

A Mixed Methods Approach: Technology and Restorative Discipline

New Jersey City University

Dr. Carnahan: Project 3

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Restorative Discipline (RD) is also referred to as Restorative Justice; Hopkins (2004) defines RD as “a dynamic and innovative way of dealing with conflict in schools, promoting understanding and healing over assigning blame or dispensing punishment.” RD offers an alternative approach in behavior management that has grown in popularity as a means to support Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives within ABC School. RD aims to address misbehavior as a teachable moment for children to enable said child to develop critical thinking strategies. PBIS and SEL frameworks provide strategies for students to identify their triggers of anger or frustration, which can lead to misbehavior if the child does not have the necessary coping mechanisms. The introduction of technology tools to support behavior management initiatives is ever-growing, visible and necessary. There is a need for ongoing research to determine how technology can support RD initiatives.

Statement of the Problem

ABC School has identified concerns in behavior management, especially among minority students. The district’s strategic plan specifically recognized the disparity among the high number of write-ups, office referrals and suspensions among minority students as a main target to address. Professional Development on cultural awareness, PBIS and SEL were presented as tools to spearhead RD initiatives. The district’s stance is to provide staff with resources to take a RD approach to manage oppositional behaviors in the classroom. Administration seeks tools to

support RD initiatives in ABC School. Presently, technology is proposed as a way to support the further development of executive functioning skills and SEL initiatives as classroom management tools as a preventative line of defense. The benefits of successful EdTech integrations within the school's instructional design offers an opportunity to further research as it relates to RD initiatives.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to employ a convergent mixed method design to explore technology implementation to support restorative discipline initiatives within ABC School. This study merges the results of both quantitative and qualitative data so that an effective comparison can be made. Data collection will be gathered by assessing survey outcomes, individual case studies and interviews. An analysis will be conducted through the lens of mixed methods to decide an effective technology integration proposal to support restorative discipline initiatives. The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of how technology is currently being implemented to support RD initiatives within ABC School, and provide feedback on what technologies can be put in place to align to the needs discovered during research.

Research Questions

- Quantitative Question: What is the relationship between classrooms that implement technology tools to assist with managing restorative discipline initiatives and the amount of student recidivism in behavior infractions?
- Qualitative Question: What is the perception of technology and how does it relate to restorative discipline for teachers and students?

- Qualitative and Quantitative Unified Question: To what extent should technology be considered to support restorative practices?

Limitations

There are a few potential limitations that could hinder the research or skew collected data. Some teachers may not be familiar with the various technologies that support RD or may not feel comfortable using technology at all. Some teachers may have an opposing view against RD and take on a different approach to address behavior concerns. Some teachers may not be familiar with PBIS and SEL as it relates to RD initiatives. Some teachers may not accurately document infractions. Case study candidates may transfer out of school or their parents may not agree with their child being a part of this study. These limitations pose a threat to the overarching goals of ABC School's goals for strategic planning.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Zero-tolerance (ZT) mentality and disciplinary methods punishes all infractions severely—no matter how small. This mindset made its way into our criminal justice system in the early 1980s. ZT policies respond to rule infractions with a punishable consequence. Having negative responses to offenses led to a ZT “craze” which slithered its way into the educational infrastructure in the 90s (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). ZT is criticized for being arbitrary, as the rate of recidivism on habitual offenses continued and increased, both in the judicial system and in school settings. Therefore, ZT within schools is arguably an unproductive approach to discipline; therefore, alternative means to rectify behavioral infractions within schools was sought, and Restorative Discipline was birthed. RD encompasses PBIS and SEL frameworks by

focusing on the skillset children need to make better decisions. Promoting student choice and voice align to the restorative lens of the RD vision, and has gained traction within schools.

Relevant Studies and Theory

Historically, Blacks are suspended at a disproportionate rate, statistically obtain lower academic scores, and have a higher rate of repeated disciplinary infractions when compared to White students (American Psychological Association, 2008). As a result, the Obama Administration requested schools to reform zero tolerance policies and rectify the racial disproportion by adopting alternative responses to school's discipline infrastructure (Department of Education, 2014). Many schools opted to pilot restorative practices in lieu of punitive responses to misbehavior that resulted in school infractions.

Goldys, P. (2016), conducted a four-year research on the effectiveness of restorative practices in Norwood Elementary, a Title I STEM school in Baltimore, MD, affiliated with Towson University. Though this STEM school has access to EdTech resources, it is still plagued with habitual occurrences of student behaviors. Alternative successful approaches were sought to replace their traditional disciplinary methods; restorative justice was able to "transform the culture and climate to one of enduring peacefulness, persistence, grit, and compassion". Goldys, P. (2016) reported a 55% decrease in office referrals, 49% decrease in time missed from instruction, and 55% decrease in physical aggression. In addition, 97.7% of students reported feeling safe in school, and over 20,000 minutes of instructional time was gained, when compared to the year prior to when the study took place.

Throughout Norwood Elementary's first year of RD implementation, technology was used in various ways. In the first year of research, technology was used to record restorative

circles as they were piloted. One teacher and her class were recorded as they conducted justice circles to model an exemplar framework for other teachers to follow. Using technology to capture authentic models provided teachers, students and administration with a genuine lens. As research continued, the data collected and logged showed that rewards and punishment provided immediate compliance and not long-lasting results. Technology was used to collect data, monitor and gauge student progress, and conduct research to build upon RD practices. Parents were also surveyed and their input was recorded and taken into account. Technology was also used for Virtue Assemblies as student successes were recorded and shared with the entire school community. Norwood Elementary also has a STREAM Project Bus that goes out into the community to engage families in STEM related activities, which include EdTech tools. Goldys, P. (2016) gradually rolled out a successful four-year strategic plan that highlights RD and its impact on school climate, student choice and community network. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used throughout the evolution of schoolwide restorative practices. Multiple ways of data collection were used to obtain information that helped navigate decision making and policy reform.

In a different research, RD was achieved in a distinct fashion, but documented as a success story as well. Gardner, T. (2014), conducted a study on the effectiveness of RD in The City School (pseudonym) in the California. For this study, technology was only used as a tool to document progress; however, the researcher utilized a focus group for the study. Student Justice Panel (SJP) was at the root of success in decreasing the habitual concerns with negative behavior. SJP is similar to justice circles in that students have an opportunity to express their feelings, and students determine how order can be restored within the school community. SJP consists of 12 student leaders, all of which are nominated by teachers and peers. The SJP listens

and provides insight and recommendations; along with an adult facilitator, the SJP “wanted to create a school culture in which students learned to discipline themselves and each other so that referrals, suspensions, and expulsions would become the exception instead of the rule.” Gardner (2014) reports that RD provided the foundational block to establish a decrease in student discipline referrals because the SJP emphasized the importance of culture and positive school climate.

In Gardner’s scenario, allowing students to come together to voice their concerns, deliberate with one another and come up with reasonable solutions together allowed for improved school climate all around. Though specific statistics are not provided in this situation, Gardner (2014) reports that restorative justice was achieved through SJPs as a decrease in school discipline referrals was notable in this anonymous school in San Francisco, CA.

Meanwhile in the east coast, New York is confronted with high numbers of behavioral concerns as well. As a solution, in 2015, the New York City Council supplied over two million dollars to implement pilot restorative justice programs within 15 schools (New York City Council Finance Division, 2015). Lustick, H. (2016) conducted a study and determined that money did not change the culture of a school, only those within the school have the ability to influence change. Lustick (2016) highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development and training to shift a school’s culture and overall climate. The researcher used technology to collect and gather data, as well as to monitor progress of student disciplinary infractions. Technology was used to make recommendations and modifications to policy reform, as decisions were data driven.

Summary

Justice Circles, and Student Justice Panels have different titles and slightly different methodologies, but all have the same underlying goal. All of these studies sought Restorative Discipline and found that effective change can be found and achieved with students using a student-centered approach through restorative circles. When students were taught how to develop problem-solving skills, children built upon their knowledge and implemented self-governing attributes in their surrounding communities. RD practices are a gateway for readiness and preparedness. PBIS and SEL offer preventative measures students and teachers can consider as a proactive strategy. If an infraction takes place, restorative circles offer an opportunity for both the victim and the offender to openly discuss their feelings and together, they accept responsibility and move forward. Students are purposefully given the opportunity to collaboratively discuss, express and come up with restorative solutions. Together, all of these supports provide an alternative to ZT by restoring justice in the classroom. RD values empowerment, communication and repair; transforming the daily interactions of children within their school setting will promote positive outcomes to inevitable conflicts they will encounter in life (Hopkins, 2004). With the use of technology, the skills and strategies to restore justice in the classroom are multiplied with a virtual network of support, development and life-tools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This mixed methods study is designed to collect, examine and utilize technology to support Restorative Discipline initiatives in ABC School. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used simultaneously to gather data and obtain the narrative that makes ABC School unique. The effectiveness of RD is not being questioned, but rather how to use technology to effectively support ABC School's strategic plan of action to create RD. This

research is designed to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to increase the probability of successful implementation of RD practices with technology. Procedures, data collection and analysis are necessary to increase the efficacy of RD.

Research Design

The researcher will begin this research by obtaining the incident referral log from administration. The researcher will analyze data and make notable observations. This process will be used to funnel the students who have obtained office referrals and/or disciplinary actions by class, infraction level (measures severity of infraction), and the amount of repeated offenses. Patterns will be noted and questions seeking clarity will be asked, should they arise. Simultaneously, the researcher will distribute teacher survey to all teachers in ABC School. Creswell & Clark (2018) suggest the data from done both qualitative and quantitative questions be obtained at the same time. This will allow data to be cross referenced with one another. A short window will be given for responses to be returned. Researcher will collect data and jot discoveries.

The qualitative portion of this study will align to Grounded Theory framework. Charmaz, K. (2006) provides an alternative framework and makes suggestions for Grounded Theory that varies from Glaser and Strauss, who are accredited with being its founding fathers. Charmaz emphasizes that the ideas and observations of the researcher matter when conducting researcher; however, cannot and should not be used to make assumptions, as it can hinder the data collection process. As such, the researcher will collect data from students, administration and teachers via observation logs, surveys, and interviews to obtain data for the purpose of this study. This study will implement the convergent parallel mixed methods research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be taken and merged so that a comparison can be made to gain a

better understanding of technology and its relationship and level of effectiveness of restorative practices (Creswell, 2018). The quantitative data will be collected utilizing cross-sectional survey design. This design aims to expand upon mindsets, opinions and characteristics of the participants involved in the study (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

Creswell (2014) suggests that non-random purposeful sampling is selected when the person conducting the study selects individuals intentionally to better understand a “central phenomenon”. For this reason, the population within ABC School will be the focal point of this study as it connects to RD practices. The quantitative component of this study will revolve around the teachers and staff, as it correlates to gathering data regarding what types of technologies are used to assist and/or manage restorative practices in the classroom. This data will be collected and cross referenced with the data collection spreadsheet obtained from administration that logs the number of office referrals, student suspensions, and disciplinary infractions according to classroom, student and race. Since the variables on the spreadsheet can be quantified to make comparisons, the researcher will obtain various samples for intended research. The researcher will compare the data obtained to determine the relationship between technology implementation and the recidivism level of behavioral infractions. Students who are habitual offenders will become the candidates for the case study component of this research. These students will be assessed closely and asked how they perceive technology and/or use technology to develop their critical thinking skillset. Obtaining feedback from students who are already identified as problematic will provide insight directly from a direct vantage point.

Classrooms who have the most and least number of infractions in each grade level will become the focus groups for comparison in this research. The researcher will collect data

through observations and interviews, and document anecdotal notes to further examine the perception of technology to both teachers and students. The researcher will log notable similarities and differences between both classes and compare information to the data to each other. Merging both qualitative and quantitative methods of research will provide data for the researcher to make recommendations on the relationship between technology and restorative practices.

Procedure

The researcher will begin research by meeting with administrator of ABC School to obtain approval start date for study (Appendix A). Following approval, researcher will survey all classroom teachers in ABC School (Appendix B) and obtain behavioral log from administrator. Students identified in behavioral log will be listed according to number of infractions, and those students will receive permission forms for parental consent to be part of a case study (Appendix C). Once the surveys are returned, the data will be compared to the administrative behavioral log and the class with the most and least number of infractions will become the two focus groups for the study. Students within these two classes will obtain permission slips to be a part of the focus group to be interviewed (Appendix D). Researcher will also log observations based on the findings during qualitative and quantitative research as it relates to the amount and type of usage and integration of technology to support RD. Researcher will merge all of the data and analyze findings to make recommendations to administration in ABC School on the best way to integrate technology to support RD to reduce the amount of recidivism of behavioral infractions.

Research and Data Chart

| Research Question | Data Type | Scope |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| What is the relationship between classrooms that implement technology tools to assist with managing restorative discipline initiatives and the amount of student recidivism in behavior infractions? | Quantitative Research | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Researcher-designed survey 2. Data collection spreadsheet from Administration |
| What is the perception of technology and how does it relate to restorative discipline for teachers and students? | Qualitative Research | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group Interviews 2. Case Study 3. Observation Log |
| To what extent should technology be considered to support restorative practices? | Mixed Method | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data integration from surveys and interviews |

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APPENDIX A

May #, 2020

To: ABC Administrator

From: Aileen Matias-Castro

Re: Permission to Conduct Study

Dear Principal ABC:

I am a doctoral student in EdTech Leadership in NJCU. I am interested in conducted a Mixed Method Research to examine how technology can be used to support restorative discipline initiatives in your school. I will be under the supervision of my professor throughout the entire study. Dr. Professor can be reached at 201-123-4567, and via email at drprofessor@njcu.us.

I would like to have access to your behavioral logs, conduct teacher and student interviews, and observe the methods that currently support your district's restorative discipline vision.

Particularly, I would like to have a case study with your most habitual offenders, as well as two focus groups. One focus group would be the class with the least number of infractions, while the other focus group would be the class with the greatest number of discipline referrals. Overall, I would like to examine how technology is currently being used and based on my findings make recommendations on how technology can support student-centered initiatives that align with restorative practices.

Respectfully,

Aileen Matias-Castro

Aileen Matias-Castro

APPENDIX B**Teacher Survey**

Name: _____

Grade Level: _____

1. I know what restorative discipline is.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

2. I agree with restorative practices as a behavior management tool.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

3. I feel comfortable integrating technology in my classroom.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

4. I feel knowledgeable using technology as a tool to support restorative discipline.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

5. I use restorative practices in my classroom.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

6. I feel supported by administration.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

7. I would like professional development on restorative discipline.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

8. I would like professional development on how to use technology tools to support classroom management.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

9. I have great classroom management skills.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

10. I feel my students' parents would benefit from a restorative discipline workshop.

| | | |
|-------|----------|----------|
| Agree | Somewhat | Disagree |
|-------|----------|----------|

APPENDIX C**Parental Consent Form**

May #, 2020

Dear Parent,

My name is Aileen Matias-Castro. I am a doctoral student for Educational Technology Leadership in NJCU. I am interested in obtaining your permission to have your child participate in a case study. The purpose of having your child participate in this case study is to explore ways ABC School can support your child using various tech tools. Your child's name will not be used nor shared without your consent. You can request that this case study be stopped at any point in time in regard to your child's participation. This case study solely seeks to obtain authentic information for a child's point of view regarding ways ABC School can integrate restorative practices within the school day. I am available to speak and meet with you throughout the study to share my findings as it relates to your child. Remember, your child's voice and input is invaluable to obtaining data on how technology can support his/her skillset as it pertains to restorative justice.

Thank you,

Aileen Matias-Castro

Aileen Matias-Castro

555-123-4567, ext. 1234

Email: amc@email.com

