

Help Oakland Unified to Better Understand the Impact of Restorative Justice in its Schools

Context

“Restorative justice, which has cut suspensions by more than half at Bunche, is one of several strategies the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) is embracing as it attempts a seismic shift in the culture of discipline – from punitive to preventive, exclusion to inclusion.” *The Christian Science Monitor*

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a set of principles and practices employed in the Oakland Unified School District to build community and respond to student misconduct, with the goals of repairing harm and restoring relationships between those impacted. The RJ program in OUSD pilots a three-tiered model of prevention, intervention and supported reentry in response to conflict and harm. The RJ program works to lower the district’s rate of suspension and expulsion and to foster positive school climates with the goal of eliminating racially disproportionate discipline practices and the resulting push-out of students into the prison pipeline. Restorative justice is one of the pillars of the district’s 2012 voluntary resolution plan with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights to eliminate the disproportionate suspension of African American male students, who comprise 17% of the district’s student body but account for 42% of the district’s suspensions.

[Opening Up, Students Transform a Vicious Circle - NY Times](#)

[Restorative justice: One high school's path to reducing suspensions by half](#)

Videos

[Tier 1 - Community Building Circle](#)

[Tier 3 - Welcome and Reentry Circle](#)

Problem

OUSD has no method in place to collect data related to the implementation of restorative justice in its schools. While the district currently collects and analyzes student suspension data, there is no data on the frequency of restorative justice circles in schools, the type of circles being held (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3), the number or identity of students participating, or the outcomes for students who participate in restorative justice.

The restorative justice program would like a data collection tool that could be used by teachers and restorative justice coordinators to capture key data points that they could use to evaluate and improve the program.

The program hopes to collect the following data for the three tiers of intervention:

Tier 1 - Community Building or Prevention Circles (up to 20 students)

- Date
- school
- name of adult
- name of students & student IDs
- topic (school climate, peer pressure, college admissions, stress, family life)

- classroom circle or targeted
- follow-up
- comments

Tier 2 - Peer Mediation or Alternatives to Suspension (6 to 8 students)

- Date
- school
- name of adult
- name & student ID of students as well as their role in the dispute and in the circle, i.e., who are the disputants versus community participants.
- type of intervention (peer mediation, alternative to suspension, etc.)
- follow-up
- comments

Tier 3 - Welcome Circles (7-12 participants)

- Date
- school
- name of adult(s)
- name of student(s) & student IDs
- reason for welcome circle (reentry from Juvenile Justice Center, other)
- follow-up
- comments

Stakeholders

Restorative Justice Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 circles at participating schools • Would be the primary users of the data collection tool • Have access to smart phones (Android and iPhone) or computers • Value a tool that is user-friendly and minimally time-consuming
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Tier 1 circles in their classrooms (in some cases) • Would be secondary users of the data collection tool • Have access to smart phones (Android and iPhone) or computers • Value a tool that is user-friendly and minimally time-consuming
Restorative Justice Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to connect data collected in the tool to demographic, behavior and academic data in the student information system • Want to limit manual data entry to promote adoption and reduce errors
Oakland Unified administration and school board, parent community, U.S. Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The District needs to use rigorous evaluation methods and high quality data to understand the

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extent to which RJ contributes to better outcomes for all students and especially African American boys and young men.