, Black students have risen from being 1.95 to 3 times more likely to receive a suspension because of an ODR (Maryland State Department of Education, 2014). The MSDE 2019 report entitled *Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions* indicates that in school year 2018-2019, there were 79,306 suspensions and expulsions attributed to all districts across the state of Maryland, of which 46,221 or 58% were attributed to Black students. Of the 46,221 suspensions and expulsions attributed to Black students, 17,511 or 39% were for the subjective offenses of disrespect and disruption (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019b). The graph of state suspensions and expulsions in Table 2 shows both the substantial number of actions for subjective offenses compared with other categories and the disproportion among student groups.

Table 2

2018-2019 Maryland Public Schools Total Numbers of K-12 In-School and Out-of-School

Suspensions and Expulsions by Major Offense Category

Description of Data	Total	Attendance	Dangerous Substances	Weapons	Attacks/ Threats/ Fighting	Arson/ Fire/ Explosives	Sex Offenses	Disrespect/ Disruption	Other
All	79,306	1,004	5,347	1,579	36,479	489	1,653	30,125	2,630
Male	55,133	631	3,723	1,194	25,260	390	1,387	20,597	1,951
Female	24,173	373	1,624	385	11,219	99	266	9,528	679
American Indian or Alaska Native	239	3	16	2	92	2	4	105	15
Asian	749	8	114	20	334	10	29	206	28
Black or African American	46,221	333	1,686	836	23,250	280	905	17,511	1,420
Hispanic/Latino of any race	8,564	116	969	273	3,604	95	237	2,968	302
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	98	1	11	1	33	1	4	43	4
White	18,941	458	2,244	374	7,191	84	406	7,472	712
Two or more races	4,494	85	307	73	1,975	17	68	1,820	149
Students with Disabilities	22,056	138	988	466	10,546	145	479	8,547	747

Note. Reprinted from Maryland State Department of Education (2019).

State Efforts to Address the Problem

Recognizing that disproportionate disciplinary action has been an on-going problem in the state, MSDE, the Maryland State Board of Education, and the Maryland legislature have taken several steps to address inequities in school discipline. In July 2012, MSDE issued a report, *School Discipline and Academic Success: Related Parts of Maryland Education Reform*, declaring that school discipline and academic success are equal partners in education reform. The report outlines reforms instituted by MSDE focused on keeping students in school by adopting rehabilitative approaches to school discipline and proposing a set of regulations that

- reflect a rehabilitative discipline philosophy based on the goals of fostering, teaching, and acknowledging positive behavior;
- support strategies designed to keep students in school and ensure that when they graduate, they will be ready for college and/or career;

- prohibit disciplinary policies that trigger automatic discipline without the use of discretion; and

- explain why and how long-term suspensions or expulsions are last resort options.

Each school district was asked to focus on the connection between school discipline and academic success and to establish a school discipline best practices workgroup to determine the types of professional development needed by teachers, administrators, and school resource officers to implement best practices.

In addition, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted regulations making it clear that exclusionary discipline should be used as a last resort; and, where necessary, exclusionary discipline should be applied equitably across the student population. In 2014, as part of the statewide effort to reform school policies and practices related to student conduct, MSDE issued *The Maryland Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline* to identify how school systems should code violent vs. non-violent offenses. The purpose of the state guidelines was to provide a framework for Maryland's local school systems to use to establish and implement their own local codes of conduct. To further assist local school districts, the guidelines outline 27 potential infractions and 31 response options. MSDE organized potential infractions and responses into a five-level system with classroom teacher responses at Level 1 and administrative and exclusionary responses at Level 5. The response levels include an example of a visualization showing potential code of conduct infractions mapped onto a given level or series of levels as shown in Table 3. Each local school district then created a visualization to demonstrate how their codified responses for given behavioral infractions aligned with the Maryland State recommended guidelines (Curran & Finch, 2018).

Table 3

Maryland State Recommended Response Levels for Violations of District Codes of Conduct

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5

Class cutting
Disrespect
Harassment
False alarm
Academic dishonesty
Fighting
Trespassing
Theft
Alcohol
Firearms
Tardiness

Note. The levels represent the severity of the violation and whether responsibility for addressing the conduct lies with the teacher or with the administration. Reprinted from Curran and Finch (2018), p. 4.

In 2016, the Maryland State Board of Education issued a new regulation affecting discipline processes, COMAR 13A.08.01.21 *Reducing and Eliminating Disproportionate/Discrepant Impact* (Md. Code Ann. Education § 7-306, 2016). Section C of the regulation specifically addresses disproportionate impact on minority students and the development of plans to reduce such impact. To ensure reform in equitable discipline, the State Board through the regulation directed MSDE to develop a model to analyze local school system discipline data to determine whether a school's discipline practices have a disproportionate impact on minority students.

To comply with the regulation, MSDE analyzed each local school system's code 910, Out-of-School suspension, and expulsion data by school, using two complementary measures focused on disproportionality. One measure, the risk ratio measure, compares the removal rate of each student group in a school to the removal rate of a comparison group in the school (i.e., all

other students in the school) to determine the likelihood that a student will receive an out-of-school suspension or expulsion. The second measure, the state comparison measure, compares the removal rate of each student group in a school to a statewide removal rate. MSDE set a threshold risk ratio of 3.0 as the state comparison measure for determining when a school's discipline actions are to be identified as having disproportionate impact on any group of students. The state-wide removal rates are calculated by grade band (elementary and middle/high) based on the prior three years of Maryland's data (Buckheit, 2019).

In school year 2017-2018, MSDE and local school systems formed disproportionality review teams comprised of State Board members, superintendents, directors, principals, and teachers. The teams analyzed root causes of the disproportionality and developed interventions to implement in each local school system.

As mandated by COMAR 13A.08.01.21, beginning in 2018-2019, local school systems identified with risk ratios and state comparison measures that exceed a value of 3.0 are required to submit a plan to the Maryland State Board of Education indicating steps they will take to reduce the impact (i.e., risk ratio) within one year and to eliminate it within three years (Buckheit, 2019). MSDE also has shown a commitment to measures which improve school climate, promote effective discipline, and foster academic growth.

As a follow up to the MSDE *Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline* in 2018, Curran and Finch examined district level codes of conduct and discipline rates across Maryland's 24 school districts to determine if gaps existed in violations and levels of consequences among student groups, particularly between Black and White students. They concluded that Black students were 3.5 times more likely than White students to be suspended. They attributed the

greater risk to local school districts' codes of conduct for subjective offenses and to high rates of ODRs for Black students.

Other initiatives at the state level to reduce inequities in discipline have focused specifically on implementation of restorative approaches. In 2017-2018, the Maryland General Assembly appointed the Maryland Commission on the School-to Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices and after 18 months of study, the Maryland Commission issued an extensive report to the Maryland governor and legislature. The Commission urged school districts to implement "restorative approaches to building and sustaining a positive learning environment." The Commission also provided a clarification of Maryland COMAR 13A.08.04.03, Student Behavior Interventions, first issued in 2000, to highlight that the purpose of school discipline is not to punish and exclude students. Rather, conflicts and harmful incidents present opportunities for educators to teach students social-emotional skills and reinforce community behavioral norms (Maryland Commission, 2018).

In 2018-2019, MSDE convened its own Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations. The task force identified restorative approaches as one of the best practices for student discipline and recommended that districts "provide training and adequate resources to ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity" (Buckheit, 2019).

In 2019, the Maryland Senate passed Senate Bill 766 requiring each school district in the state to incorporate the use of restorative approaches (Md. Code Ann., 2019). The bill defines restorative approaches as a "relationship-based student discipline model" that

- is preventative and proactive;
- emphasizes building strong relationships;

- in response to behavior, focuses on accountability for any harm done by the problem behavior; and

- addresses ways to repair the relationships with the voluntary participation of any individual who was harmed.

The bill further requires districts to state that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure is "rehabilitative, restorative, and educational" (Md. Code Ann. Education § 7-306, 2019).

District Scope

Like many school districts, ECSD has been identified as excluding disproportionate numbers of Black students from school. According to the MSDE report *Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions*, during school year 2018-2019, ECSD assigned 9,547 suspensions and expulsions to students in grades K-12. Black students in grades K-12, who represented 21% of enrolled students in ECSD in 2018-2019, received 4,544 or 47% of the suspensions and expulsions. In comparison, White students in grades K-12, who represented 54% of enrolled students in 2018-2019, received 2,970 or 31% of the suspensions and expulsions. In the specific category for the subjective offenses of disrespect and disruption, 1,606 or 17% of the suspensions and expulsions were attributed to K-12 Black students; 1,032 or 11% were attributed to K-12 White students (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019b). These disparities are evident in Table 4.

Table 4

East Coast School District Numbers of In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions

for K-12 by Major Offense Category

Description of Data	Total	Attendance	Dangerous Substances	Weapons	Attacks/ Threats/ Fighting	Arson/ Fire/ Explosives	Sex Offenses	Disrespect/ Disruption	Other
All	9,547	71	580	181	4,792	54	212	3,388	269
Male	6,842	40	385	143	3,525	43	182	2,330	194
Female	2,705	31	195	38	1,267	11	30	1,058	75
American Indian or Alaska Native	53	2	1	1	17	0	0	29	3
Asian	72	0	4	3	32	1	3	26	3
Black or African American	4,544	14	101	71	2,527	24	99	1,606	102
Hispanic/Latino of any race	1,230	17	115	26	554	13	36	435	34
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0
White	2,970	30	311	71	1,338	14	66	1,032	108
Two or more races	673	8	47	9	321	2	8	259	19
Students with Disabilities	2,332	13	93	46	1,254	18	42	822	44

Note. Reprinted from Maryland State Department of Education (2019).

ECSD data indicates the district also has disproportion in ODRs. The greatest number of ODRs are for the subjective infractions of disrespect and disruption as seen in the data for school year 2018-2019 presented in Table 5. In school year 2018-2019 in ECSD, there were 14,348 ODRs for K-12 classroom infractions. Of the total ODRs for subjective offenses, 6,744 (47%) were for disrespect, disruption, or insubordination. Black secondary males received 2,043 (30%) of those ODRs (Office of Student Data, 2019).

Table 5

East Coast School District K-12 Office Discipline Referrals by Total Category, End of School

Year 2018-2019
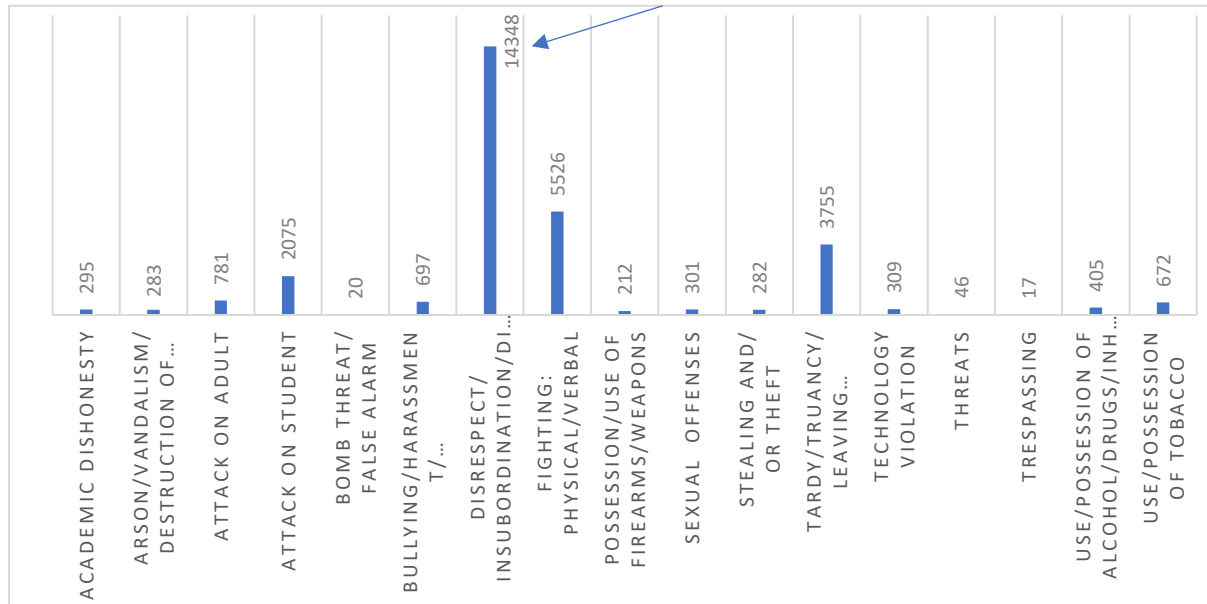
Note. Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2019).

When the lens is narrowed to focus specifically on middle schools, the ECSD ODR data confirms disproportionate impact on Black males persists at that level. For each of the three school years from 2016-2019, Black students averaged 21% of the total ECSD enrollment. However, in each of those years, Black students in middle school received far more than 21% of the ODRs for subjective offenses. In school year 2016-2017, middle school ODR data for the subjective offenses of disrespect and disruption indicate Black students received 45% of all ODRs for those subjective offenses (see Table 6). When the 45% is disaggregated by gender, Black males in middle school received 31% of all ODRs for subjective offenses (Office of Student Data, 2017). In the following school year, 2017-2018, Black students in middle school again received 45% of the ODRs for disrespect and disruption (see Table 7). When the 45% is disaggregated, Black males in middle school received 33% of all ODRs for subjective offenses

(Office of Student Data, 2018). In school year 2018-2019, Black students in middle school

received 47% of all ODRs for disrespect and disruption (see Table 8). When the 47% is

disaggregated, Black males in middle school received 43% of all ODRs for subjective offenses

(Office of Student Data, 2019).

Table 6

East Coast School District Grades 6-8 Office Discipline Referrals for Disrespect and Disruption

by Race, End of School Year 2016-2017
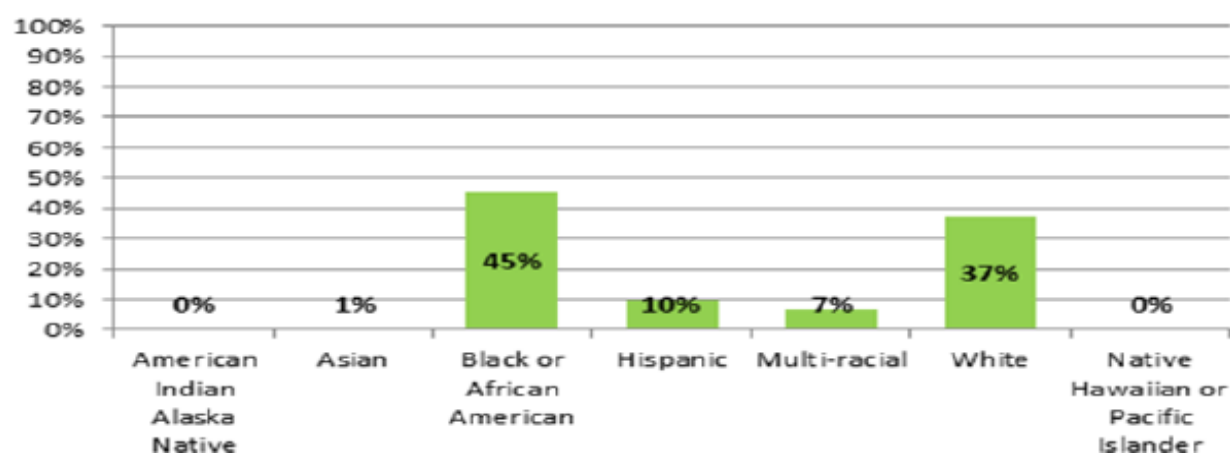
Note. Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2017).

Table 7

East Coast School District Grades 6-8 Office Discipline Referrals for Disrespect and Disruption

by Race, End of School Year 2017-2018
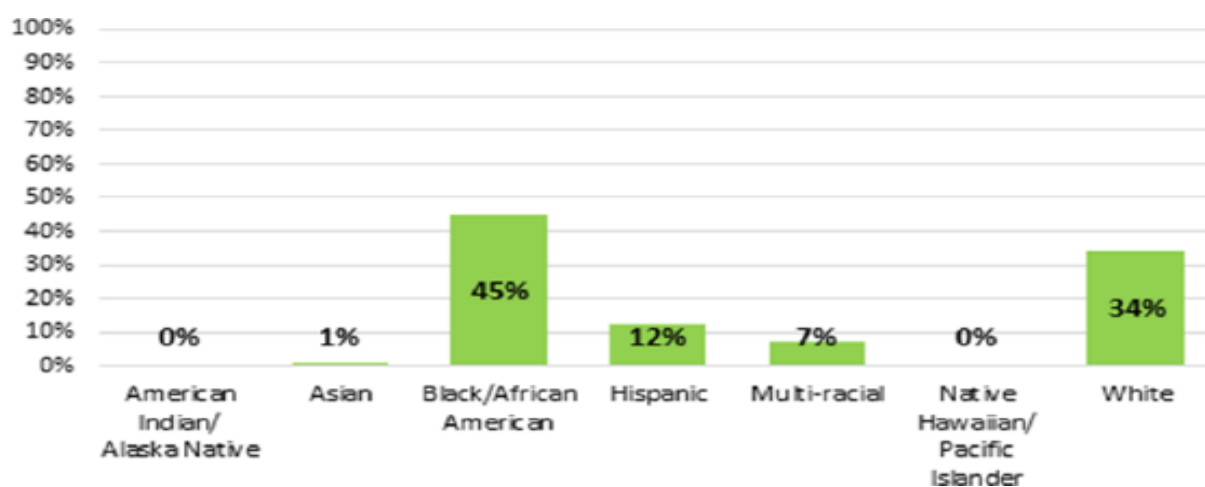
Note. Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2018).

Table 8

East Coast School District Grades 6-8 Office Discipline Referrals for Disrespect and Disruption

by Race, End of School Year 2018-2019
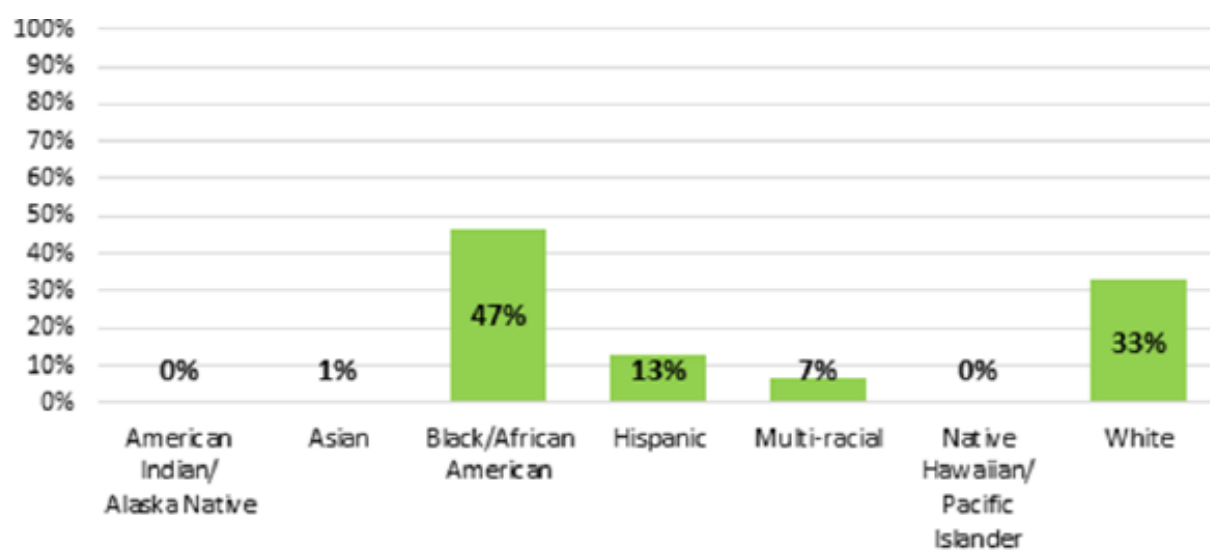
Note. Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2019).

District Efforts to Address the Problem

Like the nation and the state of Maryland, ECSD has endeavored for several years to reduce disproportion in the discipline process. A significant impetus for these efforts has been concerns raised by the East Coast County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**.** The East Coast County Branch of the NAACP has questioned the efficacy and fairness of traditional school and district discipline policies and procedures and the level of teacher capacity in ECSD. They have demanded equitable and equal educational opportunities as well as equal outcomes and accountability for discriminatory discipline practices in ECSD.

Although progress was made with a 2005 Memorandum of Agreement in lieu of continuing lawsuits against the Board of Education of East Coast School District, the Memorandum of Agreement was breached in 2014. The East Coast County Branch of the NAACP has consistently asserted that the Board of Education of East Coast School District and ECSD have repeatedly failed the community, especially Black students (Tillett, 2018). The NAACP has insisted that the Board of Education and ECSD

- dispel racial discrimination and all acts of discrimination in schools and in the school system;
- provide resources to students who have suffered discrimination and racial trauma at schools;
- require cultural proficiency professional development training for teachers and administrators who frequently recommend discipline for Black students on "soft" subjective offenses; and

- develop behavioral and academic plans for frequently disciplined Black students (Walker, 2011).

In response to the issues raised by the NAACP and in their own commitment to equity, policymakers in ECSD have sought alternative discipline practices that reduce the reliance on exclusionary discipline and reduce the overrepresentation of Black students, particularly Black males in middle school, in district discipline actions. To reduce disproportion in discipline actions, Losen and Gillespie (2012) encourage districts to rethink their approach to preventing conflict, handling subjective infractions, and improving relationships between teachers and students. Unfortunately, teachers and policymakers have few developmentally appropriate interventions at their disposal.

In 2007, Childress et al. argued that organizational coherence must be a requirement if districts are to achieve their goals; and since 2017, ECSD has continuously worked to develop and refine consistency in the discipline process. Since ODRs are the first level of exclusionary discipline actions and since teachers generally determine which students are referred, ECSD has specifically focused on more clearly defining the teacher's responsibilities in the processing of the ODR.

In the 2017-2018 school year, ECSD developed a management plan entitled *Elevating All Students, Eliminating All Gaps Action Management Plan* to ensure every student meets or exceeds standards as opportunity and discipline gaps are eliminated. More specifically, the district has chosen to address teacher capacity as it relates to the problem of disproportionate office discipline referrals for Black males in middle school. Initially and as a part of the action management plan, the district proposed teachers utilize a "soft referral" for subjective infractions verses the ECSD ODR (Office of Accelerated Student Achievement, 2017). However, when the

district examined data following the implementation of the recommended policy, the district determined that ODR rates for subjective offenses for Black males in middle school had not decreased, but increased.

As another strategy to build teacher capacity and address the problems of gaps between student groups, ECSD delivers a wide range of professional development for district personnel. Training is delivered in various formats: face-to-face, hands-on using real world scenarios, through interactive group participation, and virtually, Equity is one major topic for professional development. All current and new teachers to the district, both experienced and inexperienced, participate in annual equity professional development training. This training includes sessions on teaching tolerance, social justice standards, identity, diversity, justice, and action. Additionally, ECSD hosts diversity activities throughout the school year to continue the conversation around teacher capacity. Teachers review the meaning of implicit bias, understand biases that may influence disciplinary decisions and perceptions of their students, and explore how learning techniques can mitigate teacher-student relationships and impact teacher perceptions. In addition to the equity training, all new teachers to the district, both experienced and inexperienced, participate in quarterly new teacher professional development sessions offered by the ECSD Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. These sessions review the ECSD Code of Conduct and governance that determines exclusionary discipline for students and examine real world scenarios involving subjective infractions in the classroom.

Other professional development sessions focus on the development and use of data. To fulfill requirements from the MSDE Office of Accountability in the Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Information Technology (2019), and because the district is responsible for the general supervision of discipline data transmission to MSDE and the local student

information system, the ECSD Office of Student Data annually provides professional training opportunities for teachers throughout the school year and summer based on need. This professional training helps build teacher capacity and consistency in the process of data collection, entry, and analysis. All attendees are provided with documentation on discipline data entry processes and procedures using PowerPoint as a point of reference. The professional development, whether face-to-face, hands-on using the PowerSchool Sandbox environment, or in virtual format, further supports teacher capacity by offering training focusing on understanding and implementing the district Code of Student Conduct levels of interventions or consequences. Through the analysis of data, teachers become more aware of the disproportions in discipline and of their role in reducing those gaps.

The district also provides resources, supports, and interventions designed to build teacher capacity to reduce inequities. These materials address expectations for educational rigor, include resources and supports to help teachers maximize each student's academic success as well as social and emotional well-being, provide procedures and practices to ensure that obstacles do not exist to the access of educational tools, and offer additional professional development opportunities to help eliminate the discipline gaps. ECSD recommends that teachers consider using a variety of both internal and external resources including (1) special abilities of local school personnel; (2) assistance of parent(s)/guardian(s); (3) services of the Division of Student Support Services; and (4) psychological, health, legal, community, and rehabilitative agencies of the county and the state.

Based on promising indications in the literature and recommendations from the state, in the 2017-2018 school year, ECSD adopted Restorative Practices as a major district-wide initiative for elevating all students and eliminating gaps. In 2017-2018 ECSD initially identified

16 middle and high schools as the first ECSD schools to "go restorative" and receive specialized professional development training opportunities for Restorative Practices for teachers. The ECSD Code of Student Conduct explains that Restorative Practices are used proactively to build and support relationships and to responsively rebuild relationships among students and teachers after any level of student misconduct. Restorative Practices can be used in addition to, or instead of, other exclusionary disciplinary consequences such as suspension. Restorative Practices empower schools to build a community where all students, staff, and families feel connected and valued within the school building (Office of Safe and Orderly Schools, 2020). If a subjective violation occurs in the classroom, teachers can use Restorative Practices to address behavior in a way that holds students accountable for repairing the harm while still providing them with an honorable path back into the classroom.

ECSD is providing extensive training and resources to help teachers understand, embrace, and implement Restorative Practices. Professional development for teachers covers several aspects of Restorative Practice; however, ECSD and this study focus more on Responsive Circles, the most widely used practice. Teachers are trained in both the proactive and responsive models of Responsive Circles. The training and behavioral supports for Responsive Circles include three sessions, professional development A, B, and C, for a total of 12 hours of instruction. Training also addresses the three tiers of Restorative Practices: Tier I, universal or school wide interventions to encourage all to be successful; Tier II, targeted or available interventions for some students who need more behavioral or academic support layered with Tier I supports; and Tier III, intensive behavioral or academic support available to individual students as needed. The Restorative Practices approach and the training provided to teachers in ECSD

emphasize proactive and preventive strategies for defining, supporting, and teaching appropriate social and academic behaviors to create a positive relationship between teachers and students.

As part of the training, teachers review the ECSD Code of Student Conduct focusing on Level 1 and 2 offense types, ranges of interventions, and consequences for subjective offenses. They specifically focus on Restorative Practices that may be used to address Level 1 and Level 2 offenses. The ECSD ODR form shown in Figure 2 lists Level 1 and Level 2 teacher actions including Restorative Practices that may be taken before an ODR is written.

Figure 2

East Coast School District K-12 Office Discipline Referral Form Illustrating Restorative Practices as a Level 1 or Level 2 Option

Note. Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2020), Power School Discipline Data Portal (access to the data portal is restricted to ECSD employees).

During the 2018-2020 school years, 80 of the 130 schools across ECSD received training in Restorative Practices. By March of 2019, 400 teachers had received training in Restorative

Practices Responsive Circles and 1,210 teachers had received training in Restorative Practices

Questions (Alternative Education Office, Restorative Practices data portal, 2020). Table 9 shows

the extent and timing of teacher training in Restorative Practices.

Table 9

East Coast School District 2018-2019 Number of Teachers of Grades 6-12 Trained in

Restorative Practices
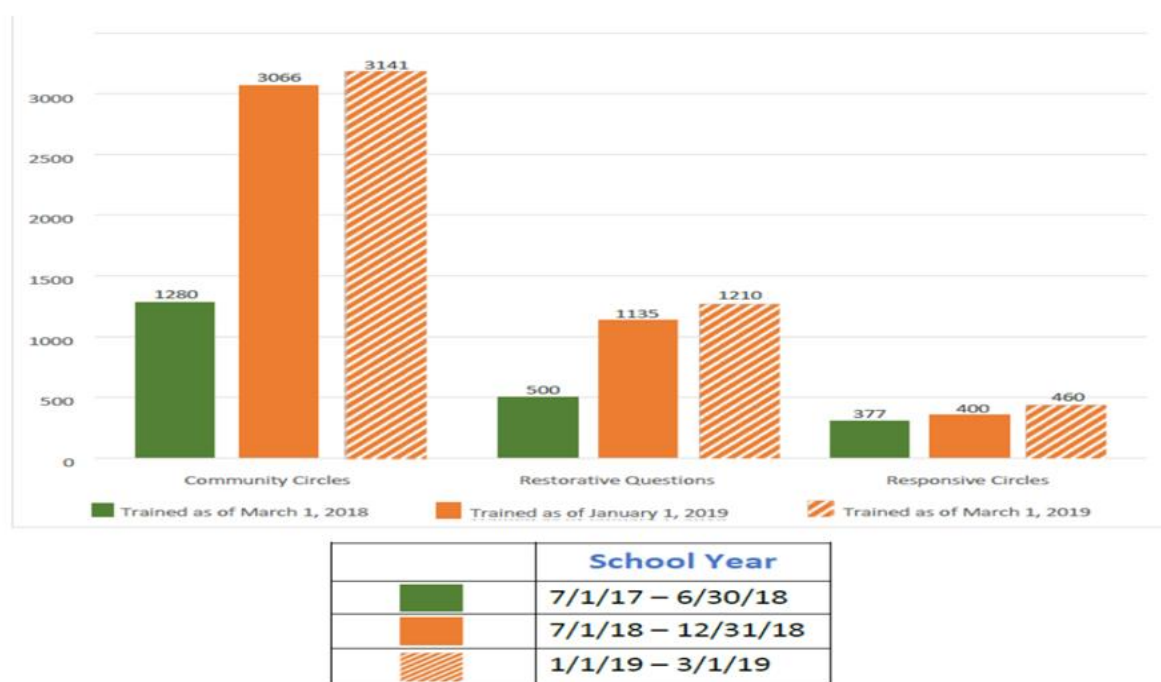
Note. Reprinted from Alternative Education Office (2020), Restorative Practices Data Portal

(access to the data portal is restricted to ECSD employees).

In adopting Restorative Practices, the ECSD Superintendent and the East Coast School

Board recognized building teacher capacity as a primary purpose of restorative approaches and

directed that training be conducted in every school. The district also mandated that all

disciplinary measures be rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. ECSD recognizes that

maintaining and changing student behaviors involves a continuum of acknowledgements,

supports, and interventions as suggested by Sugai and Simonsen (2012). According to the International Institute of Restorative Practices, the unifying hypothesis of Restorative Practices is that "human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them" (Wachtel, 2016). Changing student behavior also involves giving students a voice in the process. Tyler (2006) maintains that when people, particularly students, are given a voice in the decision-making process, they tend to view institutional power as fairer and more legitimate. Tyler also makes the case that empowering youth may lead to better self-regulation without the need for formal discipline.

ECSD recognizes the challenges that occur in the classroom when teachers work with all students to meet teaching and learning outcomes and understands that changing teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward behavior management and their expectations for students is difficult and cannot be accomplished in isolation. Ultimately, the district aims to instill the belief that the strategies for handling subjective infractions should maximize teacher-student relationships in learning rather than focus on ODR outcomes. Across the nation, qualitative case studies, recent randomized controlled trials, and feedback from schools indicate the importance of positive relationships between adults and students in creating an atmosphere conducive for learning (Wang & Degol, 2016).

ECSD continues to examine how the Restorative Practices intervention influences teacher-student relationships in formal and informal settings, and the potential of the Restorative Practices intervention to build teacher capacity by providing a technique for repairing the harm for students and teachers caused by subjective behavior in the classroom. Childress (2007) asserts that when district leaders take specific actions, such as redefining roles or relationships,

altering performance expectations, or using job assignments in creative ways, they send signals about which behaviors they value and desire throughout the organization. Actions taken by ECSD to implement Restorative Practices are summarized in the Driver's for Improvement section later in this chapter.

Consequences and Impact of Not Addressing the Problem

The consequences for Black males of the disproportionate use of specific disciplinary actions including ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions are both immediate and far-reaching, affecting both the individual student and society. All students who receive ODRs, suspensions and/or expulsions risk reduction in academic achievement. The effects can be cumulative and can lead the student to difficulty in graduating, difficulty in achieving success after leaving school, and increased risk of poverty. Those risks as well as others are magnified for Black students, specifically Black middle school males, who are more likely to be sent out of the classroom than students in any other student group (Jordan & Anil, 2009).

Loss of Academic Instruction

The first consequence of exclusion from the classroom for disciplinary action is a negative impact on academic achievement. Access to academic experiences through curriculum, teachers, and school activities is of importance for all students. Researchers repeatedly argue that time out of school, at all stages of the exclusionary process, has detrimental effects on achievement and school adjustment (Fabelo et al., 2012; Forsyth et al., 2013; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Klassen et al., 2011; Skiba, Knesting, & Bush, 2002). Warren (2002) found significant associations between office disciplinary referrals and both academic preparedness and hours spent on homework. Students who are referred, suspended, or expelled miss classroom instruction time and fall behind in their coursework. Those students are more likely to report

having a negative school experience and to become disengaged academically (Moreno &

Gaytán, 2013).

When a student is given an ODR, the student loses classroom instructional time during

the whole term of exclusion, the actual time it takes from when a student is sent out of the

classroom on an ODR until that student is readmitted to the classroom. Students recommended

for suspension or expulsion can be kept out of school until adjudication. That instructional time

is lost for students even if they are vindicated in the hearing. If they do receive suspension or

expulsion, that waiting time may not be included in the official term of exclusion. Loss of

instructional time may be one factor in the finding that students who experience repeated

discipline referrals are twice as likely as other students to repeat a grade (Fabelo et al., 2012).

Classroom discipline actions not only interrupt instruction for the student being

disciplined, but for the other students in the classroom as well. Classroom disruptions are

correlated with lower achievement both for the student who is misbehaving and for all other

students in the classroom (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007). Students who are disciplined and receive

an ODR compromise the entire instructional program. Loss of instructional time often reduces

academic achievement and prevents students from becoming ready for further education or for

entry into the work force. This in turn affects the earning potential of the student as well as the

economic well-being of communities and the nation (Jordan & Anil, 2009).

Social and Emotional Impacts

Disciplinary exclusion impacts students not only academically, but socially and

emotionally as well. This can be especially true for middle school Black males. At that

developmental stage, young adolescents are learning to make decisions as they seek

independence and power (Caskey & Anfara, 2014). Unfortunately, less research has been

conducted on how students as individuals are affected by school exclusion than on other impacts of disciplinary exclusion. The research that does exist indicates that students often interpret exclusions from class as a rejection and that negative feelings toward adults in the school are common among excluded youth (Skiba & Noam, 2002). Students who experience repeated exclusions from the classroom may become accustomed to a disrupted education and have difficulty readjusting to school both academically and socially (Klassen et al., 2011).

Injustice and Labeling

Injustice and labeling are consequences of disciplinary exclusion that have received more attention. Skiba (2010) concluded that disciplinary exclusion can foster a sense of injustice among students. Skiba and Rausch (2006) researched injustice and labeling in relation to disciplinary discrepancies correlated with race. They found that Black students viewed such discrepancies as conscious and deliberate, arguing that teachers apply classroom rules and guidelines arbitrarily. In response to disciplinary action, they consider unjust or confrontational, students often escalate unacceptable behavior (Skiba, Knesting, & Bush, 2002). Labeling and classroom exclusion practices tend to create a self-fulfilling prophecy and result in a cycle of antisocial behavior difficult for students to break (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). As students get older, internalize labels applied to them, and experience less academic success, they often lose incentive to adhere to school norms. Rule violations tend to increase in frequency and severity, resulting in a steady escalation in sanctions applied.

Increased Dropout Rates

Students are more disconnected from school when they are experiencing higher rates of exclusion and this perpetuates their negative dispositions toward schools and teachers (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014). Students who experience repeated disciplinary exclusion often

become disengaged and often encounter academic difficulty. Consequently, students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school (Klassen et al., 2011). The research suggests that suspension is a stronger predictor of dropout rate than either grade point average or socioeconomic status (Raffaele & Knoff, 2003).

The nonprofit group Texas Appleseed (2007) confirmed that numerous studies have established a link between school dropout rates and incarceration. They reinforced this link by reporting that in 2007, more than 80% of Texas adult prison inmates were school dropouts. All students who are suspended or expelled become more likely to drop out of school (Klassen et al., 2011). Adolescent Black males continue to be overrepresented in school suspensions and expulsions. They are, therefore, especially vulnerable to becoming dropouts and to entering the school-to-prison pipeline.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The link between suspensions and expulsions and incarceration was identified by Raffaele-Mendez as early as 2003. For many students, the cycles of punishment eventually lead to entanglement with law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Sheets, 2002; Verdugo, 2002). That link is now generally known as the school-to-prison pipeline. The introduction to a report on this issue published in 2007 by Texas Appleseed, a nonprofit public interest law center in Texas, defines the pipeline:

> Involvement in the criminal justice system can be viewed as a continuum of entry points from early school-based behavior problems that result in suspensions, expulsions, or Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placements to more serious law breaking and probation violations that can involve the juvenile justice system and, ultimately, the adult penal system. In Texas and nationally, zero tolerance policies are

removing thousands of juveniles from the classroom and sending them to in-school and

out-of-school suspension and to DAEPs. For too many, involvement in the school

disciplinary system becomes a gateway to the justice system. (p.1)

Lower Graduation Rates

The goal of every school district is to have all students graduate, ideally within the

regularly established time frame. However, disciplinary exclusion increases the number of

students who drop out of school leading to reductions in the graduation rate. In 2017-2018, 85%

of all U.S. public high school students graduated within four years of starting ninth grade. For

Black students, the figure was 79% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Maryland

graduation rates also are based on the percentage of students who graduate within four years of

starting ninth grade. The Maryland Public Schools Report Card, 2018-2019 reports the Maryland

graduation rate for 2018-2019 as 86.9%, down slightly from 87.1% for 2017-2018 (Maryland

State Department of Education, 2019a).

The same Report Card indicates that ECSD recorded a 2018-2019 graduation rate of

88.3%, also down slightly from 89.2% in 2017-2018. Between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, the

graduation rate for Black students in ECSD rose 1.34 percentage points and the gap in graduation

rate between Black and White student groups narrowed by 2.2 percentage points, but there is still

a large gap between these numbers and the ideal graduation rate of 100% (Bottalico & Bowie,

2020). The ECSD Superintendent acknowledged the need to further close the gap among student

groups, "I am pleased that we continued to close the gap for African-American students and

students of two or more races.... However, we have an immense amount of work to do to get to

where we need to be." (Bottalico & Bowie, 2020, p. 3).

Exclusionary discipline actions can produce devasting consequences for students beginning with loss of instruction; continuing through social and emotional impacts; and culminating in failure to graduate, greater likelihood of entry into the school-to-prison pipeline, and lifelong struggles to achieve success (Krezmien et al., 2014). An ODR is the first step of the exclusionary process. Black students, specifically Black males, are more likely to receive an ODR and that likelihood increases in middle school. Consequently, Black males in middle school are most at risk for the related negative consequences of exclusionary discipline actions.

Theory of Action

Causal System Analysis

Social justice awareness and equity in disciplinary action have become increasingly important topics of discussion within public school systems in the United States specifically as these issues relate to Black students. School districts across the nation recognize that disproportion exists in disciplinary actions and are seeking solutions to the problem. Finding solutions depends on understanding the causal factors contributing to the disproportionality. Researchers have identified several factors as potential causes of the disproportion in ODRs for Black males in middle school. These potential causes fall into four major categories: school and district discipline policies and procedures, teacher capacity, racial stereotyping and profiling, and cultural mismatch. Figure 3 presents these broad categories and some of the factors that contribute to each. Examining each of these categories more fully helps provide a better understanding of the causes of disproportionate disciplinary action.

Figure 3

Causal Systems Analysis for Disproportionate Office Discipline Referrals for Subjective Offenses

for Black Males in Middle School

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	TEACHER CAPACITY	
Unfair Zero Tolerance Policies	Authority, Control, and Power	
Lack of Focus on Racial Disparity in Discipline	Inequitable Management of Student Behavior	Black males in middle school (grades 6-8) receive disproportionate office discipline referrals for subjective offenses in comparison to White males in middle school (grades 6-8).
Inconsistent Methods of Reporting Disciplinary Actions	Lack of Teacher-Student Relationships	
Racial Background and School Racial Composition	Teacher Perceptions of Cultural Behavior	
Bias	Lack of Cultural Responsiveness	
Teachers Implicit Theories of Students Race and Culture	Lack of Classroom Structures to Support Student Self-Expression	
RACIAL STEREOTYPING AND PROFILING	CULTURAL MISMATCH	

Discipline Policies and Procedures. Discipline policies and procedures provide a framework for schools and the district to use in establishing local codes of conduct and in developing new guidelines for behavioral expectations for all students. They have a direct impact on creating teaching and learning environments that promote academic learning and student success. They also provide suggested prevention, intervention, restorative, and incentive-based strategies to respond to student misconduct; and detailed explanations of specific student behaviors that are not permitted. The district policies and procedures can be found in board policies and regulations, codes of student conduct, and student and parent handbooks (Monroe et al., 2005). Behavioral expectations tend to be set by the dominant culture as do discipline policies and procedures that can perpetuate unequal treatment of Black students such as unfair zero tolerance policies, racial disparities in discipline, and minimal requirements for reporting disciplinary actions (Monroe et al., 2005).

Many school districts have adopted zero tolerance policies as part of their efforts to improve school discipline. However, evidence indicates that these policies have had little success

and that they contribute to disproportionate ODRs. As early as 2000, The Advancement Project and Harvard's Civil Rights Project examined zero tolerance policies to determine if reduction in ODRs through zero tolerance policies promotes safety and achievement, then issued their report, *Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance and School Discipline 2000*. The report concluded that zero tolerance policies are unfair and lead to negative outcomes for students. Racial inequality arises because districts often do not focus on important work related to racial equity and do not create policies to raise awareness of and reduce racial disparities in school discipline.

Other research suggests that districts that operate utilizing zero-tolerance policies have not provided evidence to support the effectiveness of these policies (Fabelo, et al., 2011). Peterson (2000) found that zero-tolerance polices intended to reduce disparities in discipline increase suspension rates, lead to academic failure, and increase the dropout rates. Skiba, Reynolds, et al. (2006) concur and suggest that zero tolerance policies may cause increases in the overrepresentation of Black students in ODRs and other exclusionary discipline actions. In 2016, Curran reinforced the negative impact of zero tolerance policies by reporting that disproportionate discipline continues to increase for Black male students once zero tolerance policies are implemented.

A second aspect of discipline policies and procedures that contributes to the disproportionality of ODRs is the lack of district focus on racial disparity in discipline in public schools. In 2012, the Council of State Governments Justice Center examined the relationship between strict exclusionary discipline practices and increases in rates of suspension. Their review of the demographic characteristics of students being suspended or expelled revealed disparities between Black and White students in discretionary removal rates (i.e., out-of-school

suspensions and expulsions). Black male students were 31% more likely than White students to experience discretionary action, at least one removal from the classroom (Fabelo et al., 2012). Losen (2011) examined the impact that school suspension has on children and their families, including the possibility that frequent out-of-school suspension may have a harmful and racially disparate impact. As part of the disparate impact analysis, Losen examined whether frequent disciplinary exclusion from school was educationally justifiable. The study determined that schools do not focus on racial disparity in discipline as a contributing factor to the effectiveness of discipline policies and procedures.

Inconsistent methods of reporting disciplinary actions, a third aspect of discipline policies and procedures, also contributes to disproportion in ODRs. These inconsistent methods hamper efforts to study the impact of school discipline policies. Some large national and state databases such as the OCR database, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act database, state discipline data, and district discipline data systems that include School-Wide Information Systems do not provide detail about initial offenses and personnel are not required to report or evaluate the impact of disciplinary decisions (Losen, 2011).

Reports and data prompted by federal legislative requirements often leave many questions unanswered. For example, since 1968, the OCR has been collecting data on out-of-school suspension and expulsion. OCR administers a biennial survey that typically includes one-third to one-half of U.S. public schools and districts. Researchers point out, however, that the K-12 unduplicated national data yield a conservative estimate of students' time out of school because the data does not capture repeat suspensions or the length of the suspensions, and OCR data on expulsions are reported separately with similar applicable reporting rules. Another example of limitations in federal data involves data from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and

Communities Act, part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Districts who receive grants related to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act are required to report data on the frequency, seriousness, and incidence of violence and drug-related offenses that result in suspension or expulsion. Suspensions for lesser offenses are not included, and the data are not required to be disaggregated by student racial subgroups. Like OCR data, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act data reflect a sample of the population and states are not required to report annually (Losen, 2011).

The collection, dissemination, and use of data vary widely across states and school districts. A review of discipline data reported independently by each state indicates some states provide no district or school-level racial data on school discipline to track any disproportionality in ODRs written for Black students compared to White students in reports accessible to the public, even though the districts may collect such data. States and districts compile some reports concerning disciplinary policies, but information available to the public varies widely from state to state and from district to district. The state of Maryland collects racially disaggregated discipline data and makes these data available to the public on the state's website, allowing for an examination of discipline disparities for every district by grade level and school type (Losen, 2011).

Nationally, regardless of what data is collected and published, School-Wide Information Systems data regarding trends in schools, such as teacher use of the ODR, types of problems that lead to the ODR, the location and time of day the infraction occurred, and which consequences were used to streamline the discipline process are not consistently utilized by schools to assess their current discipline practices (Spaulding et al., 2010). In fact, there has been relatively little

research examining school district discipline policies and procedures and the relationship

between school discipline policies and discipline outcomes (Fenning et al., 2008).

      Teacher Capacity. In 2003, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

defined teacher capacity as a candidate's knowledge, skills, and dispositions for working with

students, families, and communities. Teacher capacity also involves the alignment of knowledge,

skills, and dispositions with professional, national, state, and local standards. Effective teacher

capacity improves school climate, promotes effective discipline, and yields more respectful and

less disruptive student behaviors in the classroom (Gregory, Clawson, et al., 2016). Teachers set

the tone for the management of behavior in their classrooms and their attitude toward supporting

their students and developing a positive relationship with them is critical to classroom

management.

      Teachers hold much of the power in the initial stages of the discipline process,

particularly in the decision to issue an ODR. One aspect of teacher capacity that contributes to

the disproportionality of ODRs is the perceived challenges to the teacher's authority, control, and

power in the classroom, such as disrespect and defiance. When Gregory and Roberts (2017)

examined the reasons for ODRs in relation to teacher authority and control in the classroom, they

determined that the teacher's perception of power and authority impacts decision-making

regarding which students receive ODRs and for what violations. In their examination of the

progression from ODR to suspension, Hilberth and Slate (2014) found that the most common

reasons for ODRs from the classroom were subjective offenses, behavior determined to require

an office discipline referral based on the teacher's judgement rather than on adherence to specific

school rules. They also found that teachers whose perceptions of their role in the classroom

emphasized their authority were less likely to reconsider the decision to write an ODR or choose

to impose different interventions. Way (2011) reported that teachers who rely on power-assertive strategies such as severe punishment; scolding; and strict, excessive rules have higher rates of defiance and disruption and less authority and control. This can lead to greater numbers of ODRs.

In their studies of how teachers' beliefs affect classroom discipline, Monroe et al. (2005) found that some teachers believe Black students require more discipline control than other students. These beliefs may lead to greater emphasis on authority and control of discipline than on academic learning in classrooms highly populated by Black students and to disproportion in disciplinary actions (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Konold and Dewey (2015) also found that ODRs were often based on power struggles between students and teachers and that teachers often perceived behaviors such as lack of student engagement and disrespect during classroom exchanges between the teacher and the student as loss of teacher control.

Another aspect of teacher capacity that contributes to the disproportionality of ODRs is the inequitable management of student behavior by teachers in the classroom. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) identified inequitable classroom management, inconsistencies, and disparities in how teachers discipline Black students as contributors to disproportionality in ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions. The disparities found in the research related to race also existed in ODRs for subjective offenses. All teachers were operating with the same codes for disciplinary action; but the judgment of the nature and seriousness of the infraction, the way discipline was managed, and the consequences imposed were subject to interpretation. These findings also suggest that students behave more defiantly and less cooperatively with teachers they perceive as exhibiting disparate variations in management of student behavior and inconsistency in handling discipline.

The final aspect of teacher capacity that contributes to the disproportionality of ODRs is the lack of teacher-student positive relationships. Research suggests a positive teacher-student relationship is associated with positive behavioral and academic outcomes for students (Gehlbach et al., 2012). Research also affirms the theoretical construct of discipline as relational (Skiba & Williams, 2014). In an examination of how the connection a student has with the teacher in the classroom impacts achievement, Way (2011) found that students who perceive teacher-student relations as legitimate and positive are less disruptive. Todić et al. (2020) assert that students are not only aware of the events affecting them at school but are also able to read and understand their responses to these events. Perceptions of fairness by students also predict lower disruptions in the classroom. Black students often find relationships challenging and may question the fairness of responses to subjective offenses in the classroom leading to greater numbers of disciplinary actions. Ideally, teacher capacity should be associated with positive relationships between teachers and students in which the student perceives the teacher as respectful and the teacher is more likely to consider other approaches to resolving disciplinary issues than to immediately write an ODR, especially for subjective offenses (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008).

Effective relationships between students and teachers require teachers to acknowledge equitable classroom management and ways to address the inequities in the application of disciplinary action (Noguera, 2003). Schools with disproportionate numbers of academically unsuccessful students tend to be preoccupied with control and heavily focused on school and classroom rules. This emphasis on control creates negative impacts for relationships between students and teachers, especially for those students who are the subjects of disciplinary action. A part of effective teacher capacity is an understanding of the importance of building relationships

with each student and fostering a sense of belonging in the classroom. This is especially important to promote learning buy-in for Black students.

  Racial Stereotyping and Profiling. Skiba, Michael, et al. (2002) examined disproportionate discipline based on race and socioeconomic status in their search for the causes of disproportionate ODRs for Black students. They found that when infractions were subject to interpretation and when disciplinary action was at the discretion of teachers, Black males were more likely to receive ODRs than White students. Reinforcing the work of earlier researchers, Kinsler (2011) identified racial stereotyping and profiling on the part of teachers as causes of disproportionality in disciplinary actions including ODRs. Kinsler reported that teachers, consciously or unconsciously, believe Black males present more disciplinary problems than Black females, and Black males are more likely to misbehave than students of other races. In examining the influence of multi-level risk and protective factors on exclusionary school discipline outcomes for Black male students, Anyon et al. (2014) found that student racial background and school racial composition are enduring risks across key decision points of the school discipline process. Texas Appleseed (2007), a non-profit public interest law center, examined factors contributing to the rising numbers of school disciplinary actions and exclusions, and the disproportionality evident in those actions. They found that although schools varied considerably in the rates of ODRs, Black male students were generally significantly overrepresented in discretionary ODRs in comparison to their representation in the total school population. Their report further claims that the school a student attends is a greater predictor than the nature of the offense as to whether the student will receive an ODR.

  Racial stereotyping results from bias. Implicit biases refer to beliefs or prejudices that are learned through experiences and may inform subconscious or automatic decision-making

(McIntosh et al., 2009). Bias is another confirmed contributor of inequities in school disciplinary actions specific to the disproportionality of ODRs. A lack of agreement within a district or school as to what constitutes aggressive behavior can open the door to bias. These biases may then result in disproportionate ODRs and suspensions for Black males. Sugai and Horner (2002) concluded that teacher bias, implicit or otherwise, was a factor when teachers excluded Black students from the classroom. Many students subjected to disciplinary action understand that consequences for violating school rules can be severe, particularly as they grow older, but their behavior is more influenced by perceptions of bias against them than by potential punishments.

Gregory and Mosely (2004) furthered the research on teacher bias when they examined teachers' implicit theories about the causes of discipline problems and specifically examined how teachers consider race and culture in their theorizing. Gregory and Mosely determined that most teachers' theories about the causes of discipline problems are culturally and racially insensitive and that these theories contribute to disproportion in ODRs. In addition, they found that teachers' perceptions related to implications of the size of a school and to the neighborhood in which a school is located can impact discipline decisions within the classroom. They determined that a relationship exists between increases in school enrollment and higher rates of suspensions for Black males. Further, they determined that inequitable discipline practices are more common in schools with Black students and out-of-school suspensions are more frequent for schools in neighborhoods with high rates of crime.

Cultural Mismatch. Traditionally, culture has been thought of as a system of values and beliefs shared by a certain group of individuals; however, Walsh (2012) argues that the term "culture" is sometimes used synonymously with "race" when describing differences between groups. The term "culture" may serve to mute and blunt the very real differences in power that

are attendant to each demographic category of race and gender (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). As early as 2000, Townsend contended that the disproportion in disciplinary actions can be largely attributed to teachers' cultural mismatches or demographic differences with certain student populations. The issue of cultural mismatch is particularly important given that up to 90% of the teaching force in U.S. public schools is comprised of White middle-class females (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Skiba and Williams (2014) noted that the more diverse and representative the teaching force, the less instances of racial disproportionally in discipline will occur.

One aspect of cultural mismatch that contributes to the disproportionality of ODRs is teacher perceptions of Black students' cultural behavior styles. Monroe et al. (2005), examined teacher perceptions of Black students' behavior in the classroom to determine whether those perceptions contributed to the overrepresentation of Black males in exclusionary discipline. They drew several conclusions regarding teacher perceptions and student behavior and found that teachers frequently approached classes populated by Black students with strong emphasis on controlling student behaviors. Additionally, Monroe et al. (2005) determined that teachers devoted little effort to addressing behavioral concerns at early stages when non-punitive techniques are more likely to be effective. When teachers disciplined Black students, the teachers were likely to demonstrate more severe reactions and to misunderstand Black males' behavior during the mediation of discipline actions in the classroom. Neal et al. (2003) found that teachers perceived Black students with culturally related behavioral styles as lower in achievement, higher in aggression, and more likely to need special education services than students with standard mainstream behavioral styles. In 2006, Tyler et al. examined teachers' perceptions of classroom motivation and achievement of their students to determine culturally based behavior styles in the classroom. They concluded that teachers valued academic success, and that

achievement ratings were significantly higher for students displaying competitive and individualistic classroom behaviors. However, teachers perceived Black students as less likely to display these characteristics.

A second aspect of cultural mismatch that contributes to the disproportionality in ODRs is the teachers' perceptions of culture and lack of cultural responsiveness towards Black students. Obiakor (1999) found that teachers' perceptions of culture-related identities and their manifestations in classrooms were especially relevant to the academic achievement of Black students. Obiakor further found that teachers' perceptions and lack of cultural responsiveness can result in psychological discomfort and low achievement among students. Townsend (2000) examined the lack of cultural responsiveness between teachers and students who were regularly excluded from school and determined that the lack of responsiveness exists because of the combined effect of race and class differences between staff and students that contribute to the misinterpretation of student behavior by teachers. This misinterpretation often leads to the disproportionate removal of Black students from the learning environment and a widening achievement gap between Black students and their White peers.

A third aspect of cultural mismatch that contributes to the disproportionality of ODRs is lack of classroom structures to support student self-expression for Black students, specifically Black males. Axelman (2006) examined whether school and classroom structures put in place by schools were in direct conflict with efforts to understand, appreciate, and avoid misinterpreting verbal discourse between students. Axelman found that Black students, specifically Black males, believed that teachers viewed them as troublemakers, that they were targeted for disciplinary action, and that discipline was enforced differently for them when they attempted to be self-expressive. Axelman further concluded that teachers do not make the necessary attempts to

understand and appreciate Black students and to avoid misinterpreting verbal discourse between and among students. Teacher misinterpretation of attempts by Black males to be self-expressive contributes to the internal conflicts that students face in school and leads to disenfranchisement of and disengagement by Black students, especially males.

Drivers for Improvement

Nearly all recommendations in the literature for addressing the disproportionate numbers of Black males receiving ODRs, suspensions, and expulsions focus on actions at the district, school, or teacher level. Most recommendations suggest that schools need to raise awareness among school-based educators of the impact of teacher capacity and discipline policies and procedures (Gilliam et al., 2016; Gregory & Roberts, 2017). However, as detailed earlier in Section 1, ECSD has been proactive in attempting to address disproportionate discipline actions. The initiatives have included changes in school district discipline policies and the adoption of Restorative Practices as efforts to improve teachers' understanding and capacity to utilize behavioral goal setting with their students, help students take ownership of their behavior, and help students resolve disagreements. Therefore, the primary drivers addressing the problem of disproportionate numbers of ODRs for subjective offenses for Black males in middle school in ECSD are linked and the focus for consideration is not on the differences between the drivers, but on how effectively ECSD is implementing the two primary drivers: (1) increase teacher capacity and (2) revise school and district discipline policies and procedures (see the Driver Diagram in Figure 4).

The long-term aim in ECSD is to reduce the ODR rate for Black males across all grades. The intermediate aim of this proposed study is to inform implementation practices in middle

school (grades 6-8) in order to reduce by 10% ODRs for subjective offenses for Black male students by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Figure 4

Driver Diagram for Reducing Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for Black Males in Middle School in East Coast School District
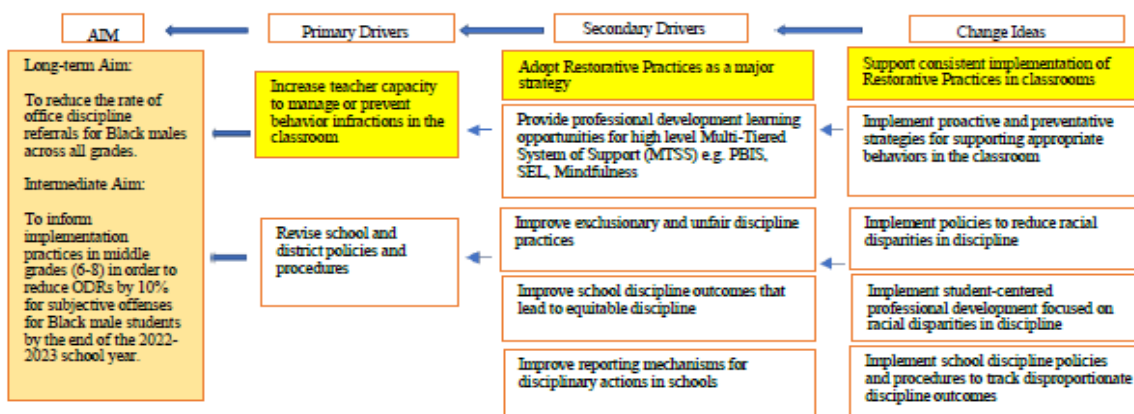
Primary Driver: Increase Teacher Capacity. The first primary driver, increase teacher capacity to understand the role of teacher decision-making in encouraging and maintaining student behavioral expectations in the classroom, is an essential component in the discipline process. Implementing changes in teacher capacity directly impacts the interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student and can determine how teachers will interpret and respond to student behavior (Crosnoe, 2000). Gregory, Clawson, et al. (2016) note the importance of providing opportunities for teachers to build relationships, promote understanding, and reduce the cultural divide with students. Positive teacher-student relationships among all racial groups are key to creating a supportive and equitable school classrooms that does not rely on punitive approaches to behavior (Gregory, Cornell, and Fan, 2012).

Secondary Driver: Revise School and District Discipline Policies and Procedures.

The second primary driver, revise school and district discipline policies and procedures began with the complaint lodged by the East Coast County Chapter of the NAACP in 2005. The intent of policies and regulations is to create and maintain environments that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive to ensure equitable access to effective and representative teachers for all students; but the policies do not provide specifics for how these goals will be met by schools. Furthermore, the policies propose solutions to address implicit biases and areas of inequity identified by ECSD such as differentiated professional development to build capacity for cultural responsiveness, but the proposed solutions are controversial. Although it is important to examine the extent to which these policies are being implemented, ECSD has established a policy review committee to monitor changes in district and state legislation. Furthermore, changes to these policies are generally formulated at the highest administrative levels of both the state and district and approved by the East Coast School District Board of Education.

Theory of Improvement

According to research, implementing Restorative Practices requires districts to provide an on-going commitment of adequate support to teachers and to create and sustain classroom climates that promote the practices (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Also, according to research, depending on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, it will take time to transform the attitudes and behavior of teachers toward students from ingrained punitive models to restorative classroom frameworks that encourage student engagement in maintaining behavioral expectations. Restorative Practices buy-in is described in the research as both a success and a challenge. This suggests that more training may be necessary to generate investment in the whole-school model of Restorative Practices (Morrison et al., 2005).

To date, ECSD has not focused on the implementation of the Restorative Practices as specified in the intervention. Understanding teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about Restorative Practices can better inform the efforts in ECSD to improve teachers' capacities to prevent negative behaviors in classrooms. Therefore, I intend to focus specifically on middle school teachers' and administrators' implementation of Restorative Practices. This focus will provide opportunities for ECSD to obtain information surrounding common themes expressed relative to full district buy-in of Restorative Practices by teachers and administrators, to professional development timelines, and to full whole-school Restorative Practices implementation. Understanding the role of teachers' decision-making as a component of teacher capacity, may help schools implement the Restorative Practices supports needed to impact, prevent, or manage subjective offenses in the classroom. Providing the appropriate supports has the potential to reduce the number of ODRs for subjective offenses. Figure 5 presents the theory of action change initiative for reducing disproportionality in ODRs for subjective offenses for Black males in middle school in ECSD.

Figure 5

Theory of Action Change Initiative

If middle school teachers' implementation of Restorative Practices is consistent with the intervention protocols,
Then middle school teachers' capacity for managing or preventing classroom behavior infractions will improve,
And office discipline referrals for Black males in middle school (grades 6-8) should decrease.

Implementation of Restorative Practices in ECSD

To facilitate implementation of Restorative Practices and to encourage increases in teacher capacity, ECSD has invested in resources and technology to further enhance professional development. Videos that support parameters and protocols when conducting virtual Responsive Circles are one example. Another is Mursion technology simulations of Restorative Practices for use during professional develop for teachers. The Mursion simulations are designed to isolate skills in areas such as behavior, pedagogy, or building rapport with students. These skills are needed by teachers for mastery during Restorative Practices Responsive Circles (Hudson et al., 2018). ECSD recognizes that the Mursion technology has the potential to be a part of the change initiative and to support teachers through the challenges of building stronger relationships with their students. One goal of the utilization of the Mursion technology is to facilitate teachers' self-reflection on how they interact with their students.

During the 2020-2021 school year, partly due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-school instruction, ECSD compared the policies of several large public-school districts around the country regarding virtual Restorative Practices Responsive Circles (circles to respond to/repair harm from subjective offenses). ECSD concluded that to ensure the fidelity of the implementation of Responsive Circles in the district, only trained teachers may conduct virtual Responsive Circles and only within the following parameters:

- Virtual Responsive Circles may be used to address student-to-student or student-to-teacher harm only.

- Teachers must complete three four-hour Restorative Practices professional development trainings before conducting virtual Responsive Circles.

- Teachers must view the "Parameters and Protocols: Differences Between In-person and Virtual Responsive Circles" video developed in 2020 by the Division of Multi-tiered Systems within the ECSD Office of Alternative Education. (Viewing of this and other ECSD videos regarding Responsive Circles is restricted to ECSD employees.)

- Teachers must obtain parent permission from the parent/guardian of each participant using the parent permission script for virtual Responsive Circles.

- Teachers must use the pre-circle interview script for virtual Responsive Circles with all student participants.

ECSD continues to struggle to provide professional development to teachers and professional staff. In addition, coordination of the program has been challenging, especially in the initial stages. Coordination of the pre-circle interview scripts and the responsive circle planning checklists requires updates for students with 504 Plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPS) to support students' accommodations. More importantly, when students are subject to potential disciplinary action because of an ODR for a subjective offense, the ECSD Restorative Practices model must support the following four elements:

1. a students' right to due process and what that means to teachers and administrators;

2. a plan for consideration of Restorative Practices before exclusionary consequences occur;

3. a plan for parent/guardian notification of Restorative Practices participation;

4. a plan of intervention by the Multi-tiered Systems of Support team to provide oversight for schools and to conduct the pre-circle interviews to determine whether Restorative Practices is recommended.

Determining how to improve the implementation of Restorative Practices first requires an investigation to uncover why teachers do or do not choose to implement Restorative Practices and to explore whether more frequent use of Restorative Practices strategies reduces ODRs. The Theory of Action Outcome Chain in Figure 6 illustrates how the proposed actions in this study will contribute to a better understanding of teacher implementation of Restorative Practices and assist the district to increase teacher capacity and reach the proposed aim.

Figure 6

Theory of Action Outcome Chain for Reducing Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for Black Males in Middle School in East Coast School District
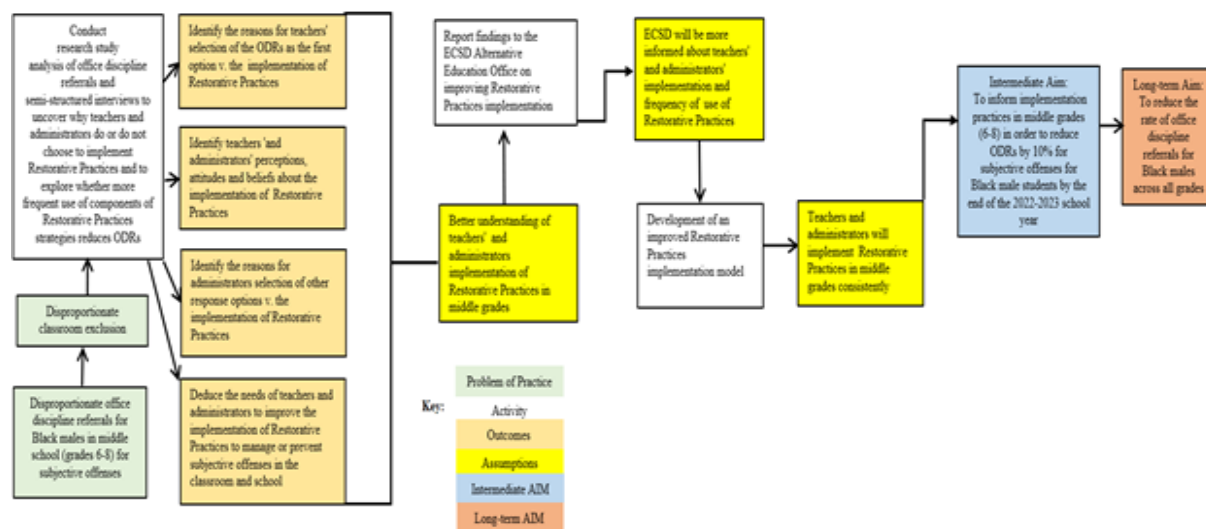
Implementation of Restorative Practices is an intensive process. Improving the implementation of Restorative Practices will improve teacher capacity to manage or prevent misconduct in the classroom (Gregory & Evans, 2020). If ECSD wants to reduce the disproportionate use of ODRs for subjective offenses, the emphasis must be on the implementation of Restorative Practices.

Section II: The Study

Purpose Statement

This sequential mixed methods study investigated to what extent middle school teachers in one school system are implementing Restorative Practices as an intervention to decrease office discipline referrals (ODRs) and explored middle school teachers' and administrators' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward Restorative Practices. The goal was to explore whether or not teachers' and administrators' decisions to implement Restorative Practices affected both the number of and disproportion in ODRs, especially for Black males. For the purpose of the study, making decisions regarding how to respond to subjective disciplinary occurrences is considered to be a key component of teacher capacity. Therefore, it is important to better understand how teachers address students' behaviors in the classroom.

The study was conducted in two designated middle schools which, like all middle schools in ECSD, encompass grades 6, 7, and 8. The study tested the theory that a better understanding of teachers' decision-making regarding subjective offenses may help schools better implement the Restorative Practices interventions needed to prevent disproportionate ODRs for subjective offenses by Black males. The intermediate aim of this study is to inform implementation practices in middle schools in order to reduce by 10% ODRs for subjective offenses for Black middle school male students by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The long-term aim in the district is to reduce the ODR rate for Black males across all grades.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the study:

1. What are the frequencies of use of unduplicated ODRS for subjective offenses among 6th-8th grade Black and White males at two designated middle schools and of reported use of Restorative Practices as a first-choice option for subjective offenses?

2. In what ways do middle school teachers and administrators characterize the support they receive from school-based administration and Central Office intended to help them make decisions regarding addressing subjective behavior offenses in their classrooms?

3. What opinions do teachers and administrators report about using the Restorative Practices intervention as a first-choice option to address subjective behavior rather than immediately issuing an ODR?

4. Which components of Restorative Practices do teachers report using to ensure students behave positively in the classroom?

Design

The study used a sequential mixed method design (quantitative-qualitative). The quantitative data were obtained through document analysis of a dataset accessed from the ECSD Web-based Data Collection System. This dataset reports all duplicated and unduplicated ODRs issued for subjective offenses throughout ECSD. Subjective offenses are broadly categorized as behavior considered to indicate disrespect, disruption, and/or insubordination. My analysis focused on data for unduplicated ODRs for 6th-8th grade Black and White males in two ECSD middle schools. The analysis of data obtained from the examination of unduplicated ODRs was used to address Research Question 1 and to inform the interview questions used during the qualitative portion of the study (see Appendix G).

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of semi-structured individual interviews conducted with 8 middle school teachers, 4 assistant principals, and 2 principals. (The original design of the study proposed interviewing 18 teachers to include 3 sixth grade teachers, 3 seventh grade teachers, 3 eighth grade teachers from each of the two schools; 4 assistant principals; and 2 principals for a total of 24 participants. However, no teacher from Middle

School B chose to participate in the study. I am uncertain as to whether the teachers in Middle School B declined the interviews due to workload, bargaining unit issues currently faced by the district's Board of Education, a lack of trust in the purpose and use of the research based on my position in the district, or other factors.) The analysis of information obtained from the semi-structured individual interviews was used to address Research Questions 2, 3, and 4.

In education, mixed methods research has developed rapidly over the last few decades as a methodology with a recognized name and distinct identity (Denscombe, 2008). The basic premise of this methodology is that integration of two types of information, quantitative and qualitative, permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data and will expand and strengthen the study's conclusions (Creswell et al., 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006; Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). As a result, mixed methods research may add value and contribute to advancing research topics in education (Molina-Azorin & López-Gamero, 2016). Literature related to qualitative research such as the interviews conducted during this study supports the efficacy of a small sample size (Baker, 2012; Morse, 2000). Morse specifically argues that the more useable data that are collected from each person, the fewer participants are needed.

Study Sites

The data and interview participants from this study came from two diverse, comprehensive middle schools (grades, 6, 7, and 8) located in a small city on the east coast of the United States. For this study, the schools are designated Middle School A and Middle School B. Both schools have been identified by MSDE as schools with disproportionate school discipline (Risk Ratio and State Comparison values of 3.0 or greater) including disproportionate ODRs and suspensions for Black students, specifically, Black males. Table 10 compares characteristics of the two schools.

Table 10

Characteristics of Middle School A and Middle School B, School Year 2020-2021

Feature	Middle School A	Middle School B
Enrollment	659	1044
Gender %	23% Black males/females 39% White males/females 31% Hispanic males/females The categories for American Indian, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races contained no male or female students, or fewer than 10 students in the group category, or the percentage for the student group category was either ≤5 or ≥95 and the corresponding counts had been suppressed.	28% Black males/females 22% White males/females 47% Hispanic males/females The categories for American Indian, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races contained no male or female students, or fewer than 10 students in the group category, or the percentage for the student group category was either ≤5 or ≥95 and the corresponding counts had been suppressed.
Teachers	70	91
Administrators	1 Principal 3 Assistant Principals	1 Principal 3 Assistant Principals

Sources: Maryland State Department of Education (2020); Office of Student Data (2021).

Interview Participants

A total of 8 teachers, 4 assistant principals, and 2 principals participated in the interviews. In Middle School A, interview participants included 2 sixth grade teachers, 3 seventh grade teachers, 3 eighth grade teachers, 2 assistant principals, and 1 principal. (One sixth grade teacher scheduled an interview, but subsequently declined to participate prior to the interview date.) In Middle School B, the interview participants consisted of 2 assistant principals and 1 principal. No teachers from Middle School B volunteered to participate in the interviews.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria. All participants were working at the designated district middle schools at the time of this study. Participants were limited to

those who have received Restorative Practices Training A; A and B; or A, B, and C. The criteria were included in the recruitment email and individuals were asked to highlight the criteria that applied to them (see Appendix C). The characteristics of those who were selected for the individual interviews are detailed in Table 11.

Table 11

Individual Interview Participant Characteristics for Middle School A and Middle School B

	Participants	**Years of Teaching Experience**	**Years of Administrative Experience**	**Restorative Practices Training**
Middle School A	6th Grade Teachers 2/3	8, 10		A and B
	7th Grade Teachers 3/3	3, 9, 12		A and B
	8th Grade Teachers 3/3	4, 13, 15		A and B
	Assistant Principals 2/2		3, 7	A, B, and C
	Principal 1/1		8	A, B, and C
Middle School B	Assistant Principals 2/2		1, 4	A, B, and C
	Principal 1/1		9	A, B, and C

Recruitment of participants began with an invitation email from me to the principals at the designated middle schools. The email noted that the research was approved by the UMCP Institutional Review Board (IRB) and by the district (See Appendix A). As a follow up to the invitation email, I met with the two middle school principals to request permission to conduct research with them and their faculty. During the meeting with each principal, I described the study's purpose and methods, detailed the proposed participant characteristics, and shared with the principals that the information collected was for my dissertation and the identity of all interview participants was protected to the maximum extent possible.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I sent the principals a follow up email (see Appendix B) and asked them to forward a recruitment email to all of their assistant principals and all 6th-8th grade classroom teachers in the school to recruit participation (see Appendix C). Once the two principals approved the request to conduct the study, they completed their consent forms and provided a date and time for interviews within the date range of October 06 through October 20, 2021.

The recruitment email for assistant principals and teachers described the study's purpose and method and detailed the proposed participant characteristics. The email noted that the research was approved by the UMCP IRB and by the district. Recipients were informed that participation was voluntary, and they would not be compensated for their participation. I shared that the information collected was for my dissertation, and that their identity would be protected. The recruitment email indicated that qualified participants would be selected on a first-come, first-served basis as responses were received.

By October 8, 2021, 9 teachers, 2 assistant principals, and the principal at Middle School A replied positively. Once I determined that these participants from Middle School A met the eligibility criteria, the recruitment in Middle School A was completed. By October 15, 2021, I had received 5 additional responses for participation from Middle School A. These responses were declined because I had completed recruitment. I sent a thank you email to individuals who were not selected for the study (see Appendix F).

In Middle School B, the principal and 2 assistant principals responded positively, but I received no response from teachers. On October 22, 2021, I discussed recruitment with the principal who resent the recruitment email to all 6th-8th grade classroom teachers. Again, no classroom teacher from Middle School B volunteered. After six additional requests to teachers

for voluntary participation were sent between late October and December 08, 2021 (see

Appendix E), the recruitment for 6th -8th grade teachers in Middle School B ceased in early

December 2021.

Once all participants were selected, they were sent a selection email and consent form

(see Appendix D). Participants were able to view the consent form approved by the UMCP IRB

(see Appendix J) and electronically sign and return the form. The email asked participants to

identify the following by highlighting one answer in each category: grade level taught; years of

teaching experience categorized as 1-3 years, 3-5 years, and 5 or more years; and current level of

Restorative Practices training: A; A and B; or A, B, and C. Participants were asked to return the

signed consent form and the email with highlighted responses to the questions by October 22,

2021. Interviews were conducted between October 25 and November 12, 2021, with 8 teachers,

2 assistant principals, and the principal at Middle School A and with 2 assistant principals and

the principal at Middle School B.

Office Discipline Referral Data

To address Research Question 1, I obtained ODR information from the ECSD Office of

Student Data using the MSDE required Web-based Data Collection System for the district,

which is the internet-based application system used to manage various data collections. From the

student data source, I collected and reviewed duplicated and unduplicated ODRs for subjective

offenses related to MSDE Code 701, disrespect and insubordination, and Code 704, disruption,

issued in two designated middle schools in the district during school years 2017-2018 and 2018-

2019. As described in Section 1, the district *Student Handbook, Code of Student Conduct* (Office

of Safe and Orderly Schools, 2021) identifies disrespect, disruption, and insubordination as

Level 1 and Level 2 subjective offenses. (Note: School years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 were the

most recent years of full in-person instruction. Statistics for school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were affected by changes in the delivery of instruction due to state and district responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and by pandemic recovery efforts.)

The study focused only on unduplicated ODRs for Level 1 and Level 2 subjective offenses because 6th-8th grade Black and White males would only be counted once in the calculation for violation of codes 701 and 704. Furthermore, chronically disruptive students with duplicate ODRs would not be considered for Restorative Practices intervention. From the student data source, I obtained the following descriptive information for each unduplicated ODR. All of the following are entered into the database as text:

- race, gender, and grade of the offender;

- location of the ODR (i.e., classroom, hallways, cafeteria);

- reasons, circumstances, and characteristics of the subjective offenses documented for each of the ODRs (e.g., student to student conflict, student to adult conflict);

- offense type (i.e., disrespect, disruption, and insubordination);

- use of the ODR as a first choice option;

- use of Restorative Practices as a first choice option;

- use of other disciplinary response options (i.e., Decision Making room, detention, In-School Intervention); and

- imposition of MSDE code 910, Out-of-School Suspension, following the issuance of the ODR.

Interviews

The second source of information used in the study came from the individual semi-structured interviews. Formal, informal, and key informant interviewing are some of the most

pervasive, adaptable, and valuable procedures for gathering evaluative information from administrators, coordinators, and teachers (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009) suggest that individual interviews such as those conducted during this study effectively solicit extensive descriptions of an individual's experiences with a specific phenomenon. Interviews generally are semi-structured rather than structured, fluid rather than rigid (Yin, 2009). Research indicates that there are several potential benefits of interviews including an increased sense of participant freedom, willingness to disclose perspectives related to sensitive issues, and a decreased sense of power structure between participants and the researcher (Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007).

Through the interviews, I collected in-depth information on how participants characterize the support they receive from Central Office and school-based administration; how they value Restorative Practices as an intervention; how, following a subjective behavior infraction, they make the choice between using the ODR as a first-choice option or implementing Restorative Practices; and how they use any strategies or components of Restorative Practices to encourage students to behave positively. This information helped me to better understand and explore participants' opinions about why middle school teachers choose to implement or not to implement Restorative Practices.

The information/data collected from the interviews was planned and structured. Information was gathered using interview questions outlined in the interview protocol I developed (see Appendix H). The interview protocol was the same for the teachers, the assistant principals, and the principals.

I designed the interviews to ask different types of questions including descriptive, structural, and explanatory. A descriptive question is one that asks the participant to recount or

depict a concrete phenomenon. An example of this type of question might be "What discipline response options do you frequently find to be most beneficial to you in your classroom?" in alignment with Research Question 1. A structural or explanatory question seeks an explanation of a situation, concept, or idea that might be familiar to the participant such as "How were you informed of resources and professional development training related to implementing Restorative Practices?" in alignment with Research Question 2; and "What are factors or limitations that lead to your decision not to select Restorative Practices as a first-choice option for handling subjective behavioral infractions?" in alignment with Research Question 3. Other explanatory questions I asked included "How do you perceive Restorative Practices as an intervention for reducing subjective behavioral infractions in the classroom or the school?" in alignment with Research Question 4.

Participants were informed that I would be utilizing an interview protocol that would serve as a guide for the purpose of capturing in detail their responses to the interview questions (see Appendix H). Participants also were informed of confidentiality norms. Prior to the interviews, participants were introduced to the interviewer and were provided with a review of the study background.

For the semi-structured individual interviews, my interview protocol contained 15 questions. Questions 1-4 gathered participant demographic information about their teaching/administration career and experience in the district. Questions 5-8 gathered information about the participants' use of frequently selected specific discipline response options; professional development training related to Restorative Practices implementation; perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the effectiveness of Restorative Practices for reducing subjective offenses; and limitations that influence the selection of Restorative Practices as a first-choice

option. Questions 9-13 focused on participants' expectations about the implementation of Restorative Practices in their classroom or school; responsibilities regarding Restorative Practices; relationships with students and staff; and perspectives regarding district strategies for handling discipline and challenging behavior management issues. Questions 14-15 provided participants opportunities to provide further information about Restorative Practices and to pose questions for the interviewer.

Methods and Procedures

Office Discipline Referral

Following approval of the study from the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) IRB (see Appendix I) and the ECSD (see Appendix K), I requested the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 ODR data files from the Office of Student Data. The Office of Student Data provided Microsoft excel files that contained duplicated and unduplicated ODRs. Unduplicated ODRs are addressed using Tier I and Tier II interventions and responses. The primary focus of Tier I and Tier II interventions is the use of proactive measures such as those advocated in Restorative Practices to foster a positive learning environment and integrate productive conflict resolution processes. These Tier I and Tier II proactive measures may include Restorative Practices whole-school circles, daily classroom circle discussions, individual conferences, and mediation. Other proactive measures that may be used as first-choice options include mindfulness, social emotional learning programs, constructive communication techniques for handling subjective offenses, and practices to strengthen relationships throughout the classroom. Duplicated ODRs are considered chronic and extreme behavior for subjective offenses as outlined in the district's Code of Conduct. That level of behavior requires Tier III interventions or disciplinary response options that may include In-School Suspension, Saturday School, or Out-of-School Suspension.

Restorative Practices, a major focus of this study, is not a response option with duplicate ODRs. Therefore, duplicated ODRs were removed from the dataset and were not considered for this study.

Data were examined for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses, MSDE codes 701, disrespect and insubordination, and 704, disruption, during school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 for Middle School A and Middle School B. School year 2017-2018 serves as the baseline because this was Year 1 of implementation of Restorative Practices in Middle School A and Middle School B. School year 2018-2019 was Year 2 of implementation for those schools and the transition year during which Restorative Practices was fully implemented throughout the district. The two years of unduplicated ODR data for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were not considered for the study because they were affected by changes in the delivery of instruction and in the implementation of Restorative Practices due to state and district responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To protect anonymity, I removed all individual identifying information (school, student name, student identification number, teacher who referred, and administrator). The unduplicated ODR discipline files were prepared for analysis utilizing pivot tables. This process required that I enter the total number of unduplicated ODRs into a table of rows and columns; sort the unduplicated ODR data by a specific attribute (e.g., total number of ODRs as a first-choice option for subjective offenses); identify the location of the ODRs; calculate the total number of ODRs issued to 6th-8th grade Black and White middle school males; and calculate the frequency of use of Restorative Practices and other disciplinary response options in Middle School A and Middle School B for school years 2017-2019. Table 12 shows a sample of the 2017-2018 Microsoft Excel data file for unduplicated ODRs.

Table 12

Sample Microsoft Excel Data File for Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals, School Year

2017-2018

GRADE	GENDER	RACE	EVENT/CONCERN CATEGORY	EVENT/CONCERN	TIME	LOCATION	REFERRED BY	ADMINISTRATOR	SUSP DAYS	1ST ACTION
8	M	White	Disrespect/Insubordination/Disruption	Chronic Disrupt Class/School	12:30	Classroom				In-School Intervention
7	M	White	Disrespect/Insubordination/Disruption	Disrespect Toward Others	09:00	Classroom				Detention
6	M	White	Disrespect/Insubordination/Disruption	Chronic Disrupt Class/School	11:35	Classroom				Phone Call to Parent/Guardian
6	M	White	Disrespect/Insubordination/Disruption	Disrespect Toward Others	11:56	Classroom				Detention
6	M	White	Disrespect/Insubordination/Disruption	Disrespect Toward Others	10:45	Classroom				Detention

Note: Reprinted from Office of Student Data (2018).

It is important to note that I have no influence on the categories of the ODR, the instances of

when the data was gathered, or the procedures for handling ODR data and encoding it into the

MSDE required Web-based Data Collection System.

Interview Procedures

Once the consent form and selection email indicating willingness to participate was

received from each participant, I contacted the individual to schedule an interview. During the

scheduling of the interview, I requested that individuals review materials provided during their

district Restorative Practices training. Participants who received only Training A were asked to

review the *Lifesavers for Common Community Building Circles Challenges* handout. Participants

who received Training A and B were asked to review the *Lifesavers* handout; to reference either

the *Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools* (Amstutz, 2005) or *The Little Book of*

Restorative Justice in Education (Evans & Vaandering, 2016); and to review an FAQ about

Restorative Practices. Participants who received Training A. B, and C were asked to review all

the above as well as the *Responsive Circles: Evaluating Appropriateness and Planning Checklist*

for deciding whether a responsive circle is appropriate and the *Pre-Circle Interview Script*. If participants requested more information on Restorative Practices before the interview, I referred them to the International Institute for Restorative Practices website *iirp.edu* for further details on the scope of the Restorative Practices outlined in the UMCP email.

Interviews were conducted using the secure Zoom communication and collaboration tool for video conferencing. All participants had access to a district issued laptop and internet connection. Before beginning each interview, I reviewed the session's interview protocols and procedures and highlighted the research questions and confidentiality guarantee. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions before the interviews began. I then asked the participant for permission to record the interview using the secure Zoom platform. With permission from the participant, I recorded each interview after explaining to the participant that the audio tapes would be destroyed once the responses were thoroughly analyzed. This software recorded each interview and automatically generated a verbatim transcript. If the participant indicated that they preferred not to be recorded during the interview, I took written notes of that participant's responses. I did not have any technical or logistical issues during any of the interviews and none of the participants lost internet connection.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) remind researchers that data collection from interviews begins with the beginning of the first interview. The individual interviews were semi-structured since I had specific questions as noted on the interview protocol that needed to be asked sequentially, but I also asked unplanned follow-up questions depending on the participant's responses (see Appendix H). Asking the same questions to each participant allowed me to compare responses, while the flexibility of being able to ask unplanned informal questions allowed me to uncover deeper meanings behind the participant's responses.

I began the interview with questions such as "How many years have you been a teacher or administrator?", "How many years have you been at this school?", "What subject area(s) do you teach or oversee?", and "What grade levels do you teach or oversee?". I then explained to each participant that I was going to ask a series of questions to learn a bit more about their past and present experiences and some situations they may have encountered regarding their role in handling discipline and implementing Restorative Practices. I asked each participant, "What discipline response options do you frequently find to be most beneficial to you in your classroom or administrative role?", "How were you informed of resources and professional development training related to implementing Restorative Practices?", "How do you perceive Restorative Practices as an intervention for reducing subjective behavioral infractions?", and "What are factors or limitations that influence your decision to select or not to select Restorative Practices as the first-choice option when handling subjective behavioral infractions?"

Next, I explained to the participant that I was going to ask a few questions about their overall expectation of the implementation of Restorative Practices in their classroom or school. Participants were asked, "How would you describe your role in implementing Restorative Practices in your classroom or your school?', "What are your identified responsibilities to the Restorative Practices intervention in your school?", "What types of relationships do you have with your students and with other teachers, assistant principals, or the principal?", "What is your general perspective on district strategies for handling discipline?", and "What would you describe as the most challenging behavior management issue in your classroom or school?"

To conclude the interview and provide the participant with opportunities to ask questions of the interviewer, I asked each participant, "Do you have any further comments you'd like to

share regarding Restorative Practices?" and "Do you have any questions for me?" Each interview took approximately 60 minutes as anticipated.

Analyses

Quantitative

As noted above, I limited my examination and analysis only to the MSDE offense codes 701, disrespect and insubordination, and 704, disruption, assigned to each subjective offense incident in Middle Schools A and B. I also limited my analysis by grade level, student race (Black and White), and gender (Male). For each of the two designated middle schools, I used pivot tables to calculate the frequencies for each of the ODR data points as described earlier. If an ODR had multiple entries for certain actions, e.g., Restorative Practices selection or other disciplinary action by the administrator, I then calculated the frequencies for each of the data items.

Qualitative

Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) caution researchers that their analysis needs to provide an independent, unbiased assessment. Due to my close connection to the district, I am particularly cognizant of the need to avoid personal bias. The goal has been, as Berger (2015) suggests, to find the appropriate balance between involvement and detachment with the data. My process for analyzing the data from the interviews was designed to be as unbiased as possible. The interview data was analyzed and summarized to ensure that participants' names were not revealed in the dissertation or in any subsequent documents or reports. The information from the semi-structured individual interviews was analyzed, sorted into themes, and utilized to address Research Questions 2, 3, and 4.

Analysis began after I transcribed the information into Word documents using the Zoom communication and collaboration tool. I used the thematic analysis strategy suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) to label each participant's response to each question with a single word or short phrase that reflected the content of that response. Then I collected the labels from all the interviews and sorted them into groups looking for consistencies, inconsistencies, and patterns that indicated emerging themes. From the list of themes, I initially selected those that seemed to be relevant to my purpose and research questions. Each of these themes was given a unique identification number. Relevant themes that emerged during the first level of analysis included characteristics of Restorative Practices; effectiveness of the professional development training; needs of teachers, assistant principals, and principals; and strengths and weaknesses of Restorative Practices. These themes and examples of supporting participant responses are reported in Table 13.

Table 13

First Level Qualitative Analysis of Emerging Themes

Themes	Sample Participant Responses
Characteristics of Restorative Practices	"Restorative Practices is a process that permits schools to build cultures of respect and climates of trust amongst students."
Effectiveness of the professional development training	"The district provides professional development opportunities in Unified Talent for Restorative Practices that improves my knowledge of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support."
Needs of teachers' assistant principals, and principals	"Families must know about the process, and it is very difficult at times to get them to buy in to Restorative Practices. The student has to want to participate."
Strengths and weaknesses of Restorative Practices	Strength "Restorative Practices helps students to move forward in a positive direction, rather than just compliance." Weakness "Restorative Practices does not support yellow and red zone students."

After the analysis of the level 1 themes, I re-evaluated each interview transcript to review the labels assigned and to confirm that no themes had been missed or mislabeled. The second review of the interview transcripts uncovered level 2 themes relevant to research questions 2-4. I highlighted additional comments for each interview transcript that specifically related to themes I identified as relevant to this inquiry. I created a file for each of the level 2 emergent themes and recorded the related comments together in that file. For example, all comments regarding district support were collected into one file. Next, I sorted the comments under each theme so that similar comments were grouped together.

Major level 2 themes were identified based on the frequency of appearance in participant responses. The data analysis resulted in the identification of nine major themes related to

Restorative Practices intervention and supports: (1) buy-in from students, teachers, and administrators; (2) discipline response options; (3) district handling of subjective discipline; (4) district support; (5) lack of support; (6) role with implementation; (7) identified responsibilities; (8) limitations; and (9) perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Themes that emerged during the second level of qualitative analysis and examples of participant responses supporting those themes are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Second Level Qualitative Analysis of Emerging Themes

Themes	Sample Participant Responses
Buy-In	"Restorative Practices can work if students and teachers are on the same page."
Discipline Response Options	"We utilize mediation and I embed the five Restorative Practices questions."
District Handling of Subjective Discipline	"I was skeptical, however, now I see the purpose, effectiveness; and I know the more we do, the more we infuse Restorative Practices, it can be a valuable and beneficial tool for our students and school."
District Support	"The district provides Restorative Practices check-ins at my school."
Lack of Support	"The district must provide a Code of Conduct with clear lines and boundaries to include confidence building, conflict management, social skills, and more social emotional support that is infused with components of Restorative Practices."
Role with Implementation	"In order to promote and establish good relationships fostered by Restorative Practices and address concerns from my students and staff, I must be available to my staff and my students through weekly check-ins, school-wide town halls, emails, and in-person one-on-one conversations."
Identified Responsibilities	"I am required to lead teachers and professional school counselors to make sure they implement Restorative Practices in the classroom and school."
Limitations	"The systemic discipline ladder (see Appendix P) provided by the district is punitive and it offers no opportunities for student reengagement."
Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs	"Restorative Practices is the most beneficial tool to manage subjective behavior in the moment, specifically, the five Restorative Practices questions, and Restorative Practices A and B are huge, it provides proactive pieces and community building."

Protection of Human Subjects

The purpose of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to ensure the protection of human subjects. All subjects were required to complete the IRB consent form when they agreed to participate in the study. I made every effort to protect the identities of the participants and the designated schools. In all reporting of data, individual names were removed. For analysis and discussion, the unduplicated ODR datasets were imported from the ECSD Web-based Data Collection System to a secure Microsoft excel spreadsheet. All ODR datasets were filtered to a secure electronic file in a separate password-protected folder on a secured desktop computer, were kept confidential, and were reported in an aggregate format only. ECSD does not permit data input to include participant identifiers in the Web-based Data Collection system. Unduplicated ODR data did not include student identification numbers or state identification numbers.

The identity of participants was masked throughout the study. Prior to interviews, all participants were informed that their identity would not be revealed during the study or in the reporting of results. Throughout the study, participants were referred to using a randomized code number rather than a name. An identification key was used to link the data to each participant's code number. Only I had access to the identification key. The school district was referred to as East Coast School District and the schools were referred to only as Middle School A and Middle School B. The use of Zoom as a remote communication tool required that I create an account on the secured desktop. I entered the UMCP email address and followed the instructions to create a protected password in the Zoom platform.

Section III: Results, Implications, and Recommendations

Context for Results

Middle School A and Middle School B have a history of disproportionality in ODRs for Black males. This disparity became more evident in school year 2017-2018 when the ECSD Board of Education approved a redistricting plan that reassigned approximately 192 minority students from Middle School A to Middle School B. The redistricting was part of a plan to alleviate overcrowding at some elementary schools within the same cluster in the district. According to ECSD Board officials Middle School B was under-enrolled and could handle additional students. Redistricting would ease over-enrollment in Middle School A, and place both schools at 62-65% of Maryland State Capacity.

Middle School A and Middle School B are approximately 1.6 miles apart and serve students from neighboring communities. The redistricting plan shifted certain communities from one school to the other. However, the redistricting caused Middle School B to become more racially and ethnically diverse, increasing Black and Hispanic enrollment by 8%, while Middle School A became more homogenous as its Black and Hispanic enrollment declined and its White enrollment increased by 11% as reported on the ECSD website.

The change in the enrollment also increased the number of students at Middle School B who are identified as economically disadvantaged. The Middle School B school-based budget allocation for faculty and staff was adjusted to account for increased enrollment; however, despite the increase in the minority student population, the faculty and staff remain mostly White and female. In addition, the increase in school enrollment in Middle School B had an adverse impact on school climate and safety.

Results, Implications, and Recommendations Related to Unduplicated ODRs for Subjective Offenses

Comparisons of Unduplicated ODRs in Middle School A and Middle School B

During the two school years 2017-2019, 1,182 duplicated and unduplicated ODRs were written for subjective offenses for 6th-8th grade Black and White males in the two target middle schools. (All quantitative data relating to the use of ODRs in ECSD during school years 2017-2019 was gathered from Office of Student Data, 2018, 2019.) Of the 1,182 ODRs, 119 (10%) were unduplicated ODRs for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. Data for these 119 unduplicated ODRs were computed, disaggregated, categorized, and analyzed.

In 2017-2018, 22 unduplicated ODRs were written for subjective offenses in Middle School A for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. In the same year, 40 unduplicated ODRs were written in Middle School B for subjective offenses for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. Table 15 illustrates the total number of unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses written for 6th-8th grade Black and White Males in Middle School A and Middle School B in school year 2017-2018.

Table 15

Total Number of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) Written for Subjective Offenses for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School A and Middle School B, School Year 2017-2018

Feature	Middle School A 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males	Middle School B 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males
Total Number of Unduplicated ODRs	22	40

Source: Office of Student Data (2018).

In 2018-2019, 9 unduplicated ODRs were written for subjective offenses in Middle School A for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. In the same year, 48 unduplicated ODRs were written in Middle School B for subjective offenses for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. For each of the two school years under study, a percentage was derived for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for Black and White males by calculating the total number of unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses written by teachers for Black and White males compared with the total number of unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses written by teachers for Black and White males during each year for each middle school. Table 16 illustrates the total number of unduplicated ODRs written for 6th-8th grade Black and White Males in Middle School A and Middle School B in school year 2018-2019.

Table 16

Total Number of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) Written for Subjective Offenses for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School A and Middle School B, School Year 2018-2019

Feature	Middle School A	Middle School B
Total Number of Unduplicated ODRs	9	48

Source: Office of Student Data (2019).

In school year 2017-2018, in Middle School A, the 121 Black males represented 14.2% of the total enrollment of 851 students. They received 82% of the unduplicated ODRs. The 90 White males represented 10.5% of the total enrollment and received 18% of the unduplicated ODRs. In Middle School B, the 111 Black males represented 14.8% of the total enrollment of 749 students. They received 88% of the unduplicated ODRs. The 132 White males represented

17.6% of the total enrollment and received 12% of the unduplicated ODRs for subjective

offenses.

For school year 2018-2019, in Middle School A, the 60 Black males represented 9.14%

of the total school enrollment of 656 students. They received 78% of the unduplicated ODRs.

The 95 White males represented 14.4% of the total school enrollment and received 22% of the

unduplicated ODRs. In Middle School B, the 159 Black males represented 16% of the total

enrollment of 987 students. They received 92% of the unduplicated ODRs for subjective

offenses. The 128 White males represented 12.9% of the total school enrollment and received

8% of the unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses. When the percentages of ODRs issued

during the two years under study are examined, for both schools, for both years, the percentages

indicate disproportion in the number of ODRs written for Black males compared to those written

for White males (see Table 17).

Table 17

Percent of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) Issued for Subjective Offenses to

6th-8th Grade Black and White Males During the Restorative Practices Year 1 Baseline Period

(2017-2018) and the Restorative Practices Implementation Year 2 (2018-2019) for Middle

School A and Middle School B
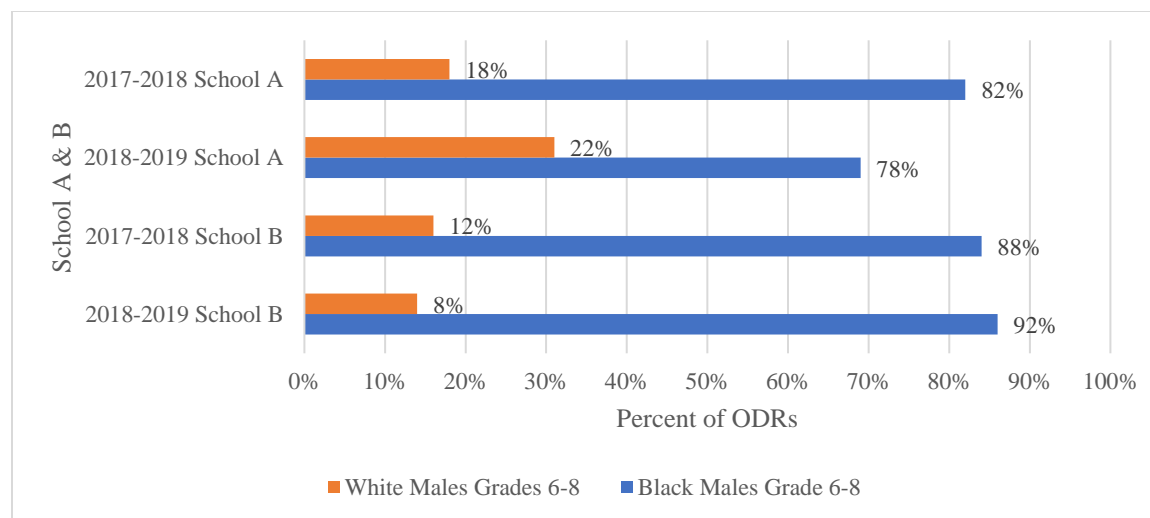
Source: Office of Student Data (2018), (2019).

Proportional Comparison of Unduplicated ODRs, 2017-2019. For Middle School A, an examination of the unduplicated ODRs written by a teacher for subjective offenses from 2017-2018 demonstrates that 6th-8th grade Black males received 64% more ODRs for subjective offenses than 6th-8th grade White males; and from 2018-2019, 6th-8th grade Black males received 56% more ODRs for subjective offenses than 6th-8th grade White males. Table 18 illustrates the proportional comparison of unduplicated ODRs by race, gender, and grade for school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 for Middle School A.

Table 18

Proportional Comparison of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) by Race, Gender,

and Grade for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School A for School Years 2017-

2018 and 2018-2019

Middle School A School Year	% ODRs 6th-8th Grade Black Males	% ODRs 6th-8th Grade White Males	ODR Comparison
2017-2018	82%	18%	64%
2018-2019	78%	22%	56%

Source: Office of Student Data (2018), (2019).

Disproportion is also evident for Middle School B. In 2017-2018, 6th-8th grade Black

males received 76% more unduplicated ODRs written by the teacher for subjective offenses than

6th-8th grade White males; and in 2018-2019, 6th-8th grade Black males received 84% more

unduplicated ODRs written by the teacher for subjective offenses than 6th-8th grade White males.

Table 19 illustrates the proportional comparison of unduplicated ODRs by race, gender, and

grade for school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 for Middle School B.

Table 19

Proportional Comparison of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) by Race, Gender,

and Grade for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School B for School Years 2017-

2018 and 2018-2019

Middle School B School Year	% ODRs 6th-8th Grade Black Males	% ODRs 6th-8th Grade White Males	ODR Comparison
2017-2018	88%	12%	76%
2018-2019	92%	8%	84%

Source: Office of Student Data (2018), (2019).

Comparisons Related to Research Question 1. Research Question 1 asks, "What are

the frequencies of use of unduplicated ODRS for subjective offenses among 6th-8th grade Black

and White males at two designated middle schools and of reported use of Restorative Practices

as a first-choice option for subjective offenses?"

Categorical Comparisons of Frequency of Use of Unduplicated ODRS and Frequency

of Use of Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options, 2017-2018. Review of the

2017-2018 data for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for Middle School A and Middle

School B indicates that all offenses occurred in the classroom. The reasons, circumstances, and

characteristics for these disciplinary incidents involved disrespect, insubordination, and/or

disruption occurring between the student and the teacher or between students.

When a disciplinary offense occurs in the classroom, the teacher makes the decision

whether to issue an ODR or choose another response option. In school year 2017-2018 in Middle

School A, the teachers chose the ODR as the first-choice disciplinary option for Black and White

males in 100% of cases. Restorative Practices was not implemented as a first-choice option by

any teacher in Middle School A. In Middle School B, the teachers also chose the ODR as the

first-choice disciplinary option for Black and White males in 100% of cases. No teacher in

Middle School B chose to implement Restorative Practices as a first-choice option. Table 20

illustrates these 2017-2018 results for the two target middle schools.

Table 20

Frequency of Use of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) Written by Teachers for Subjective

Offenses for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males by Restorative Practices First-Choice Option

and by Race, Gender, and Grade During the First Year of Restorative Practices Implementation

(2017-2018) for Middle School A and Middle School B

Race/ Gender	% ODR as First-Choice Option	% Restorative Practices as First-Choice Option	Total ODRs for 6th Grade	Total ODRs for 7th Grade	Total ODRs for 8th Grade	Total % of ODRs written by gender/ race
School A						
Black Males	100%	0	3	8	7	82%
White Males	100%	0	0	2	2	18%
School B						
Black Males	100%	0	12	14	9	88%
White Males	100%	0	3	1	1	12%

Source: Office of Student Data (2018).

Once the teacher issues an ODR, the student is excluded from the classroom and referred

to an administrator for further disciplinary action. In Middle School A, during school year 2017-

2018, administrators chose several other disciplinary response options for 6th-8th grade Black and

White males who had received an ODR. In some instances, the administrator imposed more than

one disciplinary response option for the student. Although administrators have Restorative

Practices as an intervention response option, and although they were not limited to only one

response option, no administrator chose to implement Restorative Practices. Table 21 illustrates

the frequency of use of intervention and other disciplinary response options by administrators in

Middle School A after 6th-8th grade Black and White males were issued an unduplicated ODR

during the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 21

Frequency of Use by Administrators of Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options

for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School A During the First Year of Restorative

Practices Implementation (2017-2018)

Middle School A Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options, School Year 2017-2018	6th-8th Grade Black Males	6th-8th Grade White Males
Restorative Practices	0	0
Detainment in Office	14%	0
In-School Intervention	50%	50%
Detention	28%	25%
Out-of-School Suspension	8%	0
Alternative Education Program	0	25%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Office of Student Data (2018).

In Middle School B, during school year 2017-2018, administrators also chose several

disciplinary response options for 6th-8th grade Black and White males who had received an ODR.

These options included some of the same options used by administrators in Middle School A as

well as several other options. In some instances, the administrator imposed more than one

disciplinary response option for the student. Administrators in Middle School B have Restorative

Practices as an intervention response option, but no administrator chose to implement

Restorative Practices. Table 22 illustrates the frequency of use of intervention and other

disciplinary response options by administrators in Middle School B following issuance of an

unduplicated ODR for 6th-8th grade Black and White males during the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 22

Frequency of Use by Administrators of Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School B During the First Year of Restorative Practices Implementation (2017-2018)

Middle School B Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options School Year 2017-2018	6th-8th Grade Black Males	6th-8th Grade White Males
Restorative Practices	0	0
Detainment in Office	6%	0
In-School Intervention	14%	20%
Detention	18%	60%
Out-of-School Suspension	4%	0
Parent Phone Call	14%	20%
Conference with Student	18%	0
Decision-Making Room	16%	0
Restitution	2%	0
Loss of Privileges	8%	0
Total	100%	100%

Source: Office of Student Data (2018).

   Categorical Comparisons of Frequency of Use of Unduplicated ODRS and Frequency of Use of Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options, 2018-2019. As was shown in the data for 2017-2018, the data for 2018-2019 for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for Middle School A and Middle School B also show that all offenses occurred in the classroom. Also as in 2017-2018, the reasons, circumstances, and characteristics for these disciplinary incidents involved disrespect, insubordination, and/or disruption occurring between the student and the teacher or between students.

   In school year 2018-2019, teachers in Middle School A did choose to implement Restorative Practices in some cases. Restorative Practices was chosen as a first-choice option in 57% of cases for Black males, 0% of cases for White males. Teachers chose to issue an ODR as the first-choice option in 43% of cases for Black males, 100% of cases for White males. In

Middle School B, teachers chose to issue an ODR as the first-choice disciplinary option for both Black and White males in 100% of cases. Restorative Practices was not implemented as a first-choice option by any teacher in Middle School B. Table 23 illustrates these 2018-2019 results for the two target middle schools.

Table 23

Frequency of Use of Unduplicated Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) Written by Teachers for Subjective Offenses for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males by Restorative Practices First-Choice Option and by Race, Gender, and Grade During the Second Year of Restorative Practices Implementation (2018-2019) for Middle School A and Middle School B

Race/ Gender	% ODR as First-Choice Option	% Restorative Practices as First-Choice Option	Total ODRs for 6th Grade	Total ODRs for 7th Grade	Total ODRs for 8th Grade	Total % of ODRs written by gender/ race
School A						
Black Males	43%	57%	0	4	3	78%
White Males	100%	0	0	1	1	22%
School B						
Black Males	100%	0	19	12	13	92%
White Males	100%	0	1	1	2	8%

Source: Office of Student Data (2019).

When a teacher issues an ODR, the student is referred to an administrator for further disciplinary action. During school year 2018-2019 in Middle School A, administrators chose several other disciplinary response options for 6th-8th grade Black and White males who had received an ODR, sometimes imposing more than one disciplinary response option for the student. Although administrators employed several disciplinary responses, for the 43% of ODRs issued for Black males, no administrator chose the option to implement Restorative Practices.

Table 24 compares the frequency of use of the intervention by teachers and of other disciplinary response options by administrators for Black and White males in Middle School A in 2018-2019.

Table 24

Frequency of Use of Intervention by Teachers and of Other Disciplinary Response Options by Administrators for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School A During the Second Year of Restorative Practices Implementation (2018-2019)

Middle School A Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options School Year 2018-2019	6th-8th Grade Black Males	6th-8th Grade White Males
Restorative Practices	57%	0
Detention	57%	0
Decision-Making Room	14%	0
In-School Intervention	14%	50%
Behavior Contract	15%	0
Saturday School	0	50%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Office of Student Data (2019).

In Middle School B, during school year 2018-2019, when 6th-8th grade Black and White males received an unduplicated ODR, administrators chose some of the same disciplinary response options used by administrators in Middle School A as well as other additional options. Even though in some instances administrators chose more than one response option for the student, no administrator chose the option to implement Restorative Practices. Table 25 compares the frequency of use of intervention and other disciplinary response options by administrators for Black and White males in Middle School B in 2018-2019.

Table 25

Frequency of Use by Administrators of Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options

for 6th-8th Grade Black and White Males in Middle School B During the Second Year of

Restorative Practices Implementation (2018-2019)

Middle School B Intervention and Other Disciplinary Response Options School Year 2018-2019	6th-8th Grade Black Males	6th-8th Grade White Males
Restorative Practices	0	0
Detention	18%	25%
Decision-Making Room	18%	25%
In-School Intervention	0	25%
Informal Mentoring	11%	0
Conference with Student	18%	25%
Out-of-School Suspension	18%	0
Total	100%	100%

Source: Office of Student Data (2019).

Analysis of Data Related to Unduplicated ODRs, 2017-2018

Middle School A. In 2017-2018, in Middle School A, Black males received 82% of the

unduplicated ODRs written for subjective offenses; White males received 18%. No ODRs were

issued for 6th grade White males. The disaggregated data show that 7th grade Black males had

higher numbers of ODRs than 6th and 8th grade Black males. When disciplinary response options

by teachers in Middle School A are disaggregated by race and grade, the data indicate that Black

males were more frequently assigned disciplinary removal from the classroom than White males.

For Black males, ODRs for subjective offenses were more likely to lead to suspension from

school. In action following the ODR, administrators chose MSDE code 910, Out-of-School

Suspension, only for Black males. White males were more often given school-based referrals and

supports facilitated by school-based management teams (e.g., referral to alternative education

programs).

Middle School B. In 2017-2018, in Middle School B Black males received 88% of the unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses; White males received 12%. The disaggregated data show that 6th and 7th grade Black males had higher numbers of ODRS than 8th grade Black males. When students were referred to the administrator following the ODR, administrators chose a wider variety of response options to intervene and mitigate the subjective behavior for Black males (i.e., conference with the student, Decision-Making Room, and loss of privileges) than for White males. However, administrators chose an MSDE code 910, Out-of-School Suspension, as an option only for Black males. No White males were suspended.

Analysis of Data Related to Unduplicated ODRs, 2018-2019

Middle School A. In 2018-2019, the second year of Restorative Practices implementation, in Middle School A, teachers selected the ODR as a first-choice response option for subjective offenses in the classroom 43% of the time for Black males. However, teachers selected Restorative Practices as a first-choice option for Black males 57% of the time. From 2017-2018 to 2018-2019, in Middle School A there was a 4% decrease in unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for Black males. This decrease seems to indicate that in Middle School A during this second year of implementation of Restorative Practices, the use of Restorative Practices did help to reduce the number of unduplicated ODRs for Black males. In 2018-2019, teachers selected the ODR as the first-choice option for White males 100% of the time, and there was a 4% increase in unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for White males. When students were sent to administrators following the issuance of an ODR, no administrator chose Restorative Practices as a response option and no students were suspended for subjective offenses.

Middle School B. In 2018-2019, teachers in Middle School B selected the ODR as the first-choice response option 100% of the time for Black and White males for subjective infractions in the classroom. Although Middle School B was also in the second year of Restorative Practices implementation, Restorative Practices was not selected as a first-choice option by teachers or as a response option by administrators. Although administrators did not choose Restorative Practices as a disciplinary response option, when students were sent to administrators following the issuance of an ODR, the administrators chose to include more Tier I and Tier II interventions such as In-School Intervention, Decision-Making Room, and parent conference for 6th-8th grade White males than for Black males. The lack of similar response options for 6th-8th grade White and Black males and the lack of implementation of Restorative Practices may have been factors in the 4% increase in unduplicated ODRs for Black males in Middle School B from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019. In that same time period, unduplicated ODRs for 6th-8th grade White males in Middle School B decreased by 4%.

Analysis of Disproportion in MSDE Code 910, Out-of-School Suspensions, 2017-2019

Both Middle School A and Middle School B have been identified by MSDE as having risk ratios and state comparison measures that exceed a value of 3.0 for suspensions of Black males. The unduplicated ODR data for both schools indicate that severe punitive measures were utilized disproportionately for Black males in both schools. Specifically, the 2017-2019 ODR data reveal disparity in the determination to impose Out-of-School Suspension following an ODR for subjective offenses.

In Middle School A and Middle School B, when a student is sent to an administrator following the issuance by the teacher of an unduplicated ODR for subjective offenses, Black males are more likely to receive an Out-of-School Suspension than White males. In school year

2017-2018, in Middle School A administrators chose Out-of-School Suspension as an option following an unduplicated ODR for a subjective offense in 8% of cases for 6th-8th grade Black males. No 6th-8th grade White males were suspended. In Middle School B administrators chose Out-of-School Suspension as an option following an unduplicated ODR for a subjective offense in 4% of cases for Black males, 0% for White males. In school year 2018-2019, in Middle School A, no 6th-8th grade Black or White males were suspended. However, in Middle School B use by administrators of Out-of-School Suspension as a disciplinary response option following an unduplicated ODR for a subjective offense increased by 14%. Administrators chose Out-of-School Suspension as an option in 18% of cases for Black males, 0% for White males.

The administrators' decisions in Middle School A in 2017-2018 and in Middle School B in both years to suspend only Black males for similar subjective offenses as those committed by White males suggest both disparity by race and gender and a lack of equity towards 6th-8th grade Black males. The actions taken by the administrators in discipline decisions worsen existing disparities between and consequences for 6th-8th grade Black and White males. The national literature on disproportion in suspensions confirms that 6th-8th grade Black males are negatively impacted academically, socially, and emotionally by such disparity (see Section I, Consequences, and Impact of Not Addressing the Problem).

Implications for Restorative Practices Implementation

Few direct implications for the use and effectiveness of Restorative Practices can be derived from the data regarding unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for Middle School A and Middle School B. In Middle School A, after implementation of Restorative Practices, suspensions decreased from 8% in the 2017-2018 school year to zero suspensions in 2018-2019. Although the research does not prove that Restorative Practices alone caused the decline in

suspensions, the findings suggest a potential relationship between the implementation of Restorative Practices at Middle School A and a reduction in the number of student suspensions. The findings also suggest that Restorative Practices may have improved the overall classroom climate and increased levels of respect between and among students and teachers in Middle School A.

Despite guidelines in Maryland law that school discipline shall be restorative and rehabilitative rather than punitive, and despite district efforts to train teachers and administrators in Restorative Practices, neither teachers nor administrators in Middle School B chose Restorative Practices as a disciplinary option in either of the first two years of implementation. Suspensions in Middle School B increased from 4% in school year 2017-2018 to 14% in 2018-2019. These findings raise several questions about the effectiveness of district professional development for Restorative Practices; the level of commitment of teachers and administrators to Restorative Practices intervention; the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of teachers and administrators regarding Restorative Practices; and the implicit bias among teachers and administrators.

Implications for Analysis of Interview Responses Suggested by ODR Data Analysis

The results of the review of the ODR data from 2017-2019 for Middle Schools A and B seem to generate more questions than conclusions. The unduplicated ODR data did suggest several questions that helped guide my review and analysis of the interview responses. These questions included among others

- Why did no teacher choose to use Restorative Practices during the first year of implementation, 2017-2018?

- When teachers did choose to use Restorative Practices, why only with Black students, not White students?

- What factors may have affected the difference in use of Restorative Practices by teachers in Middle School A and teachers in Middle School B during Year 2 of implementation?

- Why did no administrator choose to implement Restorative Practices in either year?

- Since they had so many other response options, how did administrators decide which response option(s) to use?

- How do issues of race and equity factor into the decision-making process when teachers and administrators choose Restorative Practices or other discipline response options?

Recommendations for Further Quantitative Research Regarding ODRs for Subjective Offenses and Restorative Practices Implementation

Although examination of the data for unduplicated ODRs in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, the first two years of implementation of Restorative Practices in Middle Schools A and B, provided insight into the use or lack of use of Restorative Practices and reinforced the discrepancy in ODR issuance and response between Black and White middle school males, further study is needed over time to determine if the implementation of Restorative Practices in these two schools is representative of implementation across the district; if implementation of Restorative Practices increases over time; and, if so, whether that implementation is effective in reducing the number of and discrepancy in unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses. Studies similar to this one could be conducted at other middle schools and the results compared with this study. Further longitudinal studies could be conducted for Middle School A and Middle School B to determine the development of Restorative Practices implementation in those schools. Unfortunately, unduplicated ODR data for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 would not be useful

because of disruption in the delivery of instruction and in Restorative Practices implementation due to state and district responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further studies would need to begin no sooner than school year 2021-2022 depending on progress in recovery from the pandemic.

Another strategy for continuing to examine the development of Restorative Practices in Middle School A and Middle School B might involve tracking specific students who have participated in Restorative Practices. These students could be supported by assuring the use of Restorative Practices circles for those students in the classroom and during other opportunities in the school day throughout their middle school years. Data on their rate of disciplinary action for subjective offenses could be examined to determine if their progress would support the efficacy of Restorative Practices. A positive result could encourage greater buy-in from teachers, administrators, and students for full implementation of Restorative Practices.

Given the mandates placed on school districts by the state of Maryland through COMAR 13A.08.01.21 *Reducing and Eliminating Disproportionate/Discrepant Impact* (Md. Code Ann. Education § 7-306, 2016) and Senate Bill 766 requiring each school district in the state to incorporate the use of restorative approaches (Md. Code Ann., 2019), additional research needs to be conducted to clarify the overall effectiveness of the Restorative Practices intervention in the district. Other studies could be conducted to assess

1. the effect of Restorative Practices on students with emotional-behavioral disorders and moderate to severe levels of disability who are at increased risk for challenging behaviors;

2. the effect of Restorative Practices implementation on certain behavior (i.e., disrespect) in district middle schools over a period of time;

3. the use and effectiveness of verbal reinforcement by teachers and administrators compared to the use of tangible reinforcement when a student is in violation of MSDE code 701, disrespect, and insubordination, or MSDE code 704, disruption, in the classroom;

4. the extent to which Restorative Practices is implemented over time in other district middle schools;

5. the perceived effectiveness of the professional development provided by Central Office for middle school teachers and administrators in Restorative Practices implementation in other middle schools across the district;

6. the negative impacts of exclusionary discipline for 6th-8th grade Black males;

7. the potential barriers for 6th-8th grade Black males that may be created by the implementation of Restorative Practices; and

8. the pathways provided for professional development training for teachers and administrators in cultural responsiveness, equity, and diversification.

Results, Implications, and Recommendations Related to Interviews

Analysis of Data Related to the Interviews

The voluntary interviews assessed three areas: 1) the ways middle school teachers and administrators characterize the support they receive from school-based administration and Central Office; 2) opinions teachers and administrators report about using the Restorative Practices intervention as a first-choice option for handling subjective behavior infractions; and 3) components of Restorative Practices teachers report using to ensure students behave positively in the classroom.

Conclusions Related to Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asks, "In what ways do middle school teachers and administrators characterize the support they receive from school-based administration and Central Office intended to help them make decisions regarding addressing subjective behavior offenses in their classrooms?"

Support offered by the school and the district includes professional development, time with administrators, general resources, and specific resources that address cultural responsiveness and diverse populations. Many participants acknowledged and positively characterized the district and school-based support, but responses demonstrated a more mixed reaction regarding the effectiveness of that support. The responses also highlighted both progress and on-going challenges in the stages of Restorative Practices implementation.

Participants indicated that the district offers a wide array of professional development training: Restorative Practices Training A, B, and C; Positive Behavior Intervention Annual Summer Institute; student training to request Restorative Practices, and a Restorative Practices training application. One participant expanded on the breadth of the professional development, "The district provides opportunities for professional development that focus on brain science, building relationships, how we process discipline, how schools work together as a team, and culturally responsive teaching." Furthermore, participants identified multiple professional development opportunities that the district provides through lesson planning, advisory period, and community-building Restorative Practices circles.

Participants believed that the district emphasis on Restorative Practices professional development training was proactive and addressed ways to repair relationships affected by subjective offenses in the classroom and school. Several shared comments similar to this

participant's response, "The virtual learning and the engagement continuum of professional development was very helpful for understanding student behavior and Restorative Practices." Another participant observed, "The district is trying to be fair with resources for Restorative Practices by promoting equity and fairness for all students regarding discipline." This comment reflected the responses of many of the participants who felt that the district focuses on teaching practices that promote authentic engagement, equity, and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.

However, some participants were more critical of the other structures, resources, and supports provided, indicating that a lack of support and options from the school and district contributes to teachers feeling overwhelmed or lacking a vision for building a sense of community when making decisions about disciplining students for subjective offenses in the classroom. Participants identified multiple challenges their schools experience in the implementation of Restorative Practices. Their comments focused on a desire for supports to reflect teacher input and for administrators to have consistent access to Restorative Practices resources and additional support from the district's Central Office.

Participants who believed that their school had not achieved full implementation of Restorative Practices indicated that certain district training models and training structures must create and sustain whole-school restorative models. One participant suggested, "The district has to provide proactive pieces to Restorative Practices for our school, specifically, Multi-tiered Systems of Support professional development training structures." Another was more emphatic, "The district must provide on-going training for teachers if they want Restorative Practices to work, and they must make it a priority."

Other participants focused on the interventions available for responding to subjective behavior infractions. Participants described the district Code of Conduct as "a great basis to work from for subjective Level 1 and 2 offenses," but the response below is representative of concerns expressed by several participants about incorporating the use of the district's Code of Conduct Level 1 and Level 2 alignment for subjective offenses with Restorative Practices Tier I and Tier II interventions:

> The district's Code of Conduct is complicated and it's too much, specifically, the Multi-tiered Systems of Support section on Restorative Practices. It's tough trying to distinguish for teachers between the Code of Conduct levels 1 and 2 for Restorative Practices Tier I and Tier II interventions and supports, and it's repetitive because there are not many choice options that coincide with the components of Restorative Practices.

The above response was supported by another participant who indicated that the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Tier I and Tier II interventions are helpful but complained that those interventions "have overwhelming steps and are hectic, and routine." Another respondent expressed frustration because "schools have no other response options from the district for the consequences of disrespect and insubordination."

In addition to sharing difficulties encountered with the MTSS, participants expressed concerns about the systemic tools the district provides and identified multiple challenges schools have experienced in the implementation of Restorative Practices utilizing these resources. Commenting on The Walk-Through Tool (see Appendix L), many participants agreed with one who stated, "The Walk-Through Tool provides feedback; however, the school had to develop it; and the Code of Conduct provided by the district offers ways, but not enough at Level 1 and 2 response options." Participants also were critical of the discipline ladder (see Appendix P)

offering comments similar to this one, "The discipline ladder provided by the district is punitive, and it offers no opportunities for reset and reengagement."

Conclusions Related to Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asks, "What opinions do teachers and administrators report about using the Restorative Practices intervention as a first-choice option to address subjective behavior rather than immediately issuing an ODR?"

Responses in this area helped provide insight into the challenges teachers face when handling subjective offenses in the classroom. According to some of the participants, classroom and whole school commitment to Restorative Practices and discipline currently falls on the teacher only without much input from the administration, counselors, or parents. Many of the participants did recognize that Restorative Practices could change classroom climate; however, they shared the opinion that, in the moment, other response options appeared to work better for their more challenging students. Consequently, participants overwhelmingly indicated that they frequently chose discipline response options other than Restorative Practices to respond to subjective behavior and conflicts in their classrooms and schools. Participants cited specific alternative strategies in responses such as "I redirect and refocus students' behavior when they disrupt my classroom by speaking to them privately."; "I use mediation all the time. Here at our school, it's a big thing. I used it nine times out of ten for any student for subjective offense violations."; and "I do not use the Restorative Questions. I look for the root cause of the problem with the subjective behavior by having a conversation with the student."

Several participants stated firmly that Restorative Practices must build on the methods and strategies that are already in place and are compatible with the other MTSS interventions such as the Positive Behavior Intervention Support model, observing that Restorative Practices

seems to align with Positive Behavior Intervention Support. Participants also agreed that conferences and mediation are more frequently utilized than Restorative Practices and that communication between teachers and administrators is important because it "demonstrates to the students that the adults are on the same page."

Conclusions Related to Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asks, "Which components of Restorative Practices do teachers report using to ensure students behave positively in the classroom?"

While there seems to be limited, inconsistent use of the full Restorative Practices intervention, most participants indicated that they do use components of Restorative Practices as needed to respond to subjective offenses in the classroom. In comments similar to the one from a participant who stated, "I facilitate Restorative Practices by myself with students, or with the professional school counselors and the school psychologist," several participants indicated that they are using components of Restorative Practices individually and in collaboration with other professionals not just in the classroom, but in the whole school to ensure that students behave positively.

In responding to questions regarding the use of components of Restorative Practices, participants indicated that they are utilizing strategies from Restorative Practices professional development such as protective/learning brain behavior strategies to adequately respond to a range of subjective offenses in the classroom. Several participants mentioned using protective/learning brain behavior strategies to address verbal conflicts, bullying, intimidation, and student to staff verbal conflicts. Participants also indicated that they are utilizing Restorative Practices training models that are aligned with the MTSS and with the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of the students as outlined on the Decision-Making Matrix (See

Appendix O). The following response regarding the use of the school-wide Decision-Making Matrix reflects the feeling of many participants: "The Restorative Practices training fits into the Multi-tiered System of Support model and structures to address the subjective offenses that come up in the classroom, specifically, the Decision-Making Matrix."

Participants reported that the components of the Restorative Practices tools and resources that they most commonly implement at their schools such as the Google drive folders with tools and resources and the restorative questions are useful. However, some participants had concerns about the Restorative Practices resources and the teachers' inability to gage how instructional and curriculum documents such as Second Step lesson planning were working as additional components of Restorative Practices.

Significant to the overall aims of this study, when responding about the use of specific components of Restorative Practices, a few participants reported that utilizing components of Restorative Practices can positively impact the use of ODRs for 6th-8th grade students in their schools. Examples of such comments include "I believe the Restorative Practices can curb and decrease ODRs, and it is beneficial" and "The components are in place, and they are tied to ODR data dives." (ODR data dives are frequent and regular school and district reviews of ODR data.)

Limitations in the Qualitative Data Results

Earlier in Section III, the analysis of the quantitative data from the review of ODRs suggested several questions that might be answered during the interviews. These questions are listed under the heading "Implications for Analysis of Interview Responses." Unfortunately, the interview responses offered little or no insight for answering those questions.

The qualitative interview data does show that middle school teachers and administrators in Middle Schools A and B hold similar perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about Restorative

Practices implementation. However, the data does not explain why teachers and administrators are inconsistent in their use of Restorative Practices as a first-choice option or how they make the decision to select one response over another to address subjective offenses. Nor does the data help clarify why teachers did not express a more substantial consideration of school-based administrator support in Restorative Practices implementation. Furthermore, the qualitative data does not indicate how administrators' and teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about Restorative Practices implementation influence individual teacher capacity.

Recommendations for Further Qualitative Research and Restorative Practices Implementation

The analysis of the qualitative data generated during the study suggests actions ECSD might take to encourage and support better and more frequent use of Restorative Practices including the following recommendations:

1. Realign/Amend the 2018-2023 district Strategic Plan to operate under a recovery timeline due to the partial loss of Restorative Practices implementation in 2019-2020 and the full loss of implementation during the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts.

2. Implement district training models that ensure that all teachers and administrators are trained in Restorative Practices A, B, and C and that on-going district support and coaching are provided.

3. Implement school-based Restorative Practices teams to monitor teachers' use of Restorative Practices and to provide on-going teacher and administrative support and coaching.

4. Utilize Restorative Practices for instruction and for student re-entry post exclusion from the classroom.

5. Align the district Code of Conduct Level 1 and Level 2 offenses with Restorative Practices components to support Tier I and Tier II interventions.

6. Continue to use a district-wide tiered Restorative approach in connection with the MTSS program (i.e., Positive Behavior Intervention Support) (see Appendix N).

7. Introduce Restorative Practices to students and familiarize them with the process to create student buy-in, engagement, and ownership in the implementation process to include requesting intervention and support (i.e., Restorative Practices application).

8. Familiarize parent communities with Restorative Practices through school-based meetings; resources; materials; and, where applicable, training.

9. Develop a systemic discipline ladder that is utilized throughout the district and that is aligned with the appropriate district Code of Conduct Level 1 and Level 2 offenses. (see Appendix P).

10. Provide teachers with pathways and opportunities that promote honest, supportive, and collaborative conversation to achieve a mutual understanding about the implementation of Restorative Practices and to further develop teacher capacity.

Assumptions for the Study

Two significant assumptions underly this study and conclusions drawn from it. The first assumption is that all ODRs were recorded properly into the correct categories of the district's Office of Student Data Web-based Data Collection System software by Middle School A and Middle School B administrators during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. The second assumption is that an adequate number of teachers and administrators participated in the

interviews to appropriately represent the true perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about Restorative Practices implementation among the teachers and administrators in Middle School A and the administrators in Middle School B.

Limitations of the Study

Although steps were taken to ensure the quality of research, several limitations affected the progress and the outcomes of the study. Interview participation was one limitation. In Middle School B, the 6th-8th grade voluntary teacher participant recruitment yielded zero results possibly due to on-going district contractual negotiations, issues resulting from recent redistricting, and expressed exhaustion due to other responsibilities such as requirements for COVID-19 contact tracing and expectations for simultaneous in-person and virtual instruction. Regardless of the reasons, the lack of participation by any teacher from Middle School B prevented comparison between the schools and provided no evidence that the responses might reflect the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of all district teachers.

The number of unduplicated ODRs was also a limitation. During school years 2017-2019, the number of unduplicated ODRs issued in Middle Schools A and B was 10% of the total number of ODRs issued in those two schools. This relatively small sample of unduplicated ODRs limited my ability to obtain specific answers to questions about frequencies of use of unduplicated ODRS for subjective offenses issued to 6th-8th grade Black and White males and about reported use of Restorative Practices as a first-choice option for subjective offenses over time. Additionally, the study drew data from two district schools, so assumptions should not be made about results that could be found from comparable studies conducted at other district middle schools.

Another limitation for the study is the lack of continuous trend data due to disruption in the continuity of Restorative Practices implementation. In the study, data is reviewed for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses during school years 2017-2018 (Year 1 baseline for Restorative Practices implementation in the district) and 2018-2019 (Year 2 of implementation). Data is also presented for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 regarding the choice by teachers and administrators in those two schools to select Restorative Practices as a first-choice option to address subjective infractions. However, state and district responses to the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the usual patterns for in-person instruction and disciplinary action. Therefore, the data for unduplicated ODRs for subjective offenses for school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 could not be compared with data from the two previous years and could not yield any trend data for ODRs or conclusions regarding selection of Restorative Practices as a first-choice option during Year 3 and Year 4 of district implementation.

Furthermore, the results from the study may not be indicative of the general population of middle school students, teachers, and administrators. Middle School A and Middle School B are diverse, comprehensive middle schools (grades 6-8) located in a small city on the east coast of the United States. Results obtained from these schools may differ from other schools in the district, from schools in other more urban or more rural areas, and from schools whose student and faculty demographics differ from those in Middle School A and Middle School B.

Fidelity in implementation of Restorative Practices became another limitation. In 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, Restorative Practices was not implemented with fidelity throughout the district because of changes in the delivery of instruction and systemic requirements due to state and district responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation in school year 2021-2022 does not align with the timeline and goals originally set out in the district's 2018-2023 strategic

plan for implementation of Restorative Practices. Participant responses in interviews conducted in fall of 2021 reflect both the participants' experience during the first two years of Restorative Practices implementation and their experience during the disruptions in instruction and school procedures related to the pandemic response and recovery.

In addition, issues involving specific district tools and resources affected the fidelity of Restorative Practices implementation and the study results. Middle School A and Middle School B do not have Restorative Practices models that permit blending of other interventions like mediation or culturally responsive interventions, and the district offerings of Code of Conduct Level 1 and Level 2 intervention choice options currently do not coincide with Restorative Practices professional development training for administrators on how to handle subjective discipline. Participants indicated the need for the district to update the discipline ladder (see Appendix P); Multi-Tiered Systems of Support professional development training structures for rapid reset post exclusion; and behavior-specific items for Restorative Practices Training B. In response to these needs, some schools, including both Middle School A and Middle School B. chose to develop and implement their own Restorative Practices framework and tools (see Appendices L, M, and O). Not only did the issues with the tools affect fidelity of implementation, but they also created frustration that affected participant perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs.

The study also was impacted by school-based limitations to include time constraints; balancing other teaching and administrative responsibilities; staffing shortages; new teacher cohort training models that take precedence over Restorative Practices implementation teams at the beginning of the school year; morale; ODR follow up and monitoring; and Restorative Practices implementation team priorities for Alternative One teachers and Professional School

Counselors over other teachers. One participant's response directly addressed these issues, "I have concerns about the number of things that the district requests schools to do like COVID-19 contact tracing that may take away from the implementation of Restorative Practices with fidelity to include mental health responsiveness, student needs, time, and balancing other job expectations and responsibilities."

A major factor limiting the interpretation of results from the study is the unexplained contradiction between participants' use of Restorative Practices and their stated perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward the intervention. During school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, in Middle School A and Middle School B, Restorative Practices implementation was rarely selected by teachers for handling subjective offenses in the classroom or by administrators after students were excluded from the classroom. Yet numerous interview responses such as those below suggest that participants believe Restorative Practices is a valuable resource.

- "Life at school is a little bit easier with Restorative Practices because the five restorative questions in the moment lay the groundwork and force the student in a positive way to see their behavior, hear the perspectives of others they may have harmed, and change their behavior. [The five questions] provide opportunities for the student to also see and hear themselves with the end goal of working for behavioral changes."

- "I seek to build relationships with my students in order to gain their trust and respect; that goes a long way. I have some really good relationships with students and the colleagues, and Restorative Practices helps the youth so they can relate differently by having conversations that are relatable with their teachers and administrators when they commit subjective offenses."

- "Restorative Practices is powerful, and it allows the school to be reflective about the process before issuing the office discipline referral."

- "Students realize that Restorative Practices was the best decision to make, and it helps students to communicate, feel confident, build rapport, and increases their ability to make better decisions in the classroom."

The participants seemed genuine in their commendation of Restorative Practices yet offered no explanation for the discrepancy between positive opinion and failure to implement.

District Impact

Teachers and administrators have social responsibilities in schools that require them to identify, adopt, and sustain effective discipline practices especially for students who present subjective behavior problems. The review of district ODR data conducted during this study confirms that Black males in middle school in ECSD continue to receive disproportionally large numbers of ODRs for subjective behavior infractions. This problem is not unique to this district. School systems across the nation are employing various approaches and interventions to reduce the disproportion. The district involved in this study has selected Restorative Practices as the strategy to reduce the number of and disparity in ODRs and to improve relationships within classrooms and the school. This specific behavior support was initially designed for ECSD to use in conjunction with Positive Behavior Intervention Systems of Support, but the district is now committed to implementing Restorative Practices as the main initiative to support schools when handling subjective behaviors.

This study provides the ECSD with information about the use of ODRs in two local middle schools. The examination of that data suggests patterns that may exist in other schools as well. The study also examines the use of Restorative Practices by teachers and administrators.

Responses during interviews offer insight into teacher and administrator perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and decisions that impact the effectiveness of Restorative Practices implementation.

ESCD will require additional data and evidence to better inform future strategies for improving the implementation of Restorative Practices. However, the results from this study offer suggestions for potential future actions in ECSD:

- develop a Restorative Practices Request System for middle schools to include data collection;

- collaborate with the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools to revise the ODR to require a Restorative Practices option for teacher consideration prior to removal of a student from class;

- create a Restorative Practices request process, including data collection, to expand to all middle schools;

- increase school awareness of alignment between School Improvement Plan goals and increased use of Restorative Practices approaches and other Multi-Tiered Systems of Support;

- infuse Restorative Practices Implementation components into a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support inventory;

- build a data portal to begin collecting Restorative Practices implementation data quarterly in all schools; and

- develop and deliver district communication around changes to the ODR form.

Next Steps

As ECSD shifts to a renewal of the Restorative Practices Five-Year Plan, School Years 2022- 2027, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Office, a Division of the ECSD Office of

Alternative Education, has identified five Restorative Practices focus areas to help teachers and administrators continue to plan for implementation of Restorative Practices programs in their schools:

1. Focus area one scheduled for school year 2022-2023 calls for

   - a completion of Restorative Practices professional development training C;

   - a comprehensive rollout communication for the MTSS Coaching Model;

   - district support for ongoing specialized Restorative Support for complex student conflicts;

   - a systemic New Teacher Orientation System;

   - Restorative Practices trainings; and

   - the creation of district training videos for Training B: Five Questions to Improve Cultural Responsiveness.

2. Focus area two scheduled for school year 2023-2024 includes

   - continued professional development in areas such the responsive circle request process;

   - increased use of MTSS teaming in secondary schools; and

   - the development of the first annual State of Restorative Practices in ECSD report to present to the Superintendent's cabinet and the ECSD Board of Education.

3. Focus area three scheduled for school year 2024-2025 includes

   - continued monitoring and improvement of the fidelity of Restorative Practices in all schools;

   - systemic responsive training in specific cohort groups (i.e., assistant principals, Alternative One teachers, and behavior support specialists); and

- an update for all stakeholders to the State of Restorative Practices in ECSD report.

4. Focus area four scheduled for school year 2025-2026 requires

- the development of a systemic plan to support school improvement around school challenges for identified schools;

- another update to the State of Restorative Practices in ECSD report;

- continued monitoring, improvement, and fidelity of Restorative Practices implementation in all schools; and

- continued support and coaching in responsive circle request systems for all secondary schools.

5. Focus area five scheduled for school year 2026-2027 calls for

- the use of evaluation models to develop the next five-year Restorative Practices plan;

- the further development of MTSS; and

- the identification of schools currently utilizing the Restorative Practices interventions and supports.

In addition to these steps, the district should create a Restorative Practices Work Group with district leaders, teachers, and administrators who would address the recommendations listed above as well as other identified needs. The work group would review the findings from this study and use them as a starting point for developing resources and proposing change initiatives. Hopefully, the work group will solicit input from teachers and administrators across the district regarding their experiences as they continue to implement Restorative Practices. In work group discussions, the members could reflect on how the results from this study and from teacher and administrative input align with the ECSD 2018-2023 Strategic Plan and the district Code of

Conduct. As an extension and expansion of this study, the proposed Restorative Practices Work Group would continue efforts to understand teacher and administrator perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about Restorative Practices implementation as a first-choice option for subjective offenses in order to improve the implementation of Restorative Practices, reduce the numbers of ODRs, and reduce the discrepancy in ODRs for Black males in grades 6-8 in ECSD.

I hope to participate in the proposed work group if it is established. I also plan to take the following steps to help develop and promote actionable change initiatives based on this study:

1. share the study with the Director of Alternative Education Programs and the district's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support team;

2. encourage the Director of Alternative Programs and the district's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support team to participate in the proposed Restorative Practices Work Group;

3. seek opportunities to provide input to the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Team as they do progress monitoring and tracking;

4. share the Restorative Practice's change initiative recommendations with the Superintendent and other relevant district leaders; and

5. assist with making recommendations for Restorative Practices implementation whenever possible.

I will also seek other opportunities to present information and insights from this study and to encourage the district to continue research related to the implementation of Restorative Practices. Future research projects might focus on topics such as the following:

- examining the readiness of district schools to implement Restorative Practices;

- establishing clear and concise actionable requirements for Restorative Practices implementation;

- examining the effectiveness of Restorative Practices via outcome-based research;

- gathering data in schools in which Restorative Practices is operating successfully and sustainably in order to replicate their success;

- identifying necessary and appropriate Restorative Practices A, B, and C professional development training that has been implemented and proven to enhance the ability of teachers and administrators to value and implement Restorative Practices in schools; and

- comparing the implementation of Restorative Practices with other MTSS models such as Positive Behavior Intervention Support programs and Response to Intervention models.

Restorative Practices is an intervention that takes time and effort to implement effectively. Transforming the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of educators and students from zero tolerance punitive models to a restorative framework that solicits student ownership of their behavior in maintaining behavioral expectations in classrooms and schools is difficult. Research and experience show that creating and sustaining a whole-school restorative school climate requires time, training, and on-going commitment of adequate resources and support (Gregory and Evans, 2020).

Appendix A

Invitation Email to Principals to Conduct Research

Date
To: Principal (email address)
From: Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Request to conduct a research study

Dear [principal's name]:

I am writing to ask if you and your school would be willing to participate in a study to support my doctoral dissertation at the University of Maryland. The study will investigate to what extent middle school teachers are using Restorative Practices and explore middle school teachers' and administrators' knowledge of and attitudes toward Restorative Practices to determine if the role of teachers' decision-making as a component of teacher capacity affects both the number of and disproportion in office discipline referrals for subjective offenses in middle schools. The information gained through the study may provide the district with information and insight regarding office discipline referrals and Restorative Practices implementation. I have been approved by the University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Instructional Data and Research Division to conduct this study. Please find the IRB approval from UMCP and AACPS attached to this email.

As a first source of information, I will review 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 middle school office discipline referrals issued for behavior related to subjective offenses, i.e., disrespect, disruption, and insubordination. The second source of information from your school will be semi-structured interviews with nine teachers, two assistant principals, and yourself. Each interview, conducted at a time convenient for each participant, should take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted using the secure Zoom platform. If participants decline to be audio/video recorded, I will take written notes to document the interview responses. All participation will be voluntary, and no incentives will be offered to individuals or to the school for participation in the study.

If you are willing for you and your school to be a part of this study, I would like to set up a time to discuss the study with you over the phone or virtually. At the end of the study, I also plan to share the aggregate results with you and your school once ethics clearance is obtained. Thank you for considering my request to include your school in this study. I look forward to your response. Please note as an employee of AACPS or a student at the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study. I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu, or (410) 693-9139.

Thank you,

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B

Follow Up Email to Principals to Conduct Research

Date
To: Principal (email address)
From: Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Follow up for study participation

Dear [principal's name]:

Thank you for taking the time today to speak with me (phone/virtual) and for agreeing for me to include your school in the study to support my doctoral dissertation. I am excited you have agreed to participate in this study.

In the dissertation, the name of the school will be kept confidential as will the names of and information from all participants. Each participant will be given a code number at the outset and referred to only using that code number throughout the study. Reporting of all data obtained from the interviews will not identify any participant individually; and personal information will not be shared with others. All participation will be voluntary, and no incentives will be offered to individuals or to the school for participation in the study. In order to facilitate the participation process at your school, I am requesting that you forward the UMCP recruitment email to all assistant principals and all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classroom teachers in your school so that I can request their participation in the interviews.

Participants who consent to the study will be provided with a consent form and be requested to identify the grade level taught; years of teaching experience; and current level of Restorative Practices training (TA; TA and TB; or TA, TB, and TC).

Interviews will be conducted at a time convenient for the participant and should take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted using the secure Zoom platform. If participants decline to be audio/video recorded, I will take written notes to document the interview responses. Participants who consent to the study will receive a range of dates and times provided in the UMCP selection email for scheduling interviews.

As an employee of AACPS or a student at the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the study further, I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu or (410) 693-9139.

Thank you,

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Recruitment Email to Participants

Date
To: Participant (email address)
From: Principal (email address) on behalf of Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Invitation to participate in a research study

Dear [name]:

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a study to support my doctoral dissertation at the University of Maryland. The study will investigate to what extent middle school teachers are using Restorative Practices and explore middle school teachers' and administrators' knowledge of and attitudes toward Restorative Practices to determine if the role of teachers' decision-making as a component of teacher capacity affects both the number of and disproportion in office discipline referrals for subjective offenses in middle schools. Your participation in the study may help provide the district with information and insight regarding office discipline referrals and Restorative Practices implementation. I have been approved by the University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Instructional Data and Research Division to conduct this study.

Your participation in this study will be kept completely confidential. Each participant will be given a code number at the outset and referred to using only that code number throughout the study. Participation is entirely voluntary. No incentives will be provided for participation.

Participation in the study involves an interview that should take approximately 60 minutes and will be scheduled at your convenience. Participants will be enrolled in the study on a first-come, first serve basis. The interviews will be conducted using the secure Zoom platform. If you decline to be audio/video recorded, I will take written notes to document the interview responses. Interviews will be conducted between [date/time] and [date/time].

As an employee of AACPS or a student at the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the study further, I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu or (410) 693-9139.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your response.

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix D

Selection Email to Participants

Date
To: Participant (email address)
From: Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Follow up to agreement to participate in the research study

Dear [participant's name]:

Thank you for expressing interest in my research study. I am excited you have agreed to participate.

All participation will be voluntary, and no incentives will be offered to individuals or to the school for participation in the study. In the dissertation, the name of the school will be kept confidential as will the names of and information from all participants. Each participant will be given a code number at the outset and referred to using only that code number throughout the study. Participation in the study involves an interview that should take approximately 60 minutes and that will be scheduled at your convenience. The interviews will be conducted using the secure Zoom platform. If you decline to be audio/video recorded, I will take written notes to document the interview responses.

Interviews will be conducted between [date/time] and [date/time]. If you consent to participate, please complete, and attach the enclosed consent form, provide three dates/times convenient for you within the date ranges, identify the following by highlighting one answer in each category below, and send in an email to aswift@umd.edu.

    Grade level taught: 6th   7th   8th

   Years of teaching experience: 1-3 years   3-5 years   5 or more years

   Current level of Restorative Practices training: TA TA and TB TA, TB, and TC

Once I receive your suggested dates and times for the interview, I will provide you with the access code for the Zoom platform.

As an employee of AACPS or a student at the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the study further, I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu or (410) 693-9139.

Thank you,

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

Reminder Email to Participants

Date
To: Participant (email address)
From: Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Reminder for participation in a research study

Dear [name]:

You should have received an email requesting your participation in my dissertation study exploring the implementation of Restorative Practices and the number of and disproportion in office discipline referrals for subjective offenses in middle school. However, I have not yet received your response. Your participation would be greatly appreciated and could help provide the district with information to help improve the classroom experience for both students and teachers. Your participation will be kept completely confidential. Each participant will be given a code number at the outset and referred to using only that code number throughout the study. Participation is entirely voluntary. No incentives will be provided for participation. Participation in the study involves an interview that should take approximately 60 minutes and that will be scheduled at your convenience. The interviews will be conducted using the secure Zoom platform. If you decline to be audio/video recorded, I will take written notes to document the interview responses. Interviews will be conducted between [date/time] and [date/time].

If you consent to participate, please complete, and attach the enclosed consent form, provide three dates/times convenient for you within the date ranges, identify the following by highlighting one answer in each category below, and send in an email to aswift@umd.edu.

Grade level taught: 6th   7th   8th

Years of teaching experience: 1-3 years   3-5 years   5 or more years

Current level of Restorative Practices training: TA   TA and TB   TA, TB, and TC

Once I receive your suggested dates and times for the interview, I will provide you with the access code for the Zoom platform. As an employee of AACPS or a student at the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the study further, I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu or (410) 693-9139.

Thank you,

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F

Thank You Email to Participants not Selected for the Study

Date:
To: Participant (email address)
From: Alice Swift (aswift@umd.edu)
Re: Thank you for your interest in the research study

Dear [name]:

Thank you for expressing interest and willingness to participate in my research study. However, although you met the eligibility criteria, I have reached the maximum number of participants and will not be asking you to take part in the interview process at this time. If there are changes in the scope of the study, I may request your participation at a later date if you are still willing.

Regardless of whether you take part in the interviews or not, if you would like me to share the study results with you at the appropriate time once ethics clearance is obtained, please send an email to aswift@umd.edu so I can add your name to the email list of those who will receive the study findings when completed.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at aswift@umd.edu or (410) 693-9139.

Again, thank you for expressing interest and willingness to participate in this research study.

Sincerely,

Alice Swift
UMCP Doctoral Candidate

Appendix G

Interview Questions

Teaching Career and Teaching Experience

1. How many years have you been a teacher or administrator? (1-3, 3-5, 5 or more years)
2. How many years have you been at this school?
3. What subject area(s) do you teach or oversee?
4. What grade levels do you teach or oversee?

Role in Handling Discipline

5. What discipline response options do you frequently find to be most beneficial to you in your classroom or administrative role?
6. How were you informed of resources and professional development training related to implementing Restorative Practices?
7. How do you perceive Restorative Practices as an intervention for reducing subjective behavioral infractions?
8. What are factors or limitations that influence your decision to select or not to select Restorative Practices as the first-choice option when handling subjective behavioral infractions?

Role in Implementing Restorative Practices

9. How would you describe your role in implementing Restorative Practices in your classroom or your school?
10. What are your identified responsibilities to the Restorative Practices intervention in your school?
11. What types of relationships do you have with your students and with other teachers, assistant principals, or the principal?

Expectations of Restorative Practices Implementation

12. What is your general perspective on district strategies for handling discipline?
13. What would you describe as the most challenging behavior management issue in your classroom or school?

General Questions

14. Do you have any further comments you'd like to share regarding Restorative Practices?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____
Participant Identifier Number: _____
Time Interview Started: _____
Time Interview Concluded: _____

I. Interview Preparation

  - Before the interview, the participants will be asked to review the following resources:
      - Training A - the *Lifesavers for Common Community Building Circles Challenges* handout;
      - Training A and B - the *Lifesavers* handout; either the *Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools* (Amstutz, 2005) or *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* (Evans & Vaandering, 2016); and an FAQ about Restorative Practices;
      - Training A. B, and C - all the above as well as the *Checklist for Deciding Whether a Responsive Circle is Appropriate* and the *Pre-Circle Interview Script*; and
  - If participants request more information on Restorative Practices before the interview, I will recommend the International Institute for Restorative Practices website *iirp.edu*.

  Participants will be

  - informed that participation will be voluntary, and they will not be compensated for their participation;
  - informed that information collected will be for my dissertation, and that the identity of participants will be protected;
  - informed that the interview data will be analyzed and summarized to ensure none of the names will be reported in the dissertation or any subsequent documents or reports;
  - selected for the study if they provide written consent (email) to participate in the study; and
  - randomly assigned numbers using a random selection tool from Text Fixer.com (https://www.textfixer.com/tools/random-choice.php), a source of online tools for generating html codes and modifying text or content.

II. Interviewer Introduction and Study Background Review

  At the time of the interview, the interviewer will

  - make the participant comfortable by greeting the participant and telling my name and position, and the purpose for the research;
  - remind the participant that the research has been approved by the UMCP Institutional Review Board (IRB) and by the district;

- remind the participant that the information collected will be for my dissertation, and that the identity of all interview participants will be protected to the maximum extent possible;
- inform the participant that demographic information of participants will not be collected to preserve participant anonymity;
- inform the participant that the interview will take approximately one hour;
- reconfirm participant agreement to participate;
- seek permission from the participant to videotape the interview and explain to the participant that the tapes will be destroyed once the responses have been thoroughly analyzed;
- inform the participant that I will be taking notes during the interview and explain to the participant that the notes will be shredded/destroyed once the responses have been thoroughly analyzed;
- verbally respond to participant requests for clarification or to concerns raised by the participant; and
- begin the interview.

III.   Interview Questions

Script: I will explain to the participant that first I am going to ask a few questions about their teaching/administration career and their experience in the district.

QUESTION BANK 1

1. How many years have you been a teacher or administrator? (1-3, 3-5, 5 or more years)
2. How many years have you been at this school?
3. What subject area(s) do you teach or oversee?
4. What grade levels do you teach or oversee?

Script: I will explain to the participant that now I am going to ask a series of questions to learn a bit more about their past and present experiences and some situations they may have encountered regarding their role in handling discipline and implementing Restorative Practices.

QUESTION BANK 2 (Align with Research Question 1)

5. What discipline response options do you frequently find to be most beneficial to you in your classroom or administrative role?

QUESTION BANK 3 (Align with Research Questions 2-4)

6. How were you informed of resources and professional development training related to implementing Restorative Practices?
7. How do you perceive Restorative Practices as an intervention for reducing subjective behavioral infractions?
8. What are factors or limitations that influence your decision to select or not to select Restorative Practices as the first-choice option when handling subjective behavioral infractions?

QUESTION BANK 4 (Other Questions)

Script: I will explain to the participant that next I am going to ask a few questions about their overall expectation of the implementation of Restorative Practices in their classroom or school.

9. How would you describe your role in implementing Restorative Practices in your classroom or your school?
10. What are your identified responsibilities to the Restorative Practices intervention in your school?
11. What types of relationships do you have with your students and with other teachers, assistant principals, or the principal?
12. What is your general perspective on district strategies for handling discipline?
13. What would you describe as the most challenging behavior management issue in your classroom or school?

IV. Participant Interview Conclusion

The interviewer will ask the participant the following

14. Do you have any further comments you'd like to share regarding Restorative Practices?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

The interviewer will

- provide any additional details about the research that is necessary to share with the participant;
- thank the participant for taking time out of their schedule to participate in the research study; and
- when all interviews have been completed, transcribe the information into a Word document using the Zoom communication and collaboration tool for video conferencing and transcribing interviews.

Assuming no interruptions due to technical issues, each interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Appendix I

University of Maryland IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: August 25, 2021
TO: Alice Swift, BA Speech Communication, Masters of Arts In Teaching, Masters in
                    Public Administration
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1782469-1] An Investigation of the Use of Restorative Practices among
                    Middle Grade Teachers as a Means to Reduce Disproportionate Office
                    Discipline Referrals for Subjective Offenses for Black Males in Middle School
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: August 25, 2021
EXPIRATION DATE: August 24, 2022
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland
College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate
risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be
conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB
Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires
continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this
procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and
continued approval before the expiration date of August 24, 2022.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and
insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must
continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a
consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant
receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior
to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Appendix J

UMCP Consent Form

Institutional Review Board
1204 Marie Mount Hall ● 7814 Regents Drive ● College Park, MD 20742 ● 301-405-4212 ●

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	*Project Title: An Investigation of the Use of Restorative Practices among Middle Grade Teachers as a Means to Reduce Disproportionate Office Discipline Referrals for Subjective Offenses for Black Males in Middle School*
Purpose of the Study	*This research is being conducted by Alice L. Swift as part of the requirements of receiving my Doctor of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am conducting this research under the direction of Dr. Douglas Anthony, and I am inviting you to participate in this research project because your experience and expertise could provide the district with information and insight regarding Restorative Practices implementation and the use of office discipline referrals. The purpose of this research project is to investigate to what extent middle school teachers are implementing Restorative Practices and to explore middle school teachers' and administrators' attitudes and beliefs toward Restorative Practices as an intervention to decrease office discipline referrals (ODRs) in middle schools in Anne Arundel County Public Schools.*
Procedures	*The procedures involve participating in an approximately one-hour individual interview to be conducted virtually on the Zoom platform. With your permission, I wish to video/audio tape our interview using the secure Zoom platform. If you decline to be audio/video recorded, the investigator will take written notes to document the interview responses. Please indicate your consent or decline to be recorded by placing an X by one of the following choices: __ I agree to be video/audio recorded during my interview.*

	__ I do not agree to be video/audio recorded during my interview. *During the interview, you will be asked questions about your teaching experience; your role in handling discipline in the school; your role in implementing Restorative Practices; your expectations for the impact and implementation of Restorative Practices implementation. Examples of questions include:* 1. *How would you describe your role in implementing Restorative Practices in your classroom or your school?* 2. *What are factors or limitations that influence your decision to select or not to select Restorative Practices as the first-choice option when handling subjective behavioral infractions?* *At the conclusion of the interview, you will have the opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer.*
Potential Risks and Discomforts	*Participants may encounter discomfort when asked to respond to specific interview questions. During the interview, you may decline to answer any question without giving a reason and move on to the next question. There are no other known risks.*
Potential Benefits	*There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include the district learning more about Restorative Practices Implementation and the use of office discipline referrals. Hopefully, the school district and possibly others might benefit from this study through improved understanding of middle school teachers' and administrators' knowledge of and attitudes toward Restorative Practices implementation. This improved understanding may help lead to reductions in the number of and disproportion in office discipline referrals for subjective offenses for Black males in middle school.*
Confidentiality	*Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by assigning each participant a code number and identification key to be used throughout the study instead of your name. Only I will have access to the code and identification key. Audio/video recordings and data from the interviews will be kept confidential, securely stored on the Zoom platform on a secured desktop and erased as soon as transcription has been finished. No other identifying information will be*

	collected, and personal information will not be shared with others. Transcripts will be analyzed and summarized to ensure that no names or potential identifiers will be reported in the dissertation or any subsequent documents or reports and will be erased at the conclusion of the study. Printed transcripts will be maintained and locked in a secure cabinet and will be shredded once the study is concluded. If you do not wish to be video/audio recorded during the interviews, all written notes will be scanned and uploaded to a secure electronic file in a separate password-protected folder on a secured desktop computer, maintained and locked in a secure cabinet, and shredded once the study is concluded. Only I will have access to the secured desktop computer and locked cabinet or to any of the research data. No personal information will be shared with any other individual within the district or any external entities. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park, or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	*Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part, or you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator.* *Alice L. Swift* *994 Round Top Drive, Annapolis, MD 21409* *aswift@umd.edu* *410-693-9139* *or* *Dr. Douglas Anthony, Interim Director of the EdD in School Leadership* *3119 Benjamin Building* *University of Maryland, College Park, MD* *301-405-2337* *Danthony@umd.edu*

	If you are an employee, or student at AACPS or the University of Maryland, your employment status or academic standing at AACPS or the University of Maryland will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in the study.
Participant Rights	*If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:* University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678 *For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:* https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*
Statement of Consent	*Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you* *have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You may print a copy of this consent form.* *If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.*

Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]**	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Appendix K

Local Research Approval

ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2644 Riva Road, Annapolis, MD 21401 | 410-222-5000 · 301-970-8644 (WASH) · 410-222-5500 (TDD) | www.aacps.org

September 23, 2021

Ms. Alice Swift
c/o AACPS Central Office
aswift@aacps.org

Re: Research Application

Dear Ms. Swift:

Thank you for your interest in conducting **An investigation of the use of restorative practices among middle grades teachers as a means to reduce disproportionate office discipline referrals for subjective offenses for black males in middle school** in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. The Research Review Committee reviewed your request.

All requests to conduct research in Anne Arundel County Public Schools are reviewed in regard to three major criteria. First, does the research have a potential positive contribution towards improving the delivery of instruction to students attending Anne Arundel County Public Schools? Second, does the research have procedures and processes in place to insure the confidentiality of all participants in the study? Third, does the research obtain its data in such a way that it will have a minimal impact upon the instructional time of students and/or staff?

The proposed study examines the office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) and the use of restorative practices with middle school teachers. At this time, your application to conduct research in Anne Arundel County Public Schools at Bates Middle School and Annapolis Middle School is approved with the following conditions:

- Deidentify all AACPS information from your research.
- Teachers must agree to participate in your study.
- All consent forms must be signed and collected for documentation.
- Solicit recruits only from schools where the principal has approved participation on file with the research application.
- As an AACPS employee, you have access to data files based on your role. Any data requests needed outside of your accessibility need to be facilitated through your AACPS Point of Contact (POC), Dr. Kellie Katzenberger, Senior Manager of Research (kkatzenberger@aacps.org) and require detailed file specifications.
- All requested data is reported through raw files and downloads. File formatting and analyses must be conducted by the applicant and cannot be supported by the Instructional Data Division.

I have also reviewed the study to determine how well it ensures the confidentiality of all respondents. There is nothing that would suggest that personal identifying information will be divulged outside of the research team.

In closing, I would like to ask that you consider this letter as formal approval of your request to conduct your research project in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Please ensure that all school, teacher, or student identifying information is removed from any prepared documents, either paper or electronic, that may be a part of any final drafts of documents relating to your study. We look forward to the information that our district can gain from your research. As such, please forward a final draft of your completed report to our office.

On behalf of the Research Office, I wish you success in the conduct of your study.

Sincerely,

Kellie Katzenberger, Ph.D.
Senior Manager of Research
Instructional Data Division

cc: Mr. Jason Dykstra, Executive Director of the Instructional Data Division
Ms. Casey Hunt, Principal, Annapolis Middle School
Ms. Katherine Hicks, Principal, Bates Middle School

Appendix L

Middle School A Instructional Walk-Through Tool

Instructional Considerations	Evidence

Relationships & High Expectations	❏ Relationships & High Expectations
	    ❏ Relationship Building taking place
	    ❏ Using student's preferred name
	    ❏ Classroom expectations present
	    ❏ Cougar Board (physical or digital)
	        ❏ Outcome
	        ❏ Essential question
	        ❏ WICOR
	        ❏ CHAMPS
	        ❏ Agenda (using a flow map)
	    ❏ Expectations set; using CHAMPs or set of Norms
	    ❏ Positive Interactions with Students
	    ❏ Use of PBIS; points, language, Bates Bucks, etc.
	    ❏ Are you responding to students using your thinking brain?
	        ❏ Are you responding to students in a calm and collected manner?

Instructional Practices	❏ Calling on a variety of students ❏ Active engagement ❏ Student talk > Teacher talk ❏ Student collaboration
Assessments	❏ Demonstrates mastery of content ❏ Self-reflection ❏ Setting learning goals ❏ Share responsibility for learning

Appendix M

Middle School A 4 Core Elements of Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports

4 CORE ELEMENTS of MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports)

Acknowledgement of Behavior   Expectations   Error Correction   Requesting assistance
EVERYDAY IS A NEW DAY WITH THIS CHILD & the goal is to build community. 😊

o Reminder of classroom/school-wide expectations: Bates Way, Community Agreements, Kindness
o Quick in classroom strategy:
   • Seat change
   • Proximity
   • Reteach CHAMPs
o **Break IN classroom (calming space/corner with mindful strategies)**
o **Teacher/Student Break: water, bathroom, walk, take a "note" to another teacher**
o **Give opportunities for student voice (written or verbal)**
o **IDT Team Detention / Teacher Detention (lunch/after-school)**
o **Restorative Circle with Teacher, Student, and Counseling Staff**
o Private conversation with student (beyond class time)
o Discuss student during IDT
o Google Form for Grade Level Admin Requesting Strategies about specific student
   - 6th Grade: https://forms.gle/CDkQn6y2K7GrPNXdA
   - 7th Grade: https://forms.gle/YzePUnQAEo2RcBHC9
   - 8th Grade: https://forms.gle/RwmygNcZumuWSHBw9
 	
PARENT OUTREACH for relationship building for success for the child (call, email, text, etc.)
	o Work avoidance
	o Attention seeking
	o Conflicts with other students
	o Power control
	o Prior incident in previous class
	o Situation beyond the school day
	o Frustrated with rigor/amount of work	

Automatic Referral (Photocopy this document and staple directly to referral):

◧ Fighting	Date: _____
◧ Obscenities directed at teacher/ adult	Date: _____
◧ Threatening and/or causing injury to people or property	Date: _____ Date: _____

Tardies (allow the student in and record) Record LU in PowerSchool. Record dates below.

Smiling is the best instructional strategy!

Appendix N

Student Code of Conduct p. 12

The Code of Student Conduct

Supports, Interventions & Consequences

12

Supports & Interventions: Grades 3–12		
(This list of sample supports and interventions is not exhaustive of all possibilities for supporting students' behavioral needs.)		
Tier 1—Universal (All)	**Tier 2—Targeted (Some)**	**Tier 3—Intensive (Few)**
Core Curriculum	**Targeted intervention programs as appropriate to ensure instructional match**	**Intensive intervention programs as appropriate to ensure instructional match**
Differentiated Culturally Responsive Practices · Mindfulness Practices · Opportunities for movement · Flexible seating · Cool/calm-down spaces and/or breaks · Break tasks into manageable chunks · Longer transition time · Offering choice · Trauma-informed practices	**Increased Adult Support** · Mentoring (group) · Check-in/Check-out (CICO) · Specialized Break Pass · Guided mindfulness strategies · Referral to Student Services staff (Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Pupil Personnel Worker) · Alternative One Teacher Support	**Intensive Adult Support** · Individualized mentoring · Individualized tutoring · Referral to Student Services staff (Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Pupil Personnel Worker) · Extended School Based Mental Health · Collaboration among and/or linkage to community resources, agencies, and parent groups · Referral to community conferencing · Specialized Break Pass
Clearly Stated Behavioral Expectations · Previewing rules and expectations in varying school settings · Modeling & Practice · Pre-correction of behaviors · Increased adult supervision · Proximity control · Redirection	**Clearly Stated Behavioral Expectations** · Reminders of rules/expectations · Increased visual examples of expected behaviors · Increased opportunities for modeling and practice of expectations · Behavior contract	**Clearly Stated Behavioral Expectations** · Frequent reminders of rules/expectations · Visual and auditory examples of expected behaviors · Individualized opportunities for practice with increased frequency · Focus on mastery of 1-3 behaviors at a time
Acknowledgement of Positive Behaviors · Increased Reinforcement · Incentive/Reward systems	**Correction of Unexpected Behaviors** · Redirection · Warning · Private discussion · Increased ratio of positive to negative acknowledgements · Targeted incentive system · Verbal de-escalation (CPI) · Referral to Charles E. Leisure Programs (RAP, ATUP, ADP, BMBLP)	**Correction of Unexpected Behaviors** · In-school intervention (ISI) · Individualized behavior plan · Threat determination · Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) verbal and physical de-escalation strategies · Referral to Charles E. Leisure Programs (RAP, ATUP, ADP, BMBLP)
Restorative Practices (if trained) · Consistent Community-Building Circles	**Restorative Practices (if trained)** · 5 Resorative Questions · Responsive Circles (student group to studentgroup) · Topic Circle Series	**Restorative Practices (if trained)** · Responsive Circles (teacher to student/ student to student)
Social-Emotional/Behavioral Instruction · Second Step Curriculum · Student Code of Conduct Lessons · School Counseling Core Curriculum (Elementary) · Advisory Lessons (Secondary) · Community wellness	**Targeted Social-Emotional/Behavioral Skill Instruction and Supports** · Social skills group · Learning Lab Lessons · Decision Making Room · Social/emotional counseling (group) · Referral to school-based problem-solving team	**Intensive Social-Emotional/Behavioral Skill Instruction and Supports** · Learning Lab (individual; increased frequency) · Decision Making Room (individual; increased frequency) · Referral to multi-disciplinary problem-solving team · Safety Plan · Schedule change · Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) · Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Appendix O

Middle School B Classroom Management Decision Making Matrix

Universal Supports

- Greet students at the door
- Address students by name
- Explicit instruction of school-wide expectations by setting (SOAR) with pre-correction as needed
- Active supervision
- Provide behavior-specific praise statements (5:1) and utilize virtual acknowledgement systems to positively reinforce *desired* behaviors – Safe, Open-minded, Accountable, Respectful (SOAR)
- Routines for distribution of materials, collection of homework and class work, and ways to communicate and participate are explicitly taught and reinforced throughout the class period using behavior-specific praise statements (CHAMPS)
- When unexpected behaviors occur use error correction statements
- Frequent home/school communication

Actively Engaged: *Investing and Driving*

- Asking/responding to questions
- Valuing the learning
- Setting goals
- Seeking feedback
- Self-assessing

Task Difficulty
Continue to provide appropriate levels of challenge based on student performance.

- Utilize the ignite, chunk, chew, review structure to continue to engage the student.

Praise and Acknowledgement
Utilize behavior specific praise statements to acknowledge the demonstration of expected behaviors.

Virtual Acknowledgement System
Utilize a virtual acknowledgement system to recognize and encourage continued on-task behavior.

Task Difficulty
Provide appropriate levels of challenge based on student performance.

- Consider additional ways to ignite the student.

Praise and Acknowledgement
Utilize behavior specific praise statements as expected behaviors are demonstrated.

Virtual Acknowledgement System
Increase utilization of virtual acknowledgement system to recognize and encourage on-task behavior.

Task Difficulty
Are there aspects of the learning task that may be contributing to the behavior exhibited?

- Utilize the ignite, chunk, chew, review structure to reengage the student in ways that are culturally responsive.

Rapid Reset

- **Re-teach** and demonstrate the expected behavior
- Provide the student with two **choices** of acceptable ways to reengage in the learning task
- Utilize behavior specific **praise** statements when the student demonstrates the expected behavior.
- **Conference** with student as needed.

Actively Disengaged: *Disrupting and Avoiding*

- Distracting others
- Disrupting the learning
- Looking for ways to avoid work
- Off-task behavior

Does the student stop the behavior once redirected and expectations are reviewed?

Continue to reinforce expectations and utilize behavior-specific statements when the student displays expected behaviors. Provide the student with two choices of acceptable ways to reengage in the learning task.

Are the student's actions unsafe to themselves or others?

NO → Rapid Reset (focused on the most disruptive behavior

Yes → CALL FOR HELP

Appendix P

District Discipline Ladder

Student displays inappropriate behavior that violates behavioral expectations/student code of conduct.

Is the behavior classroom managed?

← YES

NO →

Assess the function of the behavior and use classroom intervention to address function.

If behavior persists document behavior and interventions on administrative pass out of class

After **3** administrative passes consider administrative support.

On **4th** incident write an office referral & send Minor Incident reports & office referral to the office.

Administrator will determine appropriate intervention or consequence and create a reentry plan.

Write a referral to the office

Administrator will investigate and determine appropriate intervention or consequence and create a reentry plan.

CLASSROOM MANAGED BEHAVIORS

*TELL OFFICE IMMEDIATELY

Absence (unlawful)
Academic dishonesty (cheating & Plagiarism)
*Ammunition
*Arson/Fire
*Bullying including Cyber-Bullying
*Class cutting
Computer misuse— installing unauthorized programs on AACPS hardware. Running/Distributing unauthorized programs.
Disrespect toward others
Disruption to classroom/school
Disruptive clothing or appearance
Inappropriate use of personal electronics
*Improper physical contact
*Extortion/Strong Arming/Blackmail
Inappropriate language
Insubordination
Misuse of social media (unless threat)->
Possession of matches/lighters
Swearing at or in response to adults unless threat notify office ASAP
Tardiness/Excessive Tardiness
Unsafe action(s)
* Attack—threat to students, staff, or others
* Destruction of property/Vandalism
* Fighting Verbal
* Harassment/Intimidation
* Inciting or participating in a school disturbance
* Possession of other weapon (knives & look alike gun)
* Sexual Activity
*Sexual Harassment
*Trespassing
*Stealing and/or theft
*Possession of tobacco
*Leaving an area or class without permission
False information/false accusations
*False fire alarm
Gambling
*Gang-related activity
*Fireworks/explosive
*Hazing
* Forgery/Counterfeit Currency

OFFICE MANAGED BEHAVIORS

• Alcohol and other drugs—possession, consumption, distribution, possession w/ intent to distribute
• Bomb Threat
• Fighting (physical)
• Possession of a Weapon
• Sexual Assault
• Attack on students, staff, others Category I, II, III
• Bias Behavior
• Chronic Violation of classroom managed behaviors
• Computer misuse (Category I or II)
• Possession of firearm
• Putting substances in another person's food, drink, or on a person's body
• Use of matches/lighter to start fire/ arson
• Use of weapon to cause or attempt to cause injury)

References

Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project, Harvard University. (2000). *Opportunities suspended: The devastating consequences of zero tolerance and school discipline*. Report from A National Summit on Zero Tolerance, June 15-16, 2000.

Alternative Education Office. (2020). *Reports of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Restorative Practices (RP) data for school years 2020-2022* [Data portal; access restricted]. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Alternative Education Office. (2020). Restorative Practices data portal [access restricted]. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Amstutz, L., & Mullet, J. (2005). *The little book of restorative discipline for schools: Teaching responsibility; creating caring climates*. Simon and Schuster.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools. (2018). *Strategic plan, 2018-2023*.

Anyon, Y., Jenson, J., Farrar, J., McQueen, J., Greer, E., & Simmons, J. (2014). The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 44, 379–386.

Axelman, M. (2006). African American youth speak out about the making of safe high schools. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *50*(4), 37. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.50.4.37-44

Baker S., & Edwards R (eds.). (2012). *How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research*. (Working paper). National Centre for Research Methods Review. http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/id/eprint/336913

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools*. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social organization of Schools.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219-234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Bickel, F., & Qualls, R. (1980). The impact of school climate on suspension rates in Jefferson County Public Schools. *The Urban Review*, *12*(2), 79-80. https://doi.org/0042-0972/80/020079-08401.50

Blad, E. (2018, December 21). Here's What the End of Obama-Era Discipline Guidance Means for Schools [Blog post] http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/2018/12/heres_what_the_end_of_obama-era_discipline_guidance_means_for_schools.html

Bottalico, B., & Bowie, L. (2020, February 25). Anne Arundel public schools see slight decrease in graduation rates overall, but South River leads with largest increase. *The Baltimore Sun*. https://www.capitalgazette.com/education/ac-cn-anne-arundel-graduation-rate-decline-20200225-ykj6dxuavndjjn6vbzh5nx7xym-story.html

Buckheit, K. (2019, October 21). *Addressing Disproportionate Discipline in Maryland* [Conference session]. National Association of Pupil Services Administrators, Baltimore, MD, United States.

Bradshaw C., Mitchell M., O'Brennan L., & Leaf P. (2010, May). Multilevel explorations of factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black students in office discipline referrals. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *102*(2), 508–520.

Caskey, M., & Anfara, V. (2014, October). *Developmental characteristics of young adolescents*. Association for Middle Level Education.

Childress, S., Elmore, R., Grossman, A., & Johnson, S. (2007). *Managing school districts for high performance: Cases in public education leadership*. Harvard Education Press.

Costenbader, V., & Markson, S. (1998). School suspension: A study with secondary school students. *Journal of School Psychology*, *36*(1), 371-386.

Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced and underprotected*. Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies and African American Policy Forum.

Creswell, J., Klassen, A., Plano Clark, V., & Smith, K. (2011). *Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences*. Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research, National Institutes of Health. https://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/best_prac_mixed_methods.pdf

Crosnoe, R. (2000). Friendships in childhood and adolescence: The life course and new directions. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*(4), 377-391.

Curran, F. (2016). Estimating the effect of state zero tolerance laws on exclusionary discipline, racial discipline gaps, and student behavior. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *38*(4), 647-668.

Curran, F., & Finch, M. (2018, July). *Maryland schools' codes of conduct: Comparing discipline policy across districts*. https://edpolicylab.umbc.edu/

Denscombe, M. (2008). Communities of practice. A research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *2*(3), 270-283. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689808316807

Dilworth, M. & Coleman, M. (2014). *Time for a change: Diversity in teaching revisited.* National Education Association.

Division of Multi-tiered Systems. (2020, November). *Parameters and protocols: Differences between in-person and virtual responsive circles* [video; viewing restricted]. Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Office of Alternative Education.

Dunbar, A. M., & Taylor, B. W. (1982). Children's perceptions of elementary teachers as authority figures. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *118*(2), 249-255. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1982.9922804

Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative justice in education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and hope in schools*. Simon and Schuster.

Fabelo, T., Thompson, M., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M., & Booth, E. (2012). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement*. Council of State Governments Justice Center & Public Policy Research Institute. http://justicecenter.csg. org/resource/juveniles

Federal Commission on School Safety (2018, Dec.). *Final report*. https://www2.ed.gov /documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf?utm_name=

Fenning, P., Golomb, S., Gordon, V., Kelly, Maya, Scheinfield, R., Morello, T., Kosinski, A., & Banull, C. (2008). Written discipline policies used by administrators: Do we have sufficient tools of the trade? *Journal of School Violence*, *7*(2), 123-146. https://doi.org /10.1300/J202v07n02_08

Forsyth, C., Howat, H., Pei, L., Forsyth, Y., Asmus, G., & Stokes, B. (2013). Examining the infractions causing higher rates of suspensions and expulsions: Racial and ethnic considerations. *Laws*, *2*(1), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws2010020

Furrer, C. & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *95*(1), 148-162. https://doi.org/10. 1037/0022-0663.95.1.148

Gehlbach, H., Brinkworth, M.E., & Harris, A.D. (2012, December). Changes in teacher-student relationships. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *82*(4), 690-704. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.2011.02058.x

Gilliam. W., Maupin, A., Reyes, C., Accavitti, M., & Shic, F. (2016). *Do early educators' implicit biases regarding sex and race relate to behavior expectations and recommendations of preschool expulsions and suspensions?* Yale University Child Study Center. http://ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/briefs.aspx

Gottfredson, G., & Gottfredson, D. (2001). What schools do to prevent problem behavior and promote safe environments. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *12*(4), 313-344.

Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *26(*4), 325-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929950

Gregory, A., Cornell, D., & Fan, X. (2012). Teacher safety and authoritative school climate in high schools. *American Journal of Education*, *118*(4), 401-425.

Gregory, A., & Evans, K. (2020, January). *The starts and stumbles of restorative justice in education: Where do we go from here?* National Education Policy Center.

Gregory, A., & Mosely, P. (2004). The discipline gap: Teachers' views on the over-representation of African American students in the discipline system. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *37*(1), 18-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680490429280

Gregory, A., & Roberts, G. (2017). Teacher beliefs and the overrepresentation of Black students in classroom discipline. *Theory into Practice, 56*(3). https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1336035

Gregory, A., Skiba, R., & Noguera, P. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 59-68.

Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. (2008). The discipline gap and African Americans: Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom. *Journal of School Psychology*, *46*(4), 455-475.

Grossi, P., & dos Santos, A. (2012). Bullying in Brazilian schools and Restorative Practices. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *35*(1), 120-136.

Hilberth, M., & Slate, J. (2014). Middle school Black and White student assignment to disciplinary consequences: A clear lack of equity. *Education and Urban Society*, *46*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124512446218

Hudson, M. E., Voytecki, K. S., & Zhang, G. (2018). Mixed-reality teaching experiences improve preservice special education students' perceptions of their ability to manage a classroom. *Journal for Virtual Worlds Research*, *11*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.4101/jvwr.v11i2.7308

International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2021). *What Is Restorative Practices?* https://www.iirp.edu

Irvin, L. K., Horner, R. H., Ingram, K., Todd, A. W., Sugai, G., Sampson, N. K., & Boland, J. B. (2006, December). Using office discipline referral data for decision making about student behavior in elementary and middle schools: An empirical evaluation of validity. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *8*(1), 10-23. https://doi.org/10.1177/10983007060080010301

Ivankova, N., Creswell, J., & Stick, S. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260

Jackson, S., & Gordy, L. (Eds.). (2018). *Caged women: Incarceration, representation, & media*. Routledge.

Jordan, J., & Anil, B. (2009). Race, gender, school discipline, and human capital effects. *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics*, *41*(2), 419-429.

Kinsler, J. (2011). Understanding the black–white school discipline gap. *Economics of Education Review*, *30*(6), 1370-1383.

Klassen, R., Tze, V., Betts, S., & Gordon, K. (2011). Teacher efficacy research 1998-2009: Signs of progress or unfulfilled promise? *Educational Psychological Review*, *23*(1), 21-43.

Konold, T., & Dewey, C. (2015). Measurement and structural relations of an authoritative school climate model: A multi-level latent variable investigation. *Journal of School Psychology*, *53*(6), 447. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2015.09001

Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Wilson, M. G. (2014). Marginalized students, school exclusion, and the school-to-prison pipeline. In W. T. Church, II, D. W. Springer, & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Juvenile justice sourcebook* (2nd ed., pp. 267-281). Oxford University Press.

Lannie, A., & McCurdy, B., (2007). Preventing disruptive behavior in the urban classroom: Effects of the good behavior game on student and teacher behavior. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *30*(1), 85-98.

Losen, D. (2011). *Discipline policies, successful schools, and racial justice*. National Education Policy Center. https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies

Losen, D. & Gillespie, J. (2012). *Opportunities suspended. The disparate impact of disciplinary exclusion from school*. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.

Losen D., & Martinez, E. (2013) *Out of school and off track: The overuse of suspensions in American middle and high schools.* The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.

Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices. (2018), *Final report and collaborative action plan*. http://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/AAEEBB/CommissionSchoolPrisonPipeline.pdf

Maryland State Department of Education (2012, July). *School discipline and academic success: Related parts of Maryland education reform*. Report of the Maryland State Board of Education. http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents /StudentDicsipline/SchoolDisciplineandAcademicSuccessReport0712.pdf

Maryland State Department of Education (2014). *The Maryland guidelines for a state code of discipline*. http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP /MDGuidelinesforStateCodeDiscipline08072014.pdf

Maryland State Department of Education. (2019a). *Maryland public schools report card, 2018-2019*.

Maryland State Department of Education (2019b). *Maryland public school suspensions and expulsions by school and major offenses category out-of-school suspensions and expulsions 2018-2019*. http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents /DCAA/SSP/20182019Student/2019SuspensionsbySchoolOUT.pdf

Maryland State Department of Education. (2020). *Maryland public schools report card, 2019-2020*. https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/

McIntosh, K., Campbell, A., Carter D., & Zumbo, B. (2009). Concurrent validity of office discipline referrals and cut points used in school-wide positive behavior support. *Behavioral Disorders, 34*(2), 100-113.

Md. Code Ann., Education § 7-305 (2000). COMAR 13A.08.04.03. *Student behavior interventions*.

Md. Code Ann., Education § 7-306 (2016). COMAR 13A.08.01.21. *Reducing and eliminating the disproportionate/discrepant impact*.

Md. Code Ann., Education § 7-306 (2019). SB 0766. *Public Schools-Student Discipline-Restorative Approaches*. http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/bills/sb/sb766f.pdf

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Molina-Azorin, J., and López-Gamero, M. (2016) Mixed methods studies in environmental management research: Prevalence, purposes and designs. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *25*(2),134-148. http://doi.org/10.1002/bse.1862

Monroe, M., Fleming, M., Bowman, R., Zimmer, J., Marcinkowski, T., Washburn, J., & Mitchell, N. (2005, March). Evaluators as educators: Articulating program theory and building evaluation capacity. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *2005*(108), 57-71. https://doi.org /10.1002/ev.171

Moreno, G., & Gaytán, F. (2013). Focus on Latino learners: Developing a foundational understanding of Latino cultures to cultivate student success. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *57*(1), 7–16.

Morgan, E., Salomon, N., Plotkin, M., & Cohen, R. (2014). *The school discipline consensus report: Strategies from the field to keep students engaged in school and out of the juvenile justice system*. The Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Morrison, B., Blood, P., & Thorsborne, M. (2005). Practicing restorative justice in school communities: Addressing the challenge of culture change. *Public Organization Review*, *5*(4), 335-357.

Morrison, B. & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: Pedagogy, praxis, and discipline. *Journal of School Violence*, *11*(2), 138-155. https://doi.org/10.1080 /15388220.2011.653322

Morse J. (2000, January). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research*, *10*(1), 3–5. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973200129118183

National Center for Education Statistics (2020, Oct.). *Fast facts: High school graduation rates.* https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=805

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2003). P*rofessional standards for the accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education*.

Neal, L., McCray, A., Webb-Johnson, G., & Bridgest, S. (2003). The effects of African American movement styles on teachers' perceptions and reactions. *The Journal of Special Education*, *37*(1), 49-57.

Noguera, P. (2003). Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment: Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory into Practice*, *42*(4), 341-350.

Obiakor, F. E. (1999). Teacher expectations of minority exceptional learners: Impact on "accuracy" of self-concepts. *Exceptional Children*, *66*(1), 39-53.

Office for Civil Rights. (2016). *2013-2014 civil rights data collection: A first look*. U.S. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look-pdf

Office for Civil Rights. (2019, May Revision). *2015-16 civil rights data collection, school climate and safety report: Data highlights on school climate and safety in our nation's public schools*. U.S. Department of Education.

Office of Accelerated Student Achievement. (2017). *Elevating all students, eliminating all gaps: Action management plan*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Accountability (2019). *Maryland student record system manual*. Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Information Technology, Maryland State Department of Education. http://marylandpublicschools.org /about/Documents/OCP/Publications/StudentRecordsSystemManual2020.pdf

Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. (2020). *Student handbook, Code of Student Conduct, 2020-2021*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. (2021). *Student handbook, Code of student conduct, 2021-2022*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Student Data. (2017). *Reports of student data for school year 2016-2017*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Student Data. (2018). *Reports of student data for school year 2017-2018*, Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Student Data. (2019). *Reports of student data for school years 2018-2019*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Student Data. (2020). *Reports of student data for school years 2019-2020*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Office of Student Data. (2021). *Reports of student data for school years 2020-2021*. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Raffaele-Mendez, L. (2003). Predictors of suspension and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation. In J. Walk & D. J. Losen (Eds.) *New directions for youth development: No. 99 deconstructing the school-to-prison pipeline* (17-34) Jossey-Bass.

Raffaele-Mendez, L,. & Knoff, H. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *26*(1), 30-51.

Rausch, M. K., & Skiba, R. (2006, Fall). Discipline, disability, and race: Disproportionality in Indiana schools. *Education Policy Brief*, *4*(10), 1-8.

Ritter, G., & Anderson, K. (2018). Examining disparities in student discipline: Mapping inequities from infractions to consequences. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *93*(2), 161-173.

Robers, S., Kemp, J., and Truman, J. (2013). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2012* (NCES 2013-036/NCJ 241446) National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *16*(6), 309-314. https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2009.166.424333

Sheets, R. (2002). "You're lust a kid that's there"- Chicano perception of disciplinary events. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *1*(2), 105-122.

Skiba, R. (2010, September). Zero tolerance and alternative discipline strategies. *National Association of School Psychologists Communiqué*, *39*(1), 28-30.

Skiba, R., Arredondo, M., & Williams, N. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. E*quity and Excellence in Education*, *47*(4), 546-564. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.958965

Skiba, R., Horner, R., Chung, C., Rausch, M., May, S., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, *40*(1), 85-107.

Skiba, R., Knesting, K., & Bush, L. (2002). Culturally competent assessment: More than nonbiased tests. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *11*(1), 61-78.

Skiba, R., Michael, R., Nardo, A., & Peterson. R., (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *The Urban Review*, *34*(4), 317-342.

Skiba, R., & Noam, G. (2002). *Zero tolerance: Can suspension and expulsion keep schools safe?* Jossey-Bass.

Skiba, R., & Rausch, M. (2006). Zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion: Questions of equity and effectiveness. In C. Evertson & C. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 1063-1089). Lawrence Erbaum Associates.

Skiba, R., Reynolds, C., Graham, S., Shearas, J., Conoley, J., & Garcia-Vazquez, E. (2006, August 9). *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the school?: An evidentiary review and recommendations*. Zero Tolerance Task Force Report. American Psychological Association. https://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance-report.pdf

Skiba, R, & Williams, N. (2014, March). *Are Black kids worse? Myths and facts about racial differences in behavior: A summary of the literature* (Supplementary Paper I). The Equity Project at Indiana University.

Spaulding, S., Irvin, L., Horner, R. May, S., Emeldi, M., Tobin, T., & Sugai, G. (2010, April). Schoolwide social-behavioral climate, student problem behavior, and related administrative decisions: Empirical patterns from 1,510 schools nationwide. *Journal of*

Positive Behavior Interventions, *12*(2), 69-85. https://doi.org/10.1177 /1098300708329011

Stewart, E. (2003). School social bonds, school climate, and school misbehavior: A multilevel analysis. *Justice Quarterly*, *20*(3), 575-604. https://doi.org/10.1080.07418820300095621

Stufflebeam, D., & Coryn, C. (2014). *Evaluation theory, models, and applications* (Vol. 50). John Wiley & Sons.

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002). Introduction to the special series on positive behavior support in schools. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *10*, 130-135.

Sugai, G., & Simonsen, B. (2012). *Positive behavioral interventions and supports: History, defining features and misconceptions*. Center for PBIS and Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Connecticut.

Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations. (2019, August). *A report for the Maryland State Board of Education*. Maryland State Department of Education.

Texas Appleseed. (2007). *Texas' school-to-prison pipeline: Dropout to incarceration: the impact of school discipline and zero tolerance*. Public Education Information Management System. https://www.texasappleseed.org/sites/default/files/01-STPPReport2007.pdf

Theriot, M., & Dupper, D. (2010). Student discipline problems and the transition from elementary to middle. *Education and Urban Society*, *42*(2), 205-222.

Tillett, S. (2018, July 31). Civil rights groups to demand an end to discriminatory practices in Anne Arundel County Schools: Press Conf. Aug 1. *The Arundel Patriot*.

Todić, J., Cubbin, C., Armour, M., Rountree, M., & González, T. (2020, March). Reframing school-based restorative justice as a structural population health intervention. *Health & Place*, *62*, 102289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2020.102289

Townsend, B. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional Children*, *66*(33), 381-391.

Tyler, K., Boykin, M., Wade, A., Walton, T. (2006, November). Cultural considerations in teachers' perceptions of student classroom behavior and achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*(8), 998-1005. https://doi.org/10.1016.j.tate.2006.04.017

Tyler, T. (2006). *Why people obey the law*. Princeton University Press.

U.S. Department of Education. (2014, January). *Guiding principles: A resource guide for improving school climate and discipline*. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guinding-priciples.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2015, July 22). *Educators gather at the White House to rethink School Discipline: U.S. Department of Education announces new tools to help schools rethink discipline* [Press release]. https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/educatiors-gather-white-house-rethink-school-discipline

U.S. Department of Education. (2016, December 9). *White House Report: The continuing need to rethink discipline* [Press release]. https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/white-house-report-continuing-need-rethink-discipline.

U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018, March), *K-12 education: Discipline disparities for Black students, boys, and students with disabilities*. Report to Congressional Requestors. https://www.gao.gov/assets/700.690823.pdf

Vaught, S., & Castagno, A. (2008). "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical Race Theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *11*(2), 95-113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320802110217

Verdugo, R. (2002). Race-ethnicity, social class, and zero-tolerance policies. *Education and Urban Society, 35*(1), 50-75.

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

Walsh, E. (2012, January). How "commonsense" notions of race, class and gender infiltrate families formed across the color line. *Sociology Mind*, *2*(01), 75-79. https://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2012.21010

Walker, C. (2011, July 11). NAACP complaint claims racial bias in student discipline at Anne Arundel schools. *The Baltimore Sun*. https://www.baltimoresun.com /maryland/bs-md-arundel-naacp-20110711-story-html

Wang, M, & Degol, J. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, *28*(2), 315–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9319-1

Warren, S. (2002). African American students in schools: Research and effective instruction practices. *Educational Horizons*, *80*(3), 109-116.

Way, N. (2011). School discipline and disruptive classroom behavior: The moderating effects of student perceptions. *The Sociological Quarterly 52*(3), 346-375.

Wisdom, J., & Creswell, J. (2013, March). *Mixed methods: Integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis while studying patient-centered medical home models.* Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AHRQ Publication No. 13-0028-EF.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Applied Social Research
Methods Series, Vol. 5. Sage.