Introducing Restorative Practices into High Schools' Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Successes and Challenges

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Abstract

We report findings from a recent field test assessing the feasibility of training teachers in implementing restorative practices within a multi-tiered approach to supporting student behavior. First, we provide an overview of our training content, training delivery, and follow-up coaching. Second, we present overall outcomes from our field test with three non-traditional high schools. Results indicated improvements in overall school-wide implementation of restorative consequences, and gains in teacher use of existing discipline approaches as well as restorative practices. Results also indicated increases in early adopters' confidence level with motivating students and engaging them in appropriate behavior across the duration of the study. Challenges associated with implementation included aligning administrative commitment to restorative practices with individual teachers willingness to change classroom practices, allocating sufficient time for changing policies and practices and overcoming logistical challenges to maximize coaching benefits. Finally, we discuss our field test findings within the current recommendations for advancing the evidence-base supporting restorative practices in schools.

Keywords: restorative practices, high schools, professional development

Introducing Restorative Practices into High Schools' Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Successes and Challenges

Schools' interest in restorative practices has grown in the last two decades (Fronius et al., 2019; Gregory & Evans, 2020; Guckenburg, Hurley, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2016; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Many schools and districts across the country look towards restorative practices to improve relationships between teachers and students (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016) and among peers (Schumacher, 2014), and thereby reduce disciplinary incidents which tend to disproportionately affect students from racial and gender minority groups as well as students identified with a disability (Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; see also Wolf & Kupchik, 2017).

Initial small-scale evaluations have associated restorative practices with overall improvements in school climate (Drewery 2016; McCluskey et al. 2008; Mirsky, 2007) and also reductions in racial/ethnic disparities in discipline (Augustine et al., 2018; Gregory & Evans, 2020; Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta, 2014; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Simson, 2013). Despite limited evidence, adoption of restorative practices across the nation appears to be outpacing research on how to introduce restorative practices into schools' discipline systems.

Restorative practices as an approach to discipline in schools are derived from restorative justice implemented in the judicial system. The goal of restorative justice is to focus on ameliorating the harm caused by a criminal or delinquent act through raising awareness of its impact on the victim and the motivations or needs of the offender. Victims are provided an opportunity to share their experience and perspectives, and offenders are provided an opportunity to learn how their actions have impacted a person as well as their community, and make

appropriate restitution. The effectiveness of restorative justice is commonly measured in victim and offender satisfaction, restitution compliance, and recidivism. Overall positive effects have been found in all three areas (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005; Lloyd & Borrill, 2020); however, outcomes vary across victim and offender characteristics and implementation practices (Bain, 2012). Howard Zehr defines the core elements of restorative justice as harms, needs, and obligations (Zehr, 2015) and emphasizes that restorative justice is not necessarily meant to replace existing, fundamentally retributive, justice systems, but rather to improve the effectiveness of those systems.

Similarly, restorative practices in schools are often integrated into existing discipline systems to strengthen their effectiveness. Like restorative justice, restorative practices in schools tend to focus on harm done rather than rule violations, the underlying needs of the students who have harmed others as well as the students who have been harmed, and ways to make things right and prevent reoccurrence of the harmful behavior (Gregory et al., 2016). Implementing this restorative approach in the context of existing discipline systems focused on rule violations and punitive consequences can be challenging.

State and local education agencies engaged in restorative practices implementation have produced implementation guides (e.g., Berkowitz, no date; Minnesota Department of Education, no date). Many of these guidelines include a focus on promoting equity, identifying shared goals and visions, building local leadership, and providing on-going training and coaching. In their recent review of the state of restorative practices in schools, Gregory and Evans (2020) provide the following recommendations for sustainable implementation: (a) contextually appropriate implementation, (b) simultaneous bottom-up and top-down adoption promoting teacher buy-in and administrative leadership, and (c) long-term planning with ongoing professional support.

Our goal was to contribute to the knowledge base about how best to introduce restorative practices into multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), such as school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS). MTSS provide universal (Tier 1) support to all students at all times, secondary (Tier 2) support to students who are insufficiently responsive to Tier 1 supports, and tertiary (Tier 3) supports to students with the highest support needs. We designed a professional development training, *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline*, that maps restorative practices onto the MTSS framework. It consists of trainings for an entire school staff, follow-up trainings for early adopters, and on-going coaching for early adopters. We first describe our training modules and delivery model, and then the outcomes of our field test to assess the training's feasibility in high schools. We focused on high schools, because (a) SWPBIS has been challenging to implement successfully at the high school level (Flannery, Frank, Kato, Doren, & Fenning, 2013), and (b) restorative practices' emphasis on decentralizing authority in the classroom and promoting shared decision-making actively involving students seems to resonate with the developmental needs of older adolescent students (Spear & Kulbok, 2004). The current study was part of a multi-year, iterative development project that included the following phases: (a) initial development of the training materials based on feedback from students, school personnel, and parents; (Authors, in review), (b) field test of the training materials), and (c) conduct a pilot test of the training materials through a small-scale randomized controlled trial. We report here the outcomes of the field test conducted in the 2018-2019 school year in the Pacific Northwest

School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline

The *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD)* training consists of five modules that offer training in (a) implicit bias awareness as one step towards promoting equity,

(b) proactive and preventative community and relationship building practices in the classroom, and (c) practices to restore relationships and repair harm in the classroom or with the help of an administrator. The materials comprise trainer presentations, video examples of restorative practices implementation, small-group discussion, and role play.

Training Content

Module 1 (Introduction to School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD)) introduces school personnel to the rationale for blending existing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) with restorative practices. Participants learn how structural (e.g., institutional racism) and individual (e.g., implicit bias) factors might contribute to disciplinary disparities across student race, gender, and disability status (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012). Cognitive exercises (e.g., Implicit Association Test, seehttps://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/) allow participants to experience how implicit bias impacts perceptions. Finally, Module 1 introduces an overview of how restorative practices map onto the MTSS logic (see Figure 1).

[Figure 1 near here]

Module 2 (Preventive and Proactive SWPRD Practices (Tier 1)) shows how a restorative approach might strengthen school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) through emphasizing social capital building, procedural justice, and institutional support. It uses a "crosswalk" analysis to compare the tenets of a traditional universal positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS) approach (e.g. defining and teaching behavioral expectations, acknowledging compliance with those expectations, establishing a continuum of consequences for non-compliance, and data-based decision-making; see Horner & Sugai, 2015) with restorative practices to (see Figure 2).

[Figure 2 near here]

Discussion of discrete skills including active listening, use of affective language, and reframing shift the focus from compliance with behavioral expectations to building social capital and awareness of how one's behavior impacts oneself and others. We introduce proactive circles as one way to (a) collectively establish classroom agreements in lieu of staff-developed behavioral expectations, (b) strengthen relationships through offering everyone a chance to make their voice heard, and (c) deliver academic content. Participants are introduced to a circle planning tool and a list of potential circle prompts to initiate circles for various purposes, such as community building or developing classroom agreements.

Module 3 (Student Engagement with Restorative Practices) uses a circle format to both demonstrate how to implement a circle and engage participants in discussion about (a) selecting appropriate circle prompts based on the circle's purpose, (b) allowing students to "pass" (i.e. not speak when they have the talking piece) while they build trust in the process, and (c) managing students who tend to overshare or engage in other disruptive behaviors during circle. Given that successful implementation of restorative practices requires student buy-in and participation (Macready, 2009), participants are encouraged to practice keeping circles after the trainer has modeled the circle process and to identify and discuss any perceived challenges or barriers they foresee with implementing this new practice.

Because consistency in discipline across school and home is recommended (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), Module 4 (Communicating with Parents to Raise Awareness of SWPRD) engages participants in role plays to respond to common concerns and misperceptions parents might have about restorative practices. Debriefs after role plays reinforce the concept of discipline as "teachable moments," that is, opportunities for parents—as well as school personnel—to model empathy and healthy conflict resolution skills.

Module 5 (Responsive SWPRD Practices (Tiers 2 & 3)) provides an introduction to integrating restorative practices into existing Tier 2 (e.g., regular check-ins) and 3 (e.g., individualized) support systems (Canter, Klotz, & Cowan, 2008; Stormont, Reinke, Herman & Lembke, 2012). We introduce the use of restorative questions (e.g., What happened? How has this impacted you and others? What needs to happen to make it right?) to supplement and strengthen existing elevated support practices. Through role play we model strategies and provide practice opportunities for responding to harm affecting individuals, classrooms, or entire school communities. These strategies include restorative hallway chats and restorative circle dialogue at the classroom level to address violations of classroom agreements. We again use the circle planning tool to guide participants through preparing circles to acknowledge disrespectful behavior in the classroom, identify the impact it has, and taking collective accountability for remedying the situation.

We also engage participants with role playing restorative conferences in response to conduct that would typically qualify for out-of-school suspension. All participants receive information about a hypothetical incident that affected an individual student or entire school community, such as cyberbullying. Each participant is then assigned the role of a participant in the restorative process (e.g., the student who engaged in the harmful behavior, his/her/their parent, a school administrator, a school counselor, or the classroom teacher). Participants are then guided through acting out how the restorative dialogue might unfold to maintain everyone's emotional safety, encourage all parties to make their voice heard, and arrive at a path forward that reduces the likelihood of the event reoccurring and makes things right for those that were harmed. Role play exercises allow participants to experience what it feels like to share authority with others, to show vulnerabilities, such as a single mother talking about her challenges of

responding to her child's multiple needs, or a teacher talking about her reluctance to discipline students by whom she feels threatened. Sharing this information is critical to finding a path forward that is responsive to everyone's needs. In traditional discipline approaches, individuals are reluctant to share this information for fear of shame, guilt, or punitive consequences including social isolation or job loss.

Training Delivery

Following Gregory and Evans' (2020) recommendation, our training delivery seeks to build bottom-up buy-in as well as top-down commitment to restorative practices implementation. After securing administrative support for our training, we deliver Modules 1 and 2 to an entire school staff to (a) create shared awareness of restorative practices, (b) promote shared language with which to talk about a restorative approach to discipline, and (c) familiarize all staff with the tiered nature of restorative discipline. Derived from restorative justice implemented in judicial settings (Gonzales, 2012), restorative practices can be easily understood as a Tier 3 intervention to prevent disciplinary exclusions. Instead, we emphasize in our all-staff training the need to introduce restorative practices as a universal (Tier 1) intervention to proactively build strong classroom and school communities and build students' and staff's "restorative muscles," such as being present in a circle, when stakes are low. Modules 1 and 2 each take 1.5 hours to deliver; we encourage schools to schedule a 3-hour time period during end-of-summer in-service for all staff to participate in both modules.

Modules 3, 4, and 5 are delivered to a small number of early adopters to build bottom-up buy-in and create local champions for restorative practices. Early adopters are teachers and staff who have a strong interest in developing and implementing a deeper skillset in restorative practices. Early adopters either self-identify before or after Module 1 and 2 delivery, or are

nominated by their administrators. Early adopters are eligible to receive follow-up coaching throughout the school year. Module 3 takes approximately 2 hours and is delivered by the coach assigned to the participating school, to forge a positive relationship and trust between the school's early adopter cohort and the coach. Module 4 takes approximately 1 hour and is delivered by project personnel. Module 5 takes approximately 3 hours and is also delivered by project personnel. If the school administrator is not part of the early adopter cohort, he/she/they are encouraged to attend, given that this module focuses on restorative strategies that are likely to involve administrative actions.

Follow-up Coaching

During our initial focus group research (Authors, in review), teachers recognized both the value of adopting restorative practices and the challenge of implementing them within the classroom based on professional development trainings alone. This is consistent with the research literature, which suggests that sustained coaching, as opposed to one-time or episodic training, results in the greatest gain in knowledge and, most importantly, use of new skills (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Our follow-up coaching consists of 45 to 60-minute group sessions with early adopters, individual meetings to assist an early adopter with trouble-shooting a particular challenge, plan for implementing a specific practice, or debrief a recent implementation effort. Each coaching contact focuses on helping early adopters gain confidence and facility in using restorative practices in the classroom and within their school's discipline systems (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). In the current study, two members of our project team who had extensive training in restorative practice implementation in schools and experience working with school personnel on addressing discipline issues in a restorative manner provided follow-up coaching to our participating schools.

We next describe the feasibility testing of the *SWPRD* training in the 2018-19 school year. The primary goal of this step in the iterative development process of our training was to assess the training's impact on teacher knowledge of and comfort level with restorative practices, and refine our training content and delivery approach as necessary. The secondary goal was to assess the psychometrics of our measures in preparation for the larger pilot study to be conducted in the 2019-2020 school year.

Methods

Participants

We recruited high schools in the Pacific Northwest. Non-traditional and alternative high schools were the first to respond to our recruitment efforts, and our final sample consisted of three small non-traditional high schools in the Pacific Northwest. School A was an alternative private school serving students aged 14 to 21 with an emphasis on vocational training. During the study year, the school enrolled a total of 67 students, 16% of which were from racial minority backgrounds. Multiracial students were the largest minority group comprising 10% of the student population, followed by Hispanic/Latino students comprising 6% of the student population. White students represented 84% of all students. A total of 70% of students were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. The percentage of students with disabilities was unavailable. School B was a small non-traditional high school serving students in grades 8-12 with an emphasis on outdoor education. During the study year the school enrolled a total of 39 students, of which 18% were from racial minorities. Multiracial students were the largest minority group comprising 13% of the student population, followed by American Indian/Alsakan Native and Black/African America students, each comprising 3% of the student population. White students represented 82% of all students. A total of 41% of students had a disability. The percentage of students

eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch was unavailable. School C was an alternative high school with an emphasis on credit recovery and a GED (General Education Diploma) program. It enrolled up 216 students during the study year. 25% of which were from racial minorities. Hispanic/Latino students were the largest minority group comprising 22% of the student population, followed by Multiracial students comprising 14% of the student population, and American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African-American students, each comprising 2% of the student population. White students represented 60% of all students. A total of 22% of students had a disability, and 69% were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Student gender and sexual orientation were unavailable. The principals from each participating school were asked to complete a fidelity of implementation measure. All staff in all participating schools were asked to complete a staff survey at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Across all participating schools, a total of 17 staff completed the survey at each time point. Each school was asked to encourage students to complete a student survey at the beginning and end of the school year. At the beginning of the year, a total of 85 students across all schools completed the survey. At the end of the year, 30 students from one school only (School A) completed the survey. Each school was asked to encourage parents to complete a parent survey at the beginning and end of the school year. At the beginning of the year, 9 parents from two schools (Schools A and B) completed the survey, and at the end of the year, 10 parents from the same two schools completed the survey. In School A all staff were initially encouraged to sign up as early adopters (n = 14), but only four completed the measures at all time points. All of these four early adopters identified as White; one identified as male and three as female, In School B all staff (n = 6) signed up as early adopters and five completed measures at all time points. Of those five early adopters, four identified as White and one as Hispanic/Latino. One identified as male, three as

female, and one as other gendered. School C enrolled six early adopters, three of whom completed measures at all time points. Of those three early adopters, two completed the demographic questionnaire. Both identified as White and female. Table 1 provides an overview of the participating schools' student population at the beginning of the study year and early adopter demographics.

<Table 1 about here>

Procedures

After consenting school administrators and all participants, we collected baseline data (Time 1) at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. Project personnel then delivered Modules 1 and 2 to all school staff and Modules 3, 4, and 5 to each school's early adopters in fall term 2018. We collected mid-year data (Time 2) from staff and early adopters in winter 2019, and post data from participants at the end of the school year (Time 3).

Coaches reached out to early adopters throughout the school year to work on strategies to implement the learned practices and debrief implementation experiences. The coaching framework offered a variety of group-based booster trainings, meetings with school teams, one-on-one meetings with teachers and administrators, and weekly virtual or in-person meetings with staff members specifically assigned to promoting restorative practices. Coaches were actively involved in Module trainings to both observe participants' responses to the content in preparation for their coaching sessions and to address questions from school staff. School A and B engaged coaches in a school-wide/campus-oriented capacity - asking for additional trainings and follow-up activities and resources that were specifically tailored to their staff and student populations. School C did not engage in any group coaching but did have one very strong and dedicated early adopter that engaged in weekly individual coaching during the school year. The content of

coaching sessions was informed by interests, questions, and challenges brought to the attention of the coaches through email and phone calls, or per the request of administrators.

Measures

We asked school administrators to complete the *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD) Fidelity of Implementation Rubric* at Time 1 and Time 3. This assessment was modeled after the School-wide Evaluation Tool (Horner et al., 2004) used to evaluate school-wide positive behavior interventions and support (SWPBIS) implementation. The assessment consisted of 43 items across seven domains: (a) Administrative support: Training and coaching (9 items); (2) Define behavioral expectations/classroom agreements (4 items); (3) Teach behavioral expectations (4 items); (4) Student involvement in reward system (5 items); (5) Restorative consequences (7 items); (6) Data-based decision-making (9 items); and (7) Action planning (5 items). Each item was scored on a scale ranging from 0 = not at all/never/not in place to 10 = always/fully in place.

We asked all school staff to complete the *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD) Staff Survey* at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3. The assessment was developed by the authors for a previous study and consisted of 53 items across 6 domains at Time 1 and 70 items across 8 domains at Time 2. The domains were: (1) Bullying and harassment (3 items); (2) School's discipline processes (12 items); (3) Disciplinary consistency and equity (8 items); (4) SWPBIS implementation (9 items); (5) Restorative practices implementation (11 items); (6) Blending SWPBIS and restorative discipline (10 items); (7) Your understanding of SWPRD (6 items); and (8) Benefits of SWPRD. Each item was scored on a scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree/not at all/never to 5 = strongly agree/very much/always.

Early adopters were asked to complete an additional 3 measures at Time 1, 2, and 3. First,

we asked them to complete the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Survey* (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), a 12-item instruments measuring teachers' comfort level with managing behavior in the classroom and engaging students in instruction. All items were scored on a scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 9 = a great deal. The TSES has shown strong internal reliability (α= .90) and construct validity (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Second, we asked them to complete the *Authoritarian Child Rearing Values* (A-CRV, Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005), a 4-item instrument assessing teachers' preference for certain child-rearing values, such as self-reliance vs. obedience, independence vs. respect for elders, curiosity vs. good manners, and being considerate vs. being well-behaved. Respondents could rate their preference on a 5-point scale, with higher values indicating greater tendency towards an authoritarian orientation. The scale has reasonable reliability for a four-item scale (α = .66), and is fairly highly correlated (r = .54) with other, longer measures of authoritarianism related to public policy positions (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). Third, we asked them to complete an adapted version of the *Discipline Practices Survey* (DPS; Skiba & Edl, 2004) designed to evaluate teachers' perception of exclusionary discipline policies and practices, such as zero-tolerance, and non-exclusionary and preventative discipline policies and practices. Each item was scored on a scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 9 = a great deal. The original version of the DPS has good reliability (α = .67) (Skiba & Edl, 2004).

We asked schools to administer the *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD) Student Survey* to all students at Time 1 and Time 3. The assessment consisted of 76 items across 9 domains: (1) Bullying and harassment (7 items), (2) School safety (4 items), (3) Disciplinary consistency and equity (11 items), (4) Disciplinary rules (12 items), (5) School engagement (6 items), (6) School belonging (11 items), (7) Teacher-student relationships (12

items), (8) Stress coping (4 items), and (9) Academic motivation (9 items). Items were scored on scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree/not at all/never to 5 = strongly agree/very much/always. This measure was originally developed by the authors for a previous study based on scales measuring the construct of social capital in school settings: The *Sense of Community Scale*has been found to have good reliability (α = .80) (Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990), and the perception of justice scales developed by Gouveia-Pereira and colleagues (2003) and Sanches and colleagues (2012), which measure the extent to which people feel they are treated fairly in school contexts, and which have been found to have adequate reliability in student samples (α ≥ .65) (Gouveia-Pereira, Vala, Palmonari, & Rubini, 2003; Sanches, Gouveia-Pereira & Carugati, 2012). For the purposes of this study, we added items to assess stress coping derived from the *Brief Resilient Coping Scale* developed by Sinclair and Wallston (2004) and exhibiting good reliability (α ≥ .64), as well as items to assess academic support and motivation derived from the *Classroom Life Scale* (Johnson, Johnson, Buckman & Richards, 1985), which has shown reliability scores of α ≥ .90 (Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018).

Finally, we asked schools to encourage parents to complete the *School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD) Parent Survey* at Time 1 and Time 3. The assessment consisted of 19 items across 5 domains: (1) School safety (4 items), (2) Staff role in bullying (3 item), (3) Child's social life at school (4 items), (4) Parent-teacher relationship (4 items), and (5) Teacher-child relationship (4 items). Items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree/not at all/never to 5 = strongly agree/very much/always. This measure was developed by project personnel specifically for this study and derived from the SWPRD student survey.

Analytical Procedures

Our primary focus was on school adults' and especially early adopters' responsiveness to

our training. Because of the small number of schools in our study, we first conducted descriptive analyses of the data provided by school administrators, staff, and early adopters by school. We followed up with statistical significance testing of the staff survey data as well as data from the additional measures early adopters completed across all schools. We conducted paired sample T-tests comparing Time 1 to Time 2, Time 2 to Time 3, and Time 1 to Time 3. We also calculated scale reliabilities of the staff and early adopter surveys to assess the cohesiveness of those measures. Student and parent outcomes were of secondary interest to us, since we did not intervene with students or parents directly. The student survey sample and the parent survey sample did not represent all schools at both time points. Therefore, we conducted descriptive analyses across schools only.

Results

Because our primary interest was in school adults' responsiveness to our training, and because of the small scope of our study, we present the descriptive analyses by school first. Then, we present the overall outcomes of the staff, student, and parent surveys.

Results by School

We present changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter outcomes by school. We contextualize these quantitative results in qualitative findings from the field notes of our coaches who interacted with teachers and administrators at each school.

School A

Figure 3 presents and overview of the changes in School A's fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter outcomes. Fidelity of implementation was rated high in most domains at Time 1 and increased slightly from Time 1 to Time 3 in the domains of administrative support, rewards, restorative consequences and more noticeably in data-based

decision-making. It is worth recalling that School A was the only school that collected student survey data at Time 1 and Time 3 and successfully encouraged its parents to complete the parent survey at those time points as well. There were slight decreases in the domains of defining and teaching behavioral expectations/classroom agreements.

The majority of the staff survey domains showed small declines from Time 1 to Time 2, and small increases from Time 2 to Time 3. Staff awareness of bullying decreased from Time 1 to Time 2, but then increased to the initial level at Time 3. positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) implementation and restorative practices implementation increased at Time 3, after a minor decline from Time 1 to Time 2. There was an overall decline in staff's perception of their understanding of their school's discipline policies and procedures. Perceptions of understanding school-wide positive and restorative discipline (SWPRD) and the benefits of blending positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) with restorative practices declined minimally from Time 2 to Time 3.

Descriptive changes in the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Survey (TSES) indicate steady increases from Time 1 to Time 2 to Time 3, and very little change across time for the Authoritarian Child Reading Values (ACRV) scale. There were minimal increases from Time 1 to Time 2 in the Discipline Practices Survey (DPS) Non-Exclusionary discipline and Exclusionary discipline scales, and no change on those two scales from Time 2 to Time 3.

[Figure 3 near here]

The majority of staff in School A were either new to the school during the study year or had little prior teaching experience (0-2 years). This meant that many early adopters felt somewhat overwhelmed with adapting to a new school and to learning a new skill set focused on restorative practices. The administrator's demonstrated commitment to restorative practices

seemed consistent with the overall high fidelity of implementation scores at Time 1 and facilitated staff activities around formulating a shared vision for integrating restorative practices into community building and instruction that went beyond the scheduled trainings. Coaches were asked to guide staff through establishing a campus-wide restorative framework that included interactions between students and staff as well as among staff. This framework focused on data collection and analysis as a cornerstone to supporting student needs. School staff worked with the coaches to devise school policies and disciplinary guidelines to reflect their commitment to restorative discipline. Overall, School A focused on working towards systemic adoption of SWPRD.

School B

Figure 4 provides an overview of the changes in School B's fidelity of implementation and early adopter outcomes. There were noticeable increases in fidelity of implementation from Time 1 to Time 3 in the domains of teaching behavioral expectations/classroom agreements, restorative consequences, data-based decision-making, and the largest increase in action planning. There was a minor decrease in administrative support and a larger decrease in rewards.

The staff survey data reflected gains in most domains from Time 1 to Time 2, followed by losses of those gains from Time 2 to Time 3. The only exception was staff perception of restorative practices implementation, which steadily improved across time. There were also decreases in staff's reported understanding of SWPRD and the benefits of blending restorative practices with positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS).

There were steady increases in the TSES from Time 1 to Time 2 to Time 3, very little change across time on the ACRV, and small but steady decreases across time on the DPS non-Exclusionary discipline and Exclusionary discipline scales.

[Figure 4 near here]

School B's coaching requests and support was largely incident-driven. Coaches worked closely with the administrator to process specific disciplinary incidents and brainstorm ways to integrate circle and community building into classrooms and on-campus rituals and routines. Coaches also worked with individual teachers on the design and implementation of classroom circles. The school emphasized expanding youth leadership and youth voice in discipline and decision making and coaches were invited to lead a series of circles with students. This led to important insights about how students perceived restorative practices. Many students felt that circles happened only when something went wrong and when existing tension made it difficult to have honest dialogue. The outdoor focus of School B also meant that traditional discipline practices, such as referrals to the office or exclusions from the classroom were not applicable during field trips. Out in the field, conflict had to be resolved through restorative dialogue and staff tried to leverage wilderness experiences to promote community building.

School C

Figure 5 provides an overview of the changes in School C's fidelity of implementation and early adopter outcomes. There were noticeable increases in fidelity of implementation from Time 1 to Time 3 in the domains of teaching behavioral expectations/classroom agreements, restorative consequences, data-based decision-making, and a small increase in action planning. There was a decrease in rewards.

Staff perceptions of the majority of the staff survey domains improved from Time 2 to Time 3. The greatest improvements occurred in restorative practices implementation, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) implementation, and perceptions of disciplinary equity. There was a slight decline in staff perceptions of their understanding of SWPRD and a

slight improvement in staff perceptions of the benefits of blending PBIS and restorative practices from Time 2 to Time 3.

There was a minimal drop in the TSES from Time 1 to Time 2, but then a gain from Time 2 to Time 3, very little change across time on the ACRV, and minor increases from Time 1 to Time 2 on the DPS Non-Exclusionary discipline and Exclusionary discipline scales.

[Figure 5 near here]

Coaching activities in school C focused on assisting early adopters with integrating restorative practices into their classroom routines and policies with a focus on trauma-informed care. While the administrator expressed interest in SWPRD, there was little continuous administrative encouragement to take advantage of the available coaching. Coaches disseminated resources to early adopters, but only one early adopter availed herself of weekly meetings with coaches to hone her skills in how best to respond to trauma-impacted behavior.

Results Across Schools

Staff Survey

All domains but one on the SWPRD Staff survey had adequate scale reliability at each measurement occasion (i.e., $\alpha > .70$). The only domain with lower than adequate reliability was "Bullying and harassment." Table 2 provides an overview of the change scores for all domains (with the exception of "Bullying and harassment") assessed with the SWPRD staff survey from Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3.

[Table 2 near here]

Across all schools, staff perceptions of PBIS implementation increased from Time 1 (M = 3.47, SD = .60) to Time 2 (M = 3.82, SD = .51), and held steady at Time 3 (M = 3.86, SD = .55). The change from Time 1 to Time 2 was statistically significant, $p < .05$. Restorative discipline

implementation increased from Time 1 (M = 3.63, SD = .70) to Time 2 (M = 4.04, SD = .45), and from Time 2 to Time 3 (M = 4.16, SD = .64). The change from Time 1 to Time 2 was statistically significant, $p < .05$, as was the change from Time 2 to Time 3, $p < .01$. All other changes on the remaining domains of the staff survey did not reach statistical significance. Staff perceptions of the school discipline processes and disciplinary consistency and equity declined slightly from Time 1 to Time 2 (-.02 and -.03 respectively), but increased from Time 2 to Time 3 (+.05 and +.20 respectively). Perceptions of the benefits of blending PBIS and Restorative Practices increased from Time 1 to Time 2 (+.21), and minimally declined from Time 2 to Time 3 (-.03). Understanding of what SWPRD is was high at Time 2 (M = 4.09, SD = .70) and declined slightly at Time 3 (-.24). Similarly, perceptions of the benefits of SWPRD were high at Time 2 (M = 3.75, SD = .53) and declined minimally at Time 3 (-.08).

The additional surveys completed by Early Adopters also showed adequate reliability across measurement occasions with α.> .77 for the TSES and α.> .81 for the ACRV. The DPS scales had varying reliabilities with α ranging from .61 to .84. Table 3 provides an overview of the changes in the Early Adopter survey scores across time. The TSES scores increased from Time 2 (M = 5.68, SD = 1.25) to Time 3 (M = 6.77, SD = .99). This change was statistically significant, $p < .05$. The remaining scales showed little change across time.

[Table 3 near here]

All of the domains of the SWPRD Student Survey had adequate reliability ($\alpha \geq .60$), with the exception of Stress Coping ($\alpha \geq .42$) and Academic Motivation ($\alpha \geq .45$). Figure 6 provides an overview of change in SWPRD Student survey outcomes from Time 1 to Time 3. Student perceptions of all survey domains stayed largely the same. Students felt slightly more negative about their school environment at the end of the year compared to the beginning of the year.

[Figure 6 near here]

Most of the domains of the SWPRD parent survey had adequate reliability at Time 1 ($\alpha \geq .57$). At Time 3, reliability scores ranged from $\alpha = .40$ to $\alpha = .78$. Figure 7 provides a descriptive overview of the outcomes from the SWPRD Parent Survey from Time 1 to Time 3. Compared to Time 1, parents rated their child's safety at school, their child's social life at school, and the staff's role in bullying slightly less positively at Time 3, but rated parent-teacher relationships and teacher-child relationships more positively at Time 3.

[Figure 7 near here]

Discussion

Our goal was to test if school-wide positive and restorative discipline (SWPRD) could assist school personnel with integrating restorative practices with existing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). The SWPRD training materials mapped restorative practices onto the core components of school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS), an MTSS with which many high schools are familiar but which they often find challenging to implement.

Overall, our study indicated that introducing restorative practices into schools (a) depends on top-down and bottom-up support, (b) is a long-term commitment, (c) can require a fundamental shift in values if school personnel and students are accustomed to traditional discipline approaches, and (d) differs from school to school. As such, our study provides further empirical support for the recommendations set forth by Gregory and Evans (2020) on how to advance restorative practices in schools.

Most notably, our study participants were all non-traditional high schools with small overall enrollments. Non-traditional high schools responded first to our recruitment efforts, and responded enthusiastically. They were hungry for support and strongly committed to improving

their current discipline systems. It appeared that schools serving students who exhibit challenging behaviors, who leave traditional high schools because they feel ill-served, or who have elevated support needs, are most committed to addressing aspects of educational systems such as punitive consequences and disciplinary exclusions that seem to fail a fair number of students.

These schools' enthusiastic response resulted in initial over-enrollment of early adopters in our study. While our goal was to recruit four early adopters from each of four schools for a maximum of 16, the administrators of two of the participating schools requested that most of their staff sign up as early adopters. This meant that most of our study slots were quickly taken up and that we did not have a ratio of early adopters versus non-early adopters in two of our schools. It also meant that some early adopters might have participated primarily because of administrator pressure, and less because of their interest in becoming local champions for restorative practices. This might have also contributed to some early adopters not completing all assessments. Given the schools' enthusiastic desire to participate and given our emphasis on field testing of the training materials, we did not deliberately limit the number of early adopters per school.

Schools serving students with the highest needs experience the largest staff turn-over (Grissom, 2011). During our study, a number of early adopters left their school mid-year. Similarly, non-traditional high schools tend to have high student mobility, as students transition from regular to alternative settings during the year, drop out of school, or satisfy credit requirements early. During our study, the student population at our participating schools was in great flux which might have impacted teacher efforts to establish cohesive and trusting classroom communities.

All participating schools were familiar with school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS). Two schools were part of a district committed to district-wide SWPBIS implementation, while one school operated independently. The school-wide positive and restorative discipline (SWPRD) Fidelity of Implementation tool measured the extent to which schools implemented core SWPBIS components (e.g., defining and teaching behavioral expectations, using data for decision-making), as well as implemented those components through a restorative lens, meaning actively involving students in shaping discipline rules and resolving conflict when appropriate. None of the schools reached 80% implementation of the core SWPBIS components, the widely acknowledged implementation criterion (Horner et al., 2009), at Time 1. This seems consistent with the literature indicating that SWPBIS implementation at the high school level remains challenging (Flannery et al., 2013).

In this context, our study showed that our training had some impact on strengthening some core domains of SWPBIS implementation, improving staff perceptions of their use of positive behavior supports and restorative practices in the classroom, and improving early adopters' sense of self-efficacy with practices to keep students motivated and engaged. Changes in fidelity of implementation showed gains in use of restorative consequences and data-based decision making for all three schools. The use of rewards declined in two out of three schools. This might suggest that the participating schools welcomed the use of consequences that focused on understanding how behavior impacts self, others, and accountability, rather than on rule violation and appropriate punishment. Intrinsically rewarding students through noticing the positive impact of their behavior might require greater effort than giving out tokens or assigning privileges to promote behavioral compliance. Schools might have also shifted away from tangible, external rewards to promote intrinsic rewards through participation in conflict

resolution. The gains in data-based decision making might be due to our coaches' efforts to work with administrators and teachers to problem-solve discipline challenges and develop systemic implementation of restorative practices. Administrative support for the blended discipline approach increased in two out of three schools. Administrative support appears critical for teachers to engage with a new skill set.

In each of the three schools, early adopters' sense of efficacy increased steadily across time. This suggests that the training might have been successful in encouraging teachers to go outside their comfort zone, try new practices to build trusting relationships with and among students, and steadily improve their level of confidence with those practices. In each school, there were minimal changes in early adopters' orientation toward child rearing and perceptions of exclusionary and non-exclusionary discipline practices. Changing teachers' values and perceptions might be a long-term process that requires more time and continuous exposure to restorative practices training.

Descriptive changes on the staff survey indicated that staff perceptions of the extent to which they implemented positive behavior supports and restorative practices improved in all three schools. Those improvements were smallest in School A, where the administrator was highly committed to systemic implementation of restorative practices, and higher in the schools where early adopters seemed to be driving implementation efforts. This suggests that careful alignment between administrative goals and teacher readiness to engage with new skills is necessary for successful implementation of restorative practices.

Our descriptive findings were supported by follow-up significance testing. Results from the staff survey indicated statistically significant improvement in staff perceptions of positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) implementation from Time 1 to Time 2. This

improvement maintained at Time 3. Staff perceptions of restorative practices implementation improved significantly from Time 1 to Time 2 and from Time 2 to Time 3. Staff reported putting more emphasis on using restorative questions, impromptu chats and restorative circles to respond to inappropriate behavior. This suggests that training staff in strategies to proactively build positive relationships with and among students and to restore those relationships when they have been harmed might be perceived as one way to facilitate PBIS implementation at the high school level.

All schools welcomed administering the student survey. However, at the end of the study year, one school was unable to administer the survey due to its field work schedule. Another school changed physical location and underwent administrative restructuring which made administering the student survey difficult. We saw very little change on the student survey domains. Overall, students rated their school culture relatively high, especially their sense of school safety and teacher-student relationships. This suggests that non-traditional schools successfully address many of their students' needs. Students rated most domains slightly lower at the end than at the beginning of the year. This change might simply reflect general fatigue at the end of the school year. It might, however, also be an indication of changes in their school's discipline policies away from extrinsic rewards and toward greater involvement of students in decisions about how to address conflict and shared authority. Decentralization of authority and shared decision-making are monumental changes that require time and adjustments. Students might have felt somewhat irritated with the removal of external rewards while restorative responses and processes were not yet fully formed and implemented. Assessing student perceptions of their school environment regularly and actively using the data to improve staff responsiveness to students' support needs seems critical to implementing restorative practices

along a multi-tiered continuum.

It was encouraging to see that parents' ratings of parent-teacher relationships and teacher-child relationships improved over the course of the study. Our training included strategies for staff to involve parents in conversations about restorative practices, and the changes on the parent survey suggest that staff reached out to parents about their discipline practices. It is important to note that non-traditional high schools, perhaps due to their smaller size, might have more parent participation than larger, traditional high schools. Results need to be interpreted in the context of a very small sample representing two of our participating schools.

It seems important to note that, although all participating schools were alternative high schools, they differed in size and student population. School C had the largest student enrollment and highest minority enrollment and appeared to be most reluctant to take advantage of the follow-up coaching component of our training. Larger alternative schools might experience greater logistical challenges to create cohorts of early adopters and promoting shared professional development. The comparatively smaller schools seemed to be better positioned to participate in the training. It was not surprising to see that the majority of early adopters across all participating schools was White, while the student population was slightly more racially diverse. This is consistent with national trends indicating that most teachers remain White, while the student population is increasingly racially diverse (Will, 2020)

Overall, our findings suggest that the SWPRD training can help school personnel to introduce restorative practices into existing multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), and assist school staff and teachers with working towards systemic and sustainable implementation of restorative practices. School personnel often tend to view restorative practices as a responsive (Tier 2 and 3) intervention only, primarily to prevent exclusion of students from the classroom or

school. Students in School B seemed to corroborate this when they shared that circles tended to happen only after challenging behavior had occurred. Introducing restorative practices at Tier 1, therefore, appears necessary and perhaps most challenging. Gradually changing how teachers build protective relationships with all students requires a long-term commitment and cannot be achieved in a one-year small-scale study. Administrator buy-in and support appear necessary to implement restorative practices, as are individual teacher buy-in and support. The early adopters who were truly committed to a restorative approach to discipline became true champions in their local contexts.

Restorative practices are first and foremost a values-driven approach to discipline (Braithwaite, 2000). The core values of restorative practices include equity, respect, dignity, and empathy (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Reflecting these values in every interaction teachers have with students requires a shift away from focusing on behavioral compliance or violations to acknowledging the impact behavior has on oneself and others. While many teachers are trained to be classroom managers, restorative practices require them to become behavioral mentors of their students, teaching them to become accountable for their own behavior and modeling vulnerability, a requirement for true accountability. For example, teachers authentically sharing how behavior affects them, how events might question their authority, and what their emotional response is to those challenges can demonstrate the shared humanity of all individuals in the classroom and increase teachers' trustworthiness in their students' eyes. This fundamental shift takes time and cannot be achieved through procedural changes, such as posting expectations or agreements; it requires a great deal of self-reflection, and strategic action that will differ from school to school. Student needs, enrollment size, school climate, collegiality among teachers, and administrative support all likely impact how this shift occurs.

This shift from behavioral compliance to behavioral impact, and its individualized nature, poses challenges for measurement and how we build the evidence-base for restorative practices (Kok et al., 2016). The impact of interactions between students and teachers or between staff might not be as easily measurable as observable procedural changes, like posted expectations, or carefully planned lessons for teaching behavioral expectations (Acosta et al., 2016). Student and staff perceptions of their environment and their confidence level in engaging in restorative practices might be more difficult to appraise, though more relevant (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). Implementation of restorative interactions, such as circles, also needs to be individualized to the needs of participants so that all feel comfortable making their voice heard without fear of retaliation or psychological discomfort (Kervick, Moore, Ballysingh, Garnett, & Smith, 2019).

Limitations

Our study outcomes need to be interpreted in the context of the following limitations. First, our overall sample of participants was small. As such, our findings are largely descriptive and may not generalize beyond our sample. Our small sample also did not allow us to disaggregate student data to assess differences in student groups defined by race/ethnicity. Second, our focus on non-traditional high schools provided us with a participant sample with unique needs and operating in unique environments. Other school context might produce different findings. Third, large teacher turn-over resulted in many staff and early adopters not being present for all measurement occasions. As such, our sample for statistical testing was small and our tests underpowered. Fourth, all our measures were based on self-reports from participants. We did not conduct direct observations of teacher practices. Finally, the one-year duration of our study allowed us too little time to work with teachers and administrators on rigorous integration of restorative practices into their discipline systems. Longitudinal

replications might be necessary to obtain more rigorous results.

Recommendations for Refining Training Content and Delivery

Based on the findings from our study, we revised our training materials to highlight teacher voice. Instead of listening to researchers, teachers prefer to learn from each other and teacher testimonials carry much more credibility than professional trainers. A sample of the video testimonials included in the revised version of our training modules is available on the project's website at https://pride.obaverse.net/welcome/. We also engaged our coaches more directly in the delivery of the training modules to give them immediate exposure to a school's staff and establish a basis for building relationships for follow-up coaching. To facilitate early adopter access to coaching, we are also recommending that schools establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for their early adopters. PLCs facilitate scheduling of group-based coaching sessions, which promote collegial dialogue among the early adopters in a school.

We are currently testing the revised training materials and delivery model. Additional studies, especially longitudinal study designs are needed to observe the long-term effect of school staff interacting with the SWPRD training, building their confidence level with implementing the learned practices through participating in coaching, and gradually shifting to a more student-centered and restorative discipline approach.

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Table 1. *Participating school and early adopter demographics*

	School A	School B	School C
Overall student enrollment	67	39	216
Minority student enrollment	16%	18%	25%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0%	3%	2%
Asian	0%	0%	0%
Black/African/American	0%	3%	2%
Hispanic/Latino	6%	0%	22%
Multiracial	10%	13%	14%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
White	84%	82%	60%
Students with a disability	N/A	41%	22%
Students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch	70%	N/A	69%
Early adopters	$n = 4$	$n = 5$	$n = 3$[1]
Male	1	1	0
Female	3	3	2
Other	0	1	0
Hispanic/Latino	0	1	0
White	4	4	2

[1] Two out of three early adopters from School C completed the demographic questionnaire.

Table 2. *Domain reliability scores at each time point and change in SWPRD Staff Survey scores across Time 1, 2, and 3*

Domain (Number of respondents, reliability coefficient)	**Time 1**	**Time 2**	**Time 3**
School discipline process (N = 17; α = .91, .93., .96)	3.55 (.73)[a]	3.53 (.46)[a]	3.58 (.66)[a]
Disciplinary consistency and equity (N = 17; α = .77, .75., .84)	3.71 (.63)[a]	3.68 (.50)[a]	3.88 (.49)[a]
PBIS implementation (N = 17; α = .81, .81., .88)	3.47 (.60)[a]	3.82 (.51)[b]	3.86 (.55)[b]
RP implementation (N = 17; α = .90., .92., .92)	3.63 (.70)[a]	4.04 (.45)[b]	4.16 (.64)[c]
Blending PBIS and RD (N = 17; α = .83, .86., .88)	3.63 (.39)[a]	3.84 (.36)[a]	3.81 (.55)[a]
Understanding SWPRD (N = 16; α = .86, .83)	N/A	4.09 (.70)[a]	3.85 (.62)[a]
Benefits of SWPRD (N = 16; α = .78, .83)	N/A	3.75 (.53)[a]	3.67 (.52)[a]

Notes: Cell values are means (standard deviations). [a, b, c] = Cell-values for each scale that share the same superscript are not significantly different (i.e., p ≥ .05).

Table 3. *Domain reliability scores at each time point and change in Early Adopter Survey scores across Time 1, 2, and 3*

Domain (Number of respondents)	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Teacher self-efficacy survey (TSES; N = 11) (α = .77, .89, .93)	5.36 (.86)[a]	5.68 (1.25)[a]	6.77 (.99)[b]
Authoritarian Child Rearing Values (ACRV; N = 12) (α = .81, .84, .84)	2.42 (.66)[a]	2.58 (.71)[a]	2.52 (.68)[a]
Discipline Practices Survey (Non-Excl; N = 12) (α = .61, .81, .81)	5.85 (1.24)[a]	5.98 (1.27)[a]	5.88 (.93)[a]
Discipline Practices Survey (Excl; N = 12) (α = .66, .84, .67)	3.80 (1.03)[a]	3.94 (1.02)[a]	3.85 (1.02)[a]

Notes: Cell values are means (standard deviations). [a, b] = Cell-values for each measure that share the same superscript are not significantly different (i.e., p ≥ .05).

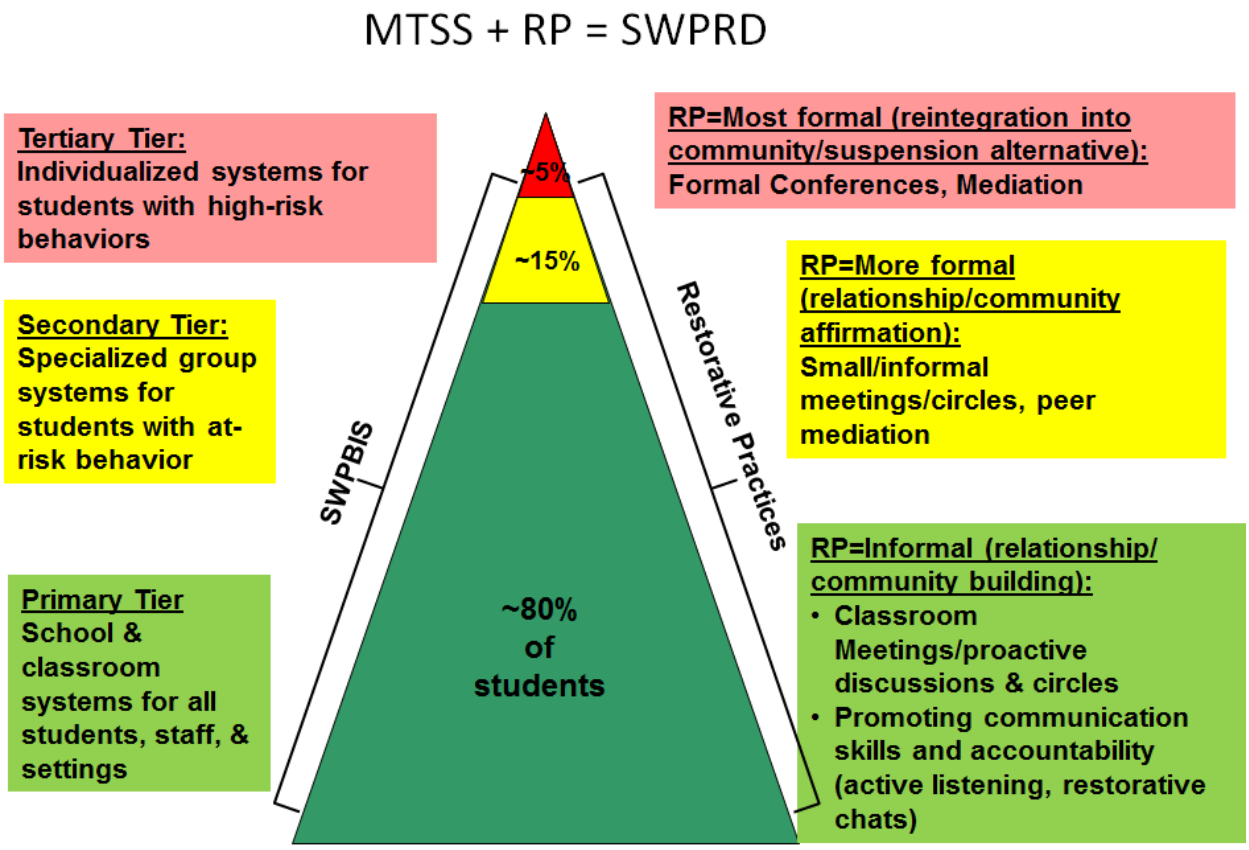


Figure 1: *Blending MTSS with Restorative Practices*

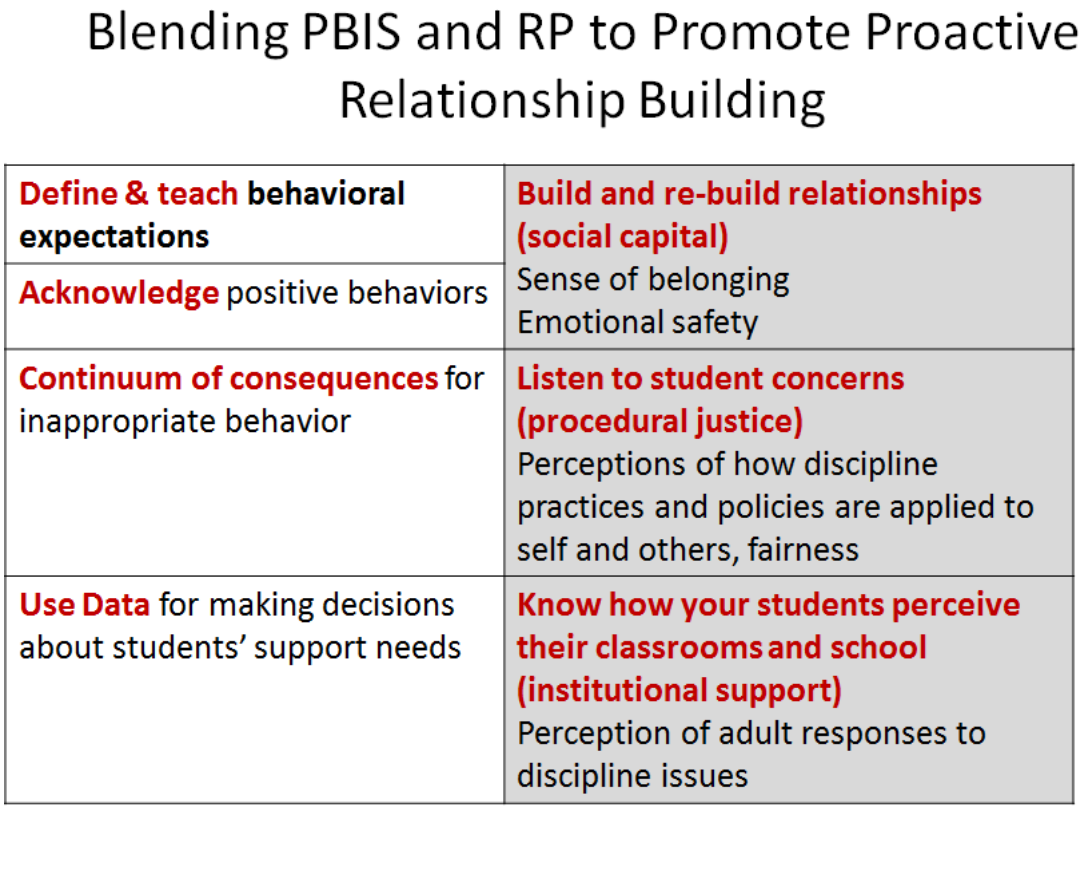
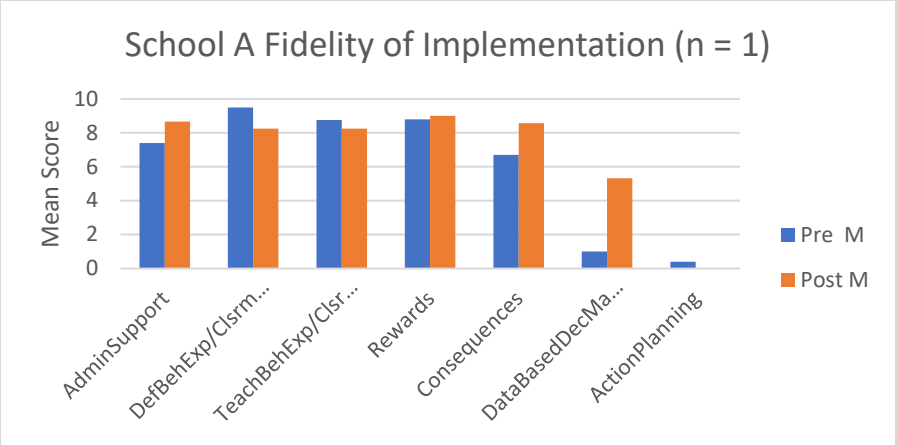
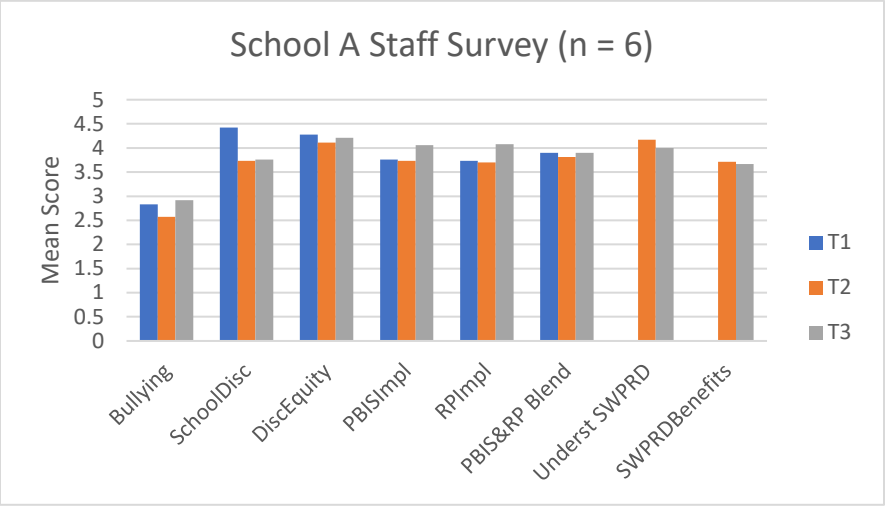


Figure 2: *Crosswalk between Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP)*





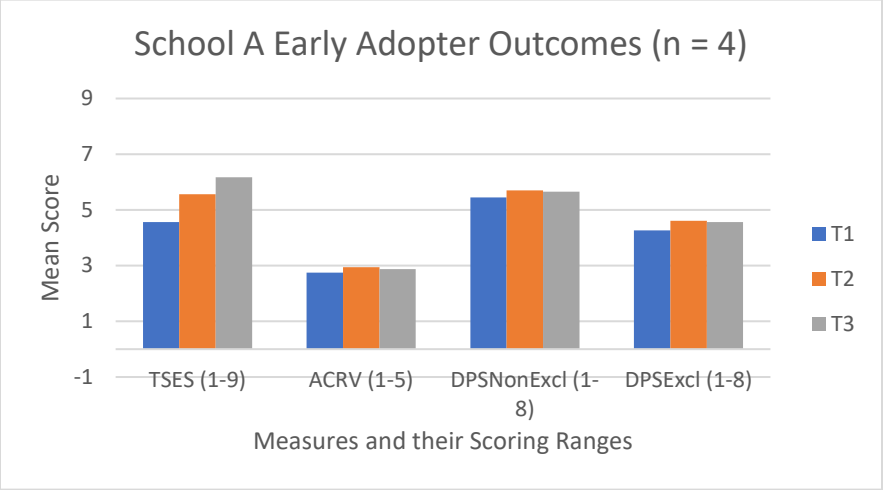
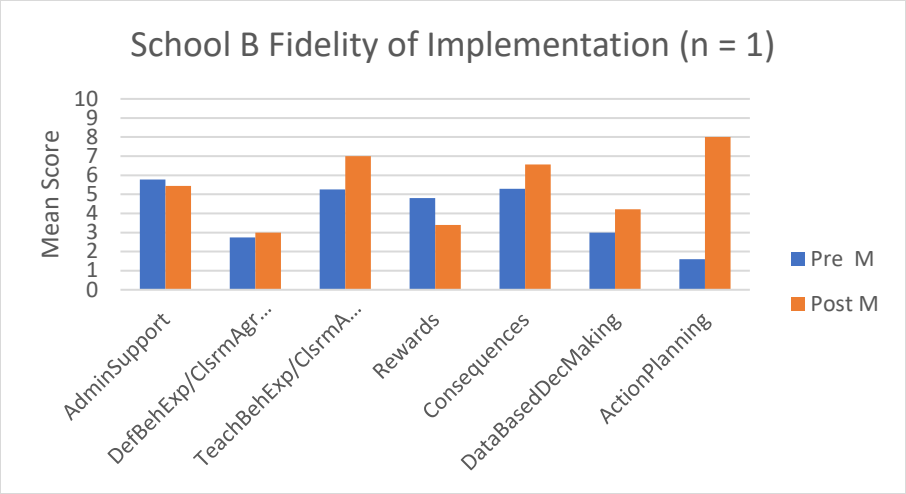
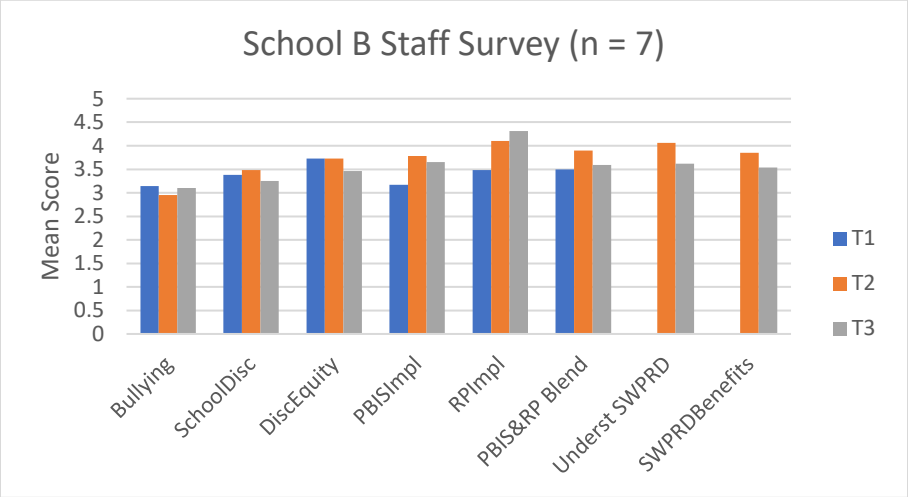


Figure 3: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School A.*





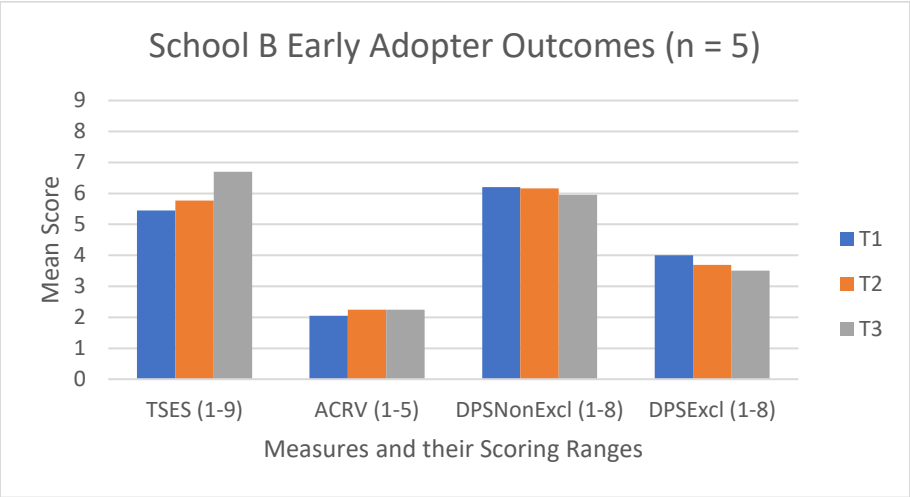
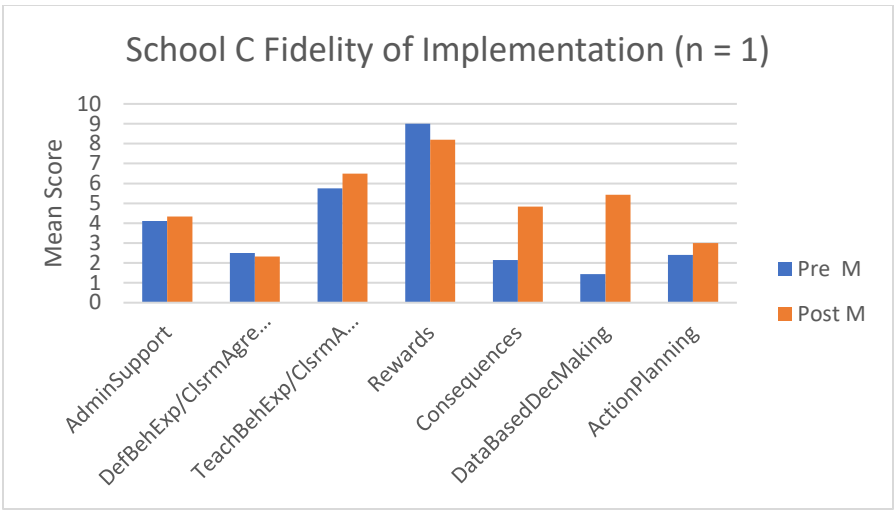
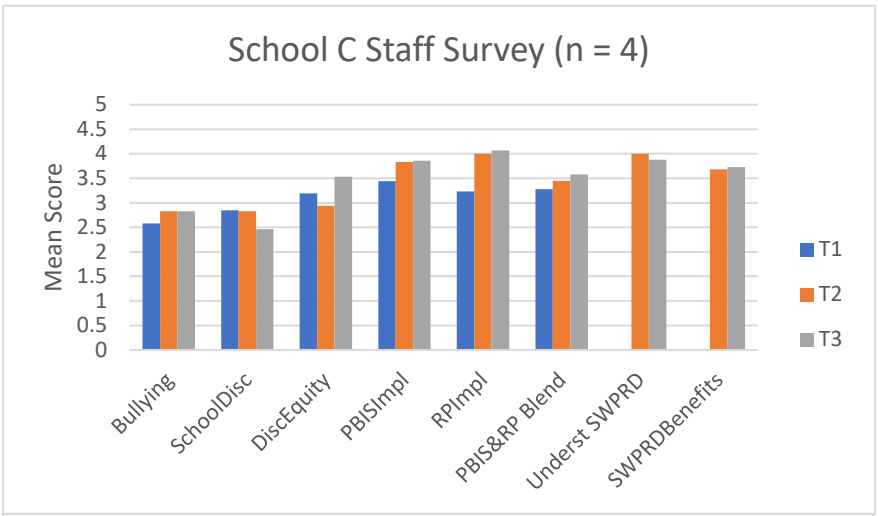


Figure 4: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School B.*





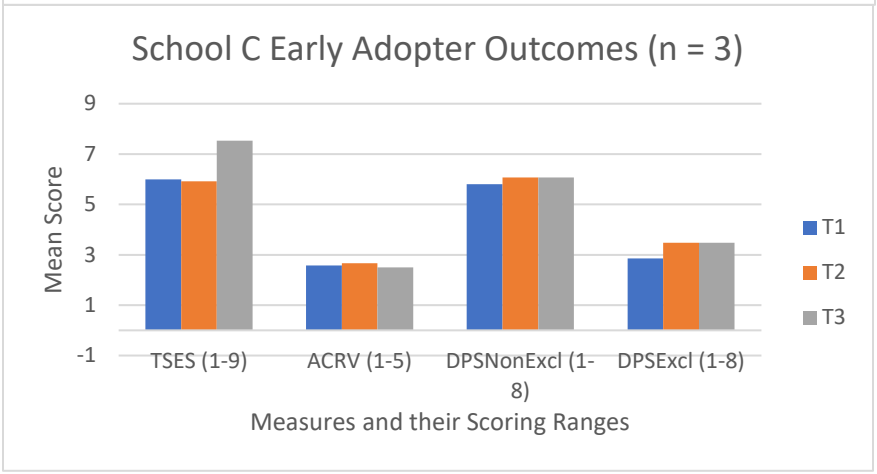


Figure 5: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School C.*

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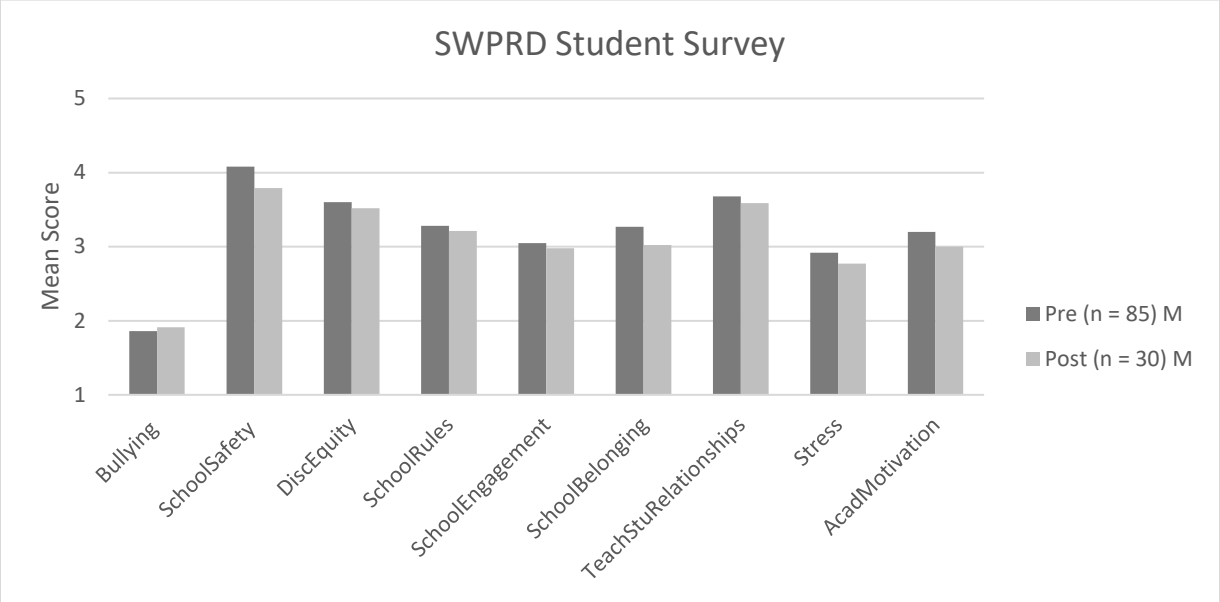

Figure 6: *SWPRD Student Survey changes from Pre (Time 1) to Post (Time 3)*

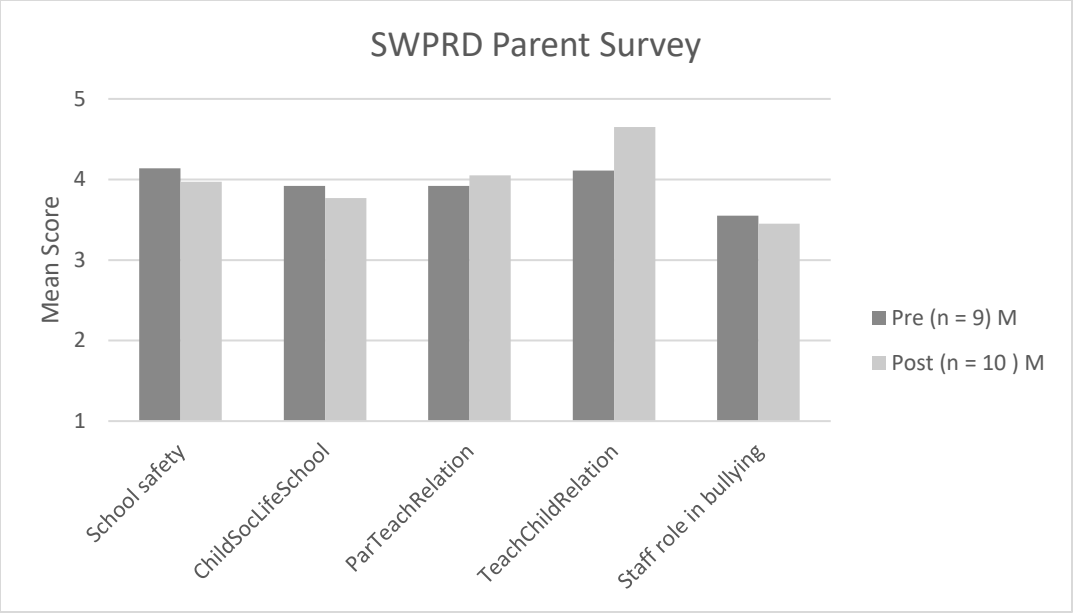

Figure 7: *SWPRD Parent Survey changes from Pre (Time 1) to Post (Time 3)*

Figure Captions:

Figure 1: *Blending MTSS with Restorative Practices.*

Figure 2: *Crosswalk between PBIS and Restorative Practices (RP).*

Figure 3: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School A.*

Figure 4: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School B.*

Figure 5: *Changes in fidelity of implementation, staff survey, and early adopter measures across time for School C..*

Figure 6: *SWPRD Student Survey changes from Pre (Time 1) to Post (Time 3).*

Figure 7: *SWPRD Parent Survey changes from Pre (Time 1) to Post (Time 3).*