

## The Effectiveness of Restorative Practices in Schools

### Points for Testimony

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Restorative Practices (RP) is a way to both build school community and respond to harmful behavior without relying on exclusionary discipline. RP includes, but is not limited to: community-building circles in the classroom; restorative conferences for repairing harm; staff-to-staff restorative circles; and restorative “re-entry” circles for students returning to school following exclusionary discipline or other absence. Schools across the US that have implemented RP school-wide have seen great successes for students, staff, and school climate.

While I am unaware of studies showing the effectiveness of RP in Vermont schools specifically, data have been collected and analyzed from schools/districts in many other locales. On one hand, it is worthwhile to focus on those schools/districts with racial and other demographics similar to particular schools/districts in Vermont. At the same time, as studies such as Vermont Legal Aid’s 2015 report<sup>1</sup> have shown, the disparities (e.g. racial, disability) in school discipline in Vermont might not be unlike those in more urban schools and/or schools predominantly attended by students of color. The data coming out of these locales are extremely informative. I have drawn on the successes of such RP programs in order to train school staff in Vermont and Western Massachusetts.

- Restorative Practices leads to a decrease in exclusionary discipline. This has been shown in urban, suburban, and rural schools with a variety of student demographics.<sup>23</sup>
- Restorative Practices leads to a decrease in disruptive student behaviors across schools in a variety of demographics. Ibid.
- In some cases, Restorative Practices programs have been created and/or expanded to reduce school discipline inequity for students of color and have been successful in eliminating the disparities.<sup>4</sup>
- The Oakland (CA) Unified School District has implemented restorative practices in more than 20 schools (as of 2013-2014 school year) and has issued a report showing: reduced referrals for disruptive behaviors, successful repair of harms/conflicts, reduced suspensions, reduced racial disparities in discipline, improved academic outcomes, and improved school climate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.vtlegalaid.org/sites/default/files/Kicked%20Out\\_School%20Discipline%20Report.pdf](http://www.vtlegalaid.org/sites/default/files/Kicked%20Out_School%20Discipline%20Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/resources/IIRP-Improving-School-Climate.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3750554>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/12/17/347383068/an-alternative-to-suspension-and-expulsion-circle-up>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ousd.org/cms/lib07/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/OSD-RJ%20Report%20revised%20Final.pdf>