Multi-year, Whole School Implementation of Restorative Practices in Saint Paul Public Schools: Relationships as Key to Improvements in School Climate and Student Behavior

Education Innovation and Research Program - Early Phase Application

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Significance

Although qualitative studies and a few systematic studies exist or are currently being conducted, implementation and evaluation of restorative practices (RP) as a whole-school change approach to improve school climate is in its early stages (Gregory et al., 2016). In this application, Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) proposes to evaluate implementation and expansion of a RP program already underway in elementary, middle and high school settings. The SPPS RP pilot program is a joint collaboration between the school district and local teachers' union affiliate, partially funded by a NEA Great Public Schools grant. The proposed study, submitted under **EIR's Early Phase Absolute Priority 1** and **2**, leverages work done in the district to date with pilot schools and will provide funding to 1) conduct a formal quasi-experimental evaluation of the field-initiated RP program in SPPS, 2) further develop structures and supports for implementing RP in new school sites to determine how best to take RP to scale, and 3) disseminate findings and lessons learned from the RP program.

Like many U.S. school districts, SPPS, one the largest and most diverse districts in Minnesota, has historically utilized a punitive approach to student discipline. This approach culminated in escalating tensions, serious discipline problems, and some high profile incidents of student physical aggression against school staff in 2015-2016. Together with the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers (SPFT), SPPS began a pilot of RP with six schools prior to the 2016-17 school year. SPPS chose RP because this framework has unique potential for addressing concerns about persistent disproportionality related to achievement, discipline and school engagement data. This approach is centered on RP as a whole-school framework to create a school climate that centers learning as primarily relational (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

School climate and academic achievement. As key dimensions of school climate,

the processes of teaching and learning are inherently based in relationships (Thapa et al., 2012). Indeed, connections between individuals are some of the most important contextual factors that drive positive climates in schools. And, school climate is positively related to students' academic achievement and behavior at all levels of schooling (Thapa et al., 2012). Research also demonstrates that in schools where students perceive environments that are both structured (e.g., having fair and reasonable discipline processes) and supportive (e.g., positive student-teacher relationships, offer help with non-academic problems), there are lower levels of behavior problems such as theft and aggression (Gregory & Cornell, 2009). When students report higher levels of positive teacher-student and student-student relationships and support, they also report improved self-esteem and higher grade point averages (Hanson et al., 2010). Importantly, better school climate has also been linked to a reduced achievement gap (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Astor et al., 2009). Despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of school climate, scholars also note that educational institutions have struggled to shift from a focus on individual behaviors and skill building to structural approaches focused on creating a relationally-oriented approach to learning (Bianchi, 1994; Braithwaite, 1989; Zehr, 1990; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

Also key to understanding challenges and opportunities related to school climate are the multiple approaches most schools are taking in supporting whole child development. Although differences exist in methods and specific goals, approaches such as RP, school climate improvement initiatives, social emotional learning strategies, de-biasing efforts, and trauma-informed practices have very strong philosophical alignment (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Blodgett & Dorado, 2016; Devine & Forscher, 2012). All provide confirming evidence that attention to relationships, mastery of key interpersonal skills, and effective norms, policies and

structures supporting these goals are essential to improving school climate, reducing problem behaviors, and improving academic outcomes for all students. While some ambiguity related to their exact alignment is inevitable, the literature and current practice appears to be moving toward stronger integration of these important endeavors. More targeted research and experienced voices from the field will be needed to guide this integration.

National Significance. The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows for school quality factors such as school climate and student engagement to be incorporated into state accountability systems. ESSA explicitly recognizes the strong relationship between positive school climates and student learning and success, with an underlying rationale that a strong system of comprehensive, social, emotional, and behavioral supports is equally as important as effective teaching in helping students achieve (NASP, 2016). In particular, RP are recommended as a universal prevention framework, as well as a positive discipline practice, that fosters healthy relationships among students and staff, promotes positive and inclusive school climates, teaches social skills, and repairs harm when it happens -harm to the victim, the school community, and the person who caused the harm. The proposed project, conducted in a school district with a diverse student population, will contribute further evidence of the impacts of RP implementation on student outcomes that are a key focus of current national school improvement initiatives.

Local Context. Traditionally, Minnesota has ranked near the top of national public education rankings—seventh in the nation by U.S. News & World Report (2016). However, this ranking masks the achievement gaps that exist among Minnesota's students. On the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth-grade reading assessment, Minnesota had the nation's third-largest gap between Hispanic and White students (33 points),

the third-largest gap between Black and White students (37 points), and the seventh-largest gap between low-income and middle-to-upper-income students (31 points).

These disparities are magnified in SPPS schools, where the majority (78.8%) are students of color or American Indian and most (67%) qualify for free/reduced price lunch. SPPS students are incredibly diverse: 32.9% Asian American, 30.7% Black/African American, 21.1% White, 13.5% Latino, and 1.8% American Indian. Additionally, 31% are English Learners (EL). Of the 60 largest U.S. districts, SPPS is second only to Dallas in the proportion of EL students compared to the entire enrolled student population (Uro & Barrio, 2013); common non-English languages spoken by students and their families include Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and Karen.

Results from Minnesota's 2016-17 comprehensive standardized assessment (MCA-III) show that achievement gaps persist. In reading, 72.1% of white students scored proficient, compared to only 23.2% of black students (nearly a 50-point gap). In math, 66.2% of white students scored proficient, compared to 12.5% of American Indian students (a 54-point gap). SPPS students of color also have disproportionately high levels of disengagement from school, as indicated by very different rates of chronic absenteeism and suspensions; in 2015-16, the average number of suspensions was 2.1 for black students and only 1.4 for white students. This level of disengagement contributes to academic struggles and points to the need for whole-school strategies and policies that engage students in their academic journey.

The Promise of Restorative Practices. RP has shown initial promise in improving school climate when implemented as a whole-school approach (IIRP, 2009; Ingraham et al., 2016), and in increasing the quality of teacher-student relationships (McCluskey et al., 2008; Ortega et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016), and student engagement (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). And there is preliminary evidence that RP is effective in creating racial equity with regard to discipline.

For example, Gregory and colleagues (2016) found that those classroom teachers who implemented RP at higher levels issued fewer discipline referrals to Latino and Black students compared with teachers who were lower implementers. And, in one of the few comparison studies to date, differences in black versus white student suspensions were slightly lower in RP schools compared with a matched set of non-RP schools (Simson, 2012).

Promising evidence of affecting academic outcomes (e.g., standardized tests) also exist. Academic gains have been noted in practice-based research literature in one San Antonio, Texas middle school (Armour, 2015) as well as in middle and high school settings in Oakland, California (Jain et al, 2014). Academic gains in the Texas study were, however, not maintained throughout the course of the three-year implementation, providing early evidence of the challenges that schools face with sustaining consistent practice over time (Armour, 2015).

Positive Youth Development & RP. Grounding the research of SPPS' evaluation partners at the UMN Prevention Research Center (UMN-PRC) is a positive youth development (PYD) perspective that sees young people as "resources to be developed, not problems to be solved" (Pittman et al., 2001). PYD refers to a deliberate process of building systems and supports that provide young people with the relationships, experiences, and opportunities to successfully transition from childhood to adulthood. Akin to school climate, a key building block of PYD is the concept of connectedness. The positive effects of connectedness to pro-social adults –within family, school or community—is a persistent finding in the UMN-PRC's research and in studies with youth worldwide (Sieving et al., 2017). Greater school connectedness has been associated with (1) better academic outcomes, including higher academic performance, staying in school longer, and school completion (CDC, 2009; Blum & Libbey, 2004; McNeely, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray et al., 2007) and (2) lower levels of involvement in risky

behaviors that jeopardize health and learning (Catalano et al., 2004). Importantly, UMN-PRC partners have noted increases in levels of school connectedness for both students and family members as a result of a RP intervention that stressed repair of harm in the Minneapolis Public School district (McMorris et al., 2013); this study lacked a comparison group, however. Although educational leadership may be hesitant to invest in programs that focus broadly on PYD, school climate, or prevention, evidence exists that adoption of such programs also improves academic outcomes (Fleming et al., 2005; Snyder et al., 2010).

Educator Growth & RP. Research also indicates that teachers' work environment, their peer relationships, and feelings of inclusion and respect are foundational to creating a positive school climate (Guo, 2012). Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs do not emphasize an understanding of school climate principles as central to student achievement and child and adolescent development. Thus, building the theoretical basis and practical skills to form relationships with all students will require ongoing and supportive professional development. In particular, the need for educator training and coaching support is important to acknowledge, given the significant paradigm shift that is inherent in RP approaches (Mayworm et al., 2016; Gregory, Gerewitz et al., 2016). Fundamental principles underlying RP -that learning is relational and that harm within schools primarily is of concern because of how it affects relationships- likely represent a significant change in mindset that goes against longstanding norms within the U.S. school systems (Winn & Milner, 2018). Whole school approaches to restorative practices emphasize the absolute necessity of community and relationship building among educators, initial training and ongoing coaching support for all educators implementing RP, and a focus on relationships and engagement among both students and teachers.

Increasingly, there is also recognition that this type of whole school RP approach represents an opportunity to transform the relationships that educational systems have with communities of color and low socio-economic status when grounded in the paradigms underpinning restorative justice. Dr. Maisha Winn offers tools for creating and sustaining the RP mind-set. These tools form a conceptual framework from which to both train and assess the extent to which educators implement RP in ways that are consistent with the principles and paradigms of RP. Taken together, her "four pedagogical stances," that history, race, justice, and language matter, asks each person implementing RP to recognize and affirm the importance and interconnectedness of people, communities and experiences. As a consultant to this project (see Appendix C; letter of support), Dr. Winn will demonstrate how each stance (e.g., History Matters) can be incorporated into different contexts and content spaces in school buildings seeking to build a restorative climate and better engage all students (Winn & Milner, 2018).

Early RP evidence in SPPS. In Saint Paul, like in districts across the country, the adoption and practice of RP outpaces the science supporting effectiveness and best practices regarding implementation. While an emphasis on continual improvement has defined SPPS' RP efforts since the RP project began two years ago, evaluation efforts have been self-funded by SPPS or UMN-PRC and have been focused on internal learning. Nonetheless, early evidence is promising. The project logic model (Appendix G) posits that by focusing on educator professional development and support in the first year, positive impact on primary objectives should begin to appear after the second year of implementation. In support of this rationale, a survey of 569 SPPS educators (16.7% of members) in November 2017 found that school sites that began the pilot in 2016-17 and were in their second year of RP school-wide implementation

had achieved nearly universal training (93%) and frequent use of core community-building practices (77%). In contrast, schools just beginning implementation (in 2017-18) were making progress toward achieving those goals, as compared to nonpilot schools, including those interested enough in RP to have applied to become a pilot site (see Table A-1 in Appendix H). Additionally, the two pilot school sites with the strongest and most consistent implementation of their RP approach are preliminarily reporting between a 30-60% reduction in suspensions near the end of their second full year of implementation.

Two rigorous trials currently underway will perhaps provide the evidence needed to make stronger claims beyond those currently being observed and consistently reported regarding RP effectiveness. First, Dr. Joy Acosta, working with the International Institute of Restorative Practices, is using a cluster randomized design to assess effectiveness of two-year whole school RP approaches in 14 middle schools in Maine (Acosta et al., 2016). Although a randomized study, an acknowledged limitation is that 95% of students in Maine are white (Acosta et al., 2016). And secondly, Dr. Marilyn Armour, working with the Austin (TX) Independent School District, recently received EIR funding to assess impacts of multi-year school-wide approaches to RP with a cohort of students as they transition between elementary and middle schools using a quasi-experimental design (Austin Independent School District, 2017).

This proposed study, also a multi-year RP implementation trial, adds to these trials by: 1) including high schools in assessing impacts of a three-year RP implementation process already underway using a quasi-experimental design; 2) adding more defined structures and supports for new RP school sites, including a readiness processes, implementation guidance tailored to different grade spans and integration of additional equity-focused strategies within the RP

approach; and 3) rigorously evaluating the effects of RP under these more structured and equity-focused conditions.

Project Design and Management Plan

Building upon existing RP strategies in SPPS. The work upon which this proposal builds began when SPPS committed to three years of funding for 12 pilot schools (six began in the 2016-17 school year, three started in 2017-18, and three will start in 2018-19) to achieve whole school implementation of RP. The final three sites supported under this pilot will end their 3-year implementation in 2021. Schools were selected based on an application process with primary criteria of 1) commitment to adhering to the principles of RP; 2) 75% educator approval; and 3) commitment to whole school implementation of RP with at least equal focus on community building and repair of harm.

As intended through a pilot process, extensive learning has occurred in the past two school years. A logic model of SPPS' approach was developed (see Appendix G), as well as a definition of RP that emphasizes three core practices: developing relationships through community building circles, engaging students through content circles and responding to all instances of harm by providing both support and accountability (see text box). Circle, a core practice at each level, is a process for engaging in conversation that emphasizes 1) equality by

> **SPSS restorative practices** are both a system of beliefs and ways of being, teaching and responding to each other, students and families. In our RP work, we at SPPS:
> - Believe that learning is relational and our schools should be places of engagement and accountability achieved with students;
> - Focus most of our effort on establishing strong, inclusive relationships within our communities through regular community building circles;
> - Engage students by connecting to their lived experiences through content circles;
> - Aim to empower, understand, provide support and create accountability for all who had a role in harm that occurs in our communities, including historical harm, so that relationships are restored.

sitting in a circle; 2) inclusion by passing a talking piece to indicate when to speak and when to listen; 3) intentionality by starting with an opening that grounds people in community and proceeds through a sequenced, guided conversation in which the facilitator asks questions of the group and passes the talking piece so all have an opportunity to respond (Boyes Watson & Pranis, 2015). Content circles bring the principles of circle (equality, inclusion, intention) to usual classroom practice by first asking students to share an experience they have related to the content, and then continuing through guided discussion incorporating both student or community experience and new information. Practices for responding to harm range from informal and immediate options such as affective statement or restorative chats, to more formal repair of harm conferences or circles. Affective statements help adults to reframe a conversation in the moment from one most interested in assigning blame and punishment to one that expresses concern about the person who was affected and the person who may have caused harm, putting the emphasis on the relationship and what needs to happen to repair the harm. Conferences or circles include preparatory conversations with all parties and a formal process of problem solving that again focus on the harm and making it right.

The SPPS definition and related practices purposefully state SPPS's intention to commit to measurable, whole-school implementation of RP grounded in key principles that center the inherent worth of all people (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Additional information underlying SPPS implementation are outlined in Appendix H: SPPS RP Readiness Process and SPPS Implementation Guidance.

This work intersects with strategic planning underway in SPPS. Superintendent Dr. Joe Gothard stepped into his position in July 2017, and began to engage in long-term planning with community and education stakeholders. At this time, components of a strategic planning

> **SPSS Strategic Focus Areas**
> 1) creating a shared sense of community to build trust and collaboration within and outside our schools;
> 2) providing instruction in ways that are relevant to each student so they stay engaged and feel valued in the classroom;
> 3) evaluating effectiveness of current programs to make informed adjustments and investments (SPPS, 2018)

framework include key long-term outcomes focused on increased student achievement and strategic focus areas (see text box) expressing what SPPS stakeholders will do to attain these outcomes. While specific strategies are still being finalized, these focus areas are clearly aligned to whole school implementation of RP and speak to district-level commitment to achieve sustained, impactful change within SPPS schools and community (see Appendix H: SPPS Matching Resources Letter).

Proposed Part I activities (see Table 1) will allow for more rigorous assessment of outcomes achieved by the current pilot sites, including an initial outcomes analysis in Fall 2019 after six schools complete their three years of implementation, and then again in 2022 assessing all 12 schools using similar methodology (see Appendix C: Existing Pilot Schools Letters of Support). The SPPS RP team will also capitalize on the extensive momentum and curiosity for implementing RP in SPPS. Beyond the current 12 pilot schools, 15 schools have applied to become an RP pilot site, indicating great enthusiasm for expansion of RP to take place in Part II (see Appendix C: Interested RP Schools Letters of Support). In sum, EIR funding would support additional data collection of RP pilot site implementation, analysis of both process and outcomes data, and dissemination of findings, in addition to RP program expansion to eight new schools.

Goals, objectives, outcomes. The purpose of this study is to illuminate key factors related to RP implementation that lead to positive impact on overall levels of school climate, discipline and attendance data while reducing differences between racial and ethnic groups. Within a distinct two-part structure, four primary project goals are proposed (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Project Goals, Objectives, Outcomes

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
PART I: Analyze and disseminate knowledge from existing SPPS RP pilot study		
1. Assess impacts of current RP implementation on 12 pilot schools representing 9,050 students	1.1. In Year 1, analyze implementation results from pilot schools and outcomes from 6 pilot study schools (who have completed the pilot) to create and disseminate best practices for readiness and implementation to academic and practice audiences. 1.2. In Years 2-3, assess implementation of remaining six pilot schools. 1.3 In Year 4, analyze outcomes from 12 pilot schools on school climate, discipline, attendance, and academic achievement (exploratory)	1.1.1. All schools assessed against indicators of implementation; degree of implementation explored as moderator in impact analysis of Phase I schools 1.1.2. Student will report increases in ratings of school climate (i.e., 85% of students will report feeling safe at school and that teachers care) 1.1.3. Office discipline referrals will drop by 25%; suspensions will drop by 10%
Part II: Prepare, select, support and evaluate up to 8 "RP ready" schools in a more controlled and structured early-phase efficacy trial		
2. Prepare 8 schools to become "RP ready	2.1. In Year 1, four schools successfully complete readiness process and begin 3-year whole school RP implementation plan, ending in spring 2022. 2.2. In Year 2, four schools successfully complete readiness process and begin 3-year whole school RP implementation, ending in spring 2023.	2.1.1. SPPS readiness process and implementation guidance are finalized and employed for Part II work 2.1.2. Schools deemed "ready" achieve 100% rating on readiness process 2.1.3. Baseline analysis of key measures of school climate are analyzed to inform implementation plan at each school
3. Integrate Dr. Winn's pedagogical stances into content and community-building circle practices	3.1. In Year 1, developmentally tailored strategies for integrating pedagogical stances into content and community-building circles will be developed and added to implementation guidance. 3.2. In Years 2-5, 60 annual classroom observations will include monitoring, coaching and feedback for educators related to the pedagogical stances	3.1.1. Thirty-two lesson plans (eight for each grade span within each content area) will be developed and added to implementation guidance by August 15, 2019 (Year 1). 3.2.1. By Year 5, classroom teachers receive average of 75% proficient rating for observations focused on integrating of pedagogical stances into content circles.
4. Improve school climate and attendance, and reduce discipline in 8 schools supported to do whole school RP implementation, representing 6,630 students	4.1. Beginning in Year 2, RP ready schools are monitored and supported to implement whole school approaches of RP with fidelity. 4.2. After three years of whole school implementation, eight RP ready schools will have overall improvements and reduced racial and ethnic group gaps in school climate, attendance and discipline.	4.1.1. Schools achieve 90% annual rating on fidelity of implementation scores 4.1.2. Student will report increases in ratings of school climate (i.e., 85% of students will report feeling safe at school and that teachers care) 4.1.3. Office discipline referrals will drop by 30%; suspensions will drop by 12%

Plan to Achieve Objectives: **Part I. Rigorous Evaluation of SPPS RP Pilot Sites.** Funded

by a small, internal UMN grant mechanism, UMN-PRC researchers produced Year 1 school

reports with baseline outcome and first year implementation data, along with several district

level reports (see Appendix H –Year 1 Implementation Reports). UMN-PRC continues to collect

implementation data and will produce similar reports at the end of the 2017-18 school year,

despite reduced funding. While SPPS is invested to support the pilot implementation, proposed

funding will support analysis and disseminating lessons learned to national audiences using

rigorous evaluation methods. Part I activities are detailed below in Dissemination and Section 3.

Part II. Early Phase Efficacy RP Intervention Research. Proposed Part II goals are

grounded in SPSS' specific approach to RP to date. The RP team will integrate lessons learned

from the pilot and create a more structured, supportive RP framework for whole school

implementation. Given the paradigm shift required and the goal to impact entire buildings, SPPS

RP guidance is based on the drivers and stages of Implementation Science, such that schools

proceed through stages of exploration, installation, initial and full implementation (Blase and

Fixen, 2010). Experience to date confirms the interactive and individualized process of personal

change within educators in the whole school change process. The RP principles of providing

support and creating accountability in relationship requires that educators do more than adopt

new tools. Educators will be supported by a full-time site lead in each building, a district RP

coach who will ensure fidelity to RP principles and implementation guidance informed by the

experiences of other SPPS educators. Part II schools will participate in the following components

to reach whole school implementation of RP within three academic years.

RP Readiness Process/Exploration. Schools interested in RP will participate in the

SPPS RP Readiness Process (see Appendix H) during Years 1-2, and access other resources in

the SPPS Schoology Course: RP Module 1: Exploring and building readiness for RP (see

Appendix H). The RP team plans to move to a readiness process to allow schools to focus time

and energy into preparing their leadership and staff for RP implementation rather than writing an application which may or may not be accepted. Written RP resources will be made available in Schoology, an existing online platform that all SPPS staff are able to access. Other resources available for this stage include training from the district RP coordinator for building leadership

> **Contents of Online Schoology Course: Implementation Guidance for RP in SPPS**
> - Introduction to RP in SPPS
> - Module 1: Exploring and building readiness for RP
> - Module 2: Installation/Building Relationships and a Restorative School Climate
> - Module 3: Initial Implementation/Being Restorative
> - Module 4: Full Implementation/Maintaining and strengthening a restorative school climate

and 10 hours of funded circle experience for all educators which provides a common foundation so educators begin to fully understand RP as both a paradigm shift and a set of new practices. By the end of this stage, a 75% opt-in rate among building staff is required to move forward, in addition to a tailored implementation plan and budget for each school (developed with the coaching of the district RP coordinator), and draft evaluation and communication plans (developed with the project evaluation lead and district communications office). The district RP coordinator will have primary responsibility for coaching and monitoring eight schools to successfully complete this readiness process between early 2019 and the spring of 2020, with four establishing "RP readiness" by fall 2019 and 2020.

Achieving RP School Wide Implementation. Upon successfully completing the exploration phase, schools proceed through installation and initial implementation stages. While linear in theory, these stages are iterative in practice, especially for approaches such as RP that include multiple practices implemented in different ways. Extensive coordination between the building site leads and the district RP coach is required throughout, with the district coach ensuring integrity to RP while site leads coach and support educators. Guidance and resources tailored to different grade spans will ensure RP is being implemented with fidelity throughout the

building. To maintain relevance and adaptability, these resources will be web-based and serve as supplements to in-person training and coaching that are the core of RP.

Table 2: Timeline for School Implementation and Analysis

			Proposed Y1	Proposed Y2	Proposed Y3	Proposed Y4	Proposed Y5
School Year:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Part I							
n = 6 pilot schools	Install	Init Imp	Init Imp	Full Imp	…	…	…
Analysis of 6 pilot schools	*Imp*	*Imp*	*Imp & Outcomes*				
n =3 pilot schools		Install	Init Imp	Init Imp	Full Imp	…	…
Analysis of 3 pilot schools			*Imp*	*Imp*	*Imp*		
n =3 pilot schools			Install	Init Imp	Init Imp	Full Imp	…
Analysis of 3 pilot schools				*Imp*	*Imp*	*Imp*	
Analysis of all 12 pilot schools						*Imp & Outcomes*	
Part II							
n= 4 new schools			Assess readi	Install	Init Imp	Init Imp	Full Imp
Analysis of 4 new schools				*Imp*	*Imp*	*Imp & Outcomes*	
n= 4 new schools				Assess readi	Install	Init Imp	Init Imp
Analysis of 4 new schools					*Imp*	*Imp*	*Imp & Outcomes*

Notes: Install = installation phase; Init Imp = initial implementation phase; Full Imp = full implementation phase; Imp = implementation; Assess readi = assess readiness.

The **installation stage** of RP implementation will include finalizing the whole-school implementation plan, continuing to identify and address structural barriers, beginning educator professional development and employing the site lead to coach educators in RP so they can explore and expand their practice with support. This occurs over the first 6-12 months of funding. Professional development expectations include ensuring all staff receives training on the principles and practices of RP, introduction to community-building circles and affective statements for responding to minor harm, generally delivered in a two-day training prior to the start of the school year by an experienced RP community trainer. Professional development will be supported by SPPS match funds. Additional expected milestones include educators spending 10 hours in circle during the academic year in which they explore the challenge and promise of RP. At this stage, RP site leads are responsible for ensuring educators are trained and supported.

The district RP coach will provide coaching and support to the RP site lead and leadership team to ensure implementation plan progress and monitor adherence to quality standards.

Initial implementation, documented as Schoology Module 3: Being Restorative, occurs during Years 2-3 when financial support for the RP site lead continues and schools are expected to provide ongoing training and support of educators per their tailored implementation plan. By the end of the third academic year of funding, expected milestones include: 1) all behavioral specialists and administrative staff who respond to harm, such as aggressive or disengaged behavior, will attend 4-day intensive trainings during summer months to conduct repair of harm circles and conferences; 2) expectations and supportive coaching for community building circles are in place tailored to the grade span of the school community; and 3) at least eight hours of additional professional development for teachers on incorporating content circles infused with Winn's (2018) pedagogical stances has been provided. Schools will also be expected to include family engagement and communications strategies in Years 2-3.

Full Implementation. Upon completion of three years of financial support, school RP leadership teams shift their focus to maintaining and continually improving practices. Key activities include 1) implementing an ongoing training plan; 2) continue using the practices and monitoring for quality and fidelity; 3) remaining connected to district supports, such as the RP coach, to train new educators and stay abreast of new developments in the RP field; 4) ensuring that RP remains relevant in the school policies and practices.

Project Partners. This project extends a partnership between SPPS, SPFT and the UMN-PRC. Since the beginning of the RP pilot, these groups have collaborated to capture, integrate and improve the quality and impact of the RP implementation currently taking place at 12 pilot sites (see text box for key personnel). An additional key partner is the RP steering

> **Key Project Personnel & Responsibilities**
>
>   **Kathy Lombardi Kimani**, Project Director, Director of SPPS Department of School Climate and Support. Ms Kimani has overall responsibility for the management of current and proposed RP activities, supervise the project coordinator and RP coach
>
>   **Becky McCammon**, district RP Coordinator, convenes the RP steering committee monthly, have primary responsibility for ensuring RP implementation integrity, coaching sites during the readiness process, and coordinate district-level activities and trainings
>
>   **District RP Coach**, TBH, will train, support and coach the site leads at each school and provide sustaining support to schools after the initial three-year implementation period
>
>   **Site RP leads** at eight schools will be funded for three years to guide implementation within buildings, coordinate PD and be educator coaches
>
>   **Dr. Barbara McMorris**, Associate Professor, UMN School of Nursing and UMN-PRC, will have primary responsibility for ensuring scientific integrity of the project, obtaining appropriate UMN human subjects approval, conducting quantitative data analysis, and publishing academic manuscripts.
>
>   **Kara Beckman**, UMN-PRC Senior Evaluator, will have primary responsibility for designing and collecting fidelity of implementation data, creating and disseminating school- and district-level annual reports to ensure timely data feedback loops inform continual improvement and conducting qualitative data analysis.

committee, a community of leaders inclusive of multiple perspectives and roles: RP leaders, community allies, the coordinator of our Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, long-time community circle keepers and elders in the local RP community of practice, the coordinator for SPPS' Out for Equity (LGBTQ) programs, a social worker, the Assistant Director of the School Climate and Support Office, parents and the President of SPFT (see Appendix C: Letters of Support). This space has nurtured the development of leaders and allies to RP who advise the work through a deeply supportive and highly accountable lens. Resumes, research biosketches or position descriptions of key project staff, when appropriate, are included in Appendix B.

   Commitment to Performance Feedback and Continuous Improvement. The RP logic model and evaluation plan were originally developed from stakeholder meetings held during Fall 2016. The principles of developmental evaluation have informed the evaluation plan, stressing that evaluations should "illuminate, inform and support what is being developed" and "time feedback to inform ongoing adaptation as needs, findings and insights emerge" (Patton, 2016). Over the first two years of RP implementation, multiple feedback measures have been employed, leading to specific adaptations; e.g., through ongoing performance feedback, the lead evaluator

worked with the district RP coordinator and site leads to clarify the use of assessment tools as primarily for coaching or evaluation, create observation tools for assessing school environments and use fidelity data for RP community-building circles for both coaching and assessment.

A key principle of RP is to do WITH, not TO or FOR, and this principle also undergirds the proposed project's evaluation plan. UMN-PRC operationalizes this principle by ensuring all data are quickly assessed and returned to primary stakeholders for interpretation and action as needed. The lead evaluator and district RP coordinator have standing monthly meetings and regularly communicate more frequently. Annual reports for district and school-specific results were created and shared back within one month of receiving data.

For purposes of Part II, efforts to provide feedback that drive continuous improvement will continue. All fidelity of implementation and outcomes measures, in addition to reflective assessments, observations, and student and teacher surveys will be analyzed in a timely manner and shared with project leadership to inform the iterative process of continuous improvement.

Dissemination. Broadly sharing lessons learned related to fidelity of implementation and outcomes is a key priority of this project. The district RP coordinator has been a panelist at national conferences in New Orleans and Washington D.C., hosted school district representatives interested in RP from Madison, WI and Indianapolis, IN, and attended trainings in Colorado and New York to share and learn from other RP practitioners. UMN-PRC will continue to create annual reports for district and school stakeholders. In Year 1, the RP team will finalize a communications and dissemination plan (Table 3), to prepare for sharing knowledge and experiences with both peer-reviewed and practice audiences locally, regionally and nationally.

To the extent that findings warrant, the RP team will provide technical assistance and collaborate with other local education agencies, furthering relationships already developed with

Table 3. RP Program Communication and Dissemination Activities and Timeline		
Products	**Audience/Type of product**	**Timeline**
SPPS Communications Plan	Principals, community, local media: Brief bi-monthly articles sharing progress, results, lessons learned	Ongoing, starting November 2018
Internal SPPS Reports	School reports for each school implementing and RP and 3-4 district level "Spotlight" reports (see Appendix H: Year 1 Reports)	Each November starting 2019
Academic manuscript #1	Conceptual approach, implementation results and initial outcomes of RP pilot schools (vs. comparison schools)	November 2019
Academic manuscript #2	Full impact assessment, including on academic achievement and discipline gaps for 12 schools	February 2022
Academic manuscript #3	Outcomes and validity of readiness process for implementation success of school wide implementation of RP for Phase II schools	September 2023
Practice report #1	Whole Child Approaches: Lessons learned re: RP implementation at different grade spans	July 2019
Practice report #2	Maximizing Success: Lessons learned re: readiness and implementation of RP	July 2021
Practice report #3	Becoming Restorative: Whole school approaches and impacts of restorative practices	August 2023

schools throughout Minnesota, Madison Public Schools or exploring opportunities with the

Austin Independent School District to build on shared RP work and consider joint applications

for a mid-phase EIR study to more rigorously test impacts of school wide implementation of

restorative practices.

Project Evaluation

The proposed evaluation utilizes a mixed methods design for both implementation and

outcome measures. UMN-PRC proposes to use an embedded design in which quantitative

outcome data analyzed over the course of a three-year implementation plan are explained and

complemented by qualitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). This pragmatist approach

will produce results that will have valuable external consequences (Bishop, 2015), such as

conceptual clarity in characterizing and operationalizing key components of effective RP in

schools without reducing the RP approach to a curriculum or set of tools (Morrison, 2012).

The RP team's experience of implementation so far underscores the importance of

narrative as key to understanding how RP is impacting a school building and the cyclical and

personal nature of the processes of change that learning about, experiencing and later implementing RP, can have on individuals. SPPS has also undertaken this work because of an urgent desire to see RP impact quantitative outcomes such as office discipline referrals (ODR), suspensions, attendance and student reports of connectedness and engagement.

As specified in the Logic Model (Appendix G), the theory of change is that through high quality, whole school RP implementation, a more relational school climate can be achieved within 2-3 years. In the long-term, sustained changes in climate are theorized to positively impact student achievement and reduce racial disparities. A further hypothesis is that schools who achieve "readiness" and implement RP with additional structures and supports proposed above will outperform existing pilot schools in their ability to improve outcomes in the timeframe described.

Sample. SPPS is made up of 56 schools and 5,600 staff serving approximately 37,000 students; 12 schools are part of Part I proposed activities, serving almost 10,000 students who tend to be primarily black or Asian and are eligible to receive free-reduced lunch (78%). Eight additional schools with similar characteristics will participate in Part II activities. Non-RP schools will be comparisons. School site descriptions are provided in Table A-2 in Appendix H.

Fidelity Measures. Table 4 shows proposed implementation fidelity measures for each component of SPPS RP implementation. Fidelity measures include both quality (to assess how well practices are implemented in alignment with restorative principles) and scope/quantity measures (to assess the extent to which practices are implemented within enough aspects of school life to achieve school-wide impact.)

Qualitative measures are assessed by conducting annual interviews with the school principal and site lead, classroom observations and document reviews. More detailed methods

Table 4. Fidelity of Implementation Measures

Core RP Component	Quality measure	Measure of scope/quantity
RP Readiness	- Implementation plans meet quality criteria	- schools achieve 100% on checklist of 13 items
Principles and paradigm	· Trainer qualifications · Assessment of school climate and discipline policies completed · Extent to which leadership team continues to assess and grow implementation	· # hours of RP 101 training (target: 16 hours) · # & role of educators trained (target: all adults in building) · #, timing & attendance of refresher trainings or reflections
Community building circles	· Trainer qualifications · Ratings of safety, belonging, student voice and opportunity for learning in community building circles (Gregory et al., 2016)	· # hours of community-building circle training (target: 24 hours over course of year); # hours students spend in circle (target: 40 hrs/year) · # & role of educators trained (target: all adults in building) · 4x/year school walk through during required circle times (target: 90% educators implementing circle)
Content circles	· Trainer qualifications · Training includes four pedagogical stances · Ratings of safety, belonging, student voice and opportunity for learning in community building circles (Gregory et al., 2016)	· # hours of content circle training (target: 12 hours over two years) · # & role of educators trained (target: all classroom teachers) · Frequency of content circle implementation (target: monthly)
Repair of minor harm	· Trainer qualifications · Educator group interviews (Year 2)	· # hours of affective language and restorative chats training (target: 6 hours in first year) · # & role of educators trained (target: all adults in building)
Circles or conferences to repair harm	· Trainer qualifications · Ratings of safety, belonging, student voice and opportunity for learning in repair circles (Gregory et al., 2016) · Records review of circles and conference documentation	· # hours of repair of harm training (target: 24 hours) · # & role of educators trained (target: all administrative and behavioral staff) · #/purpose of circles or conferences to repair harm (target: reduces by 10% annually starting in Year 3)

for collecting classroom observation data based on RP-Observe data (Gregory et al., 2016) will

be finalized in Year 1, to be completed by the district RP coach or school RP site lead to measure

improvement. Methods include 1) tracking databases kept by each site lead recording educator

attendance at training opportunities; frequency and type of coaching provided and formal repair

of harm processes; and 2) educator surveys in Years 2-3 assessing frequency of implementation

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of each practice. Finally, the lead evaluator will conduct at least two school climate walk-throughs at each school annually. A school climate walk-through form, based on Bradshaw & colleagues' (2015) updated version of a school assessment for environment typology, was adapted to include additional observable RP elements. The tool was successfully piloted in two schools during 2017-18 and will be implemented and revised as necessary for 2018-19.

Outcome & Mediator Measures. Planned measures stem from three primary sources. First, annual rates of student suspensions, office discipline referrals (ODRs), and attendance (absent 11 or more days) are provided by the SPPS Research Evaluation and Assessment (REA) department, both for schools overall and disaggregated by race/ethnicity; standardized test scores are also available although impacts are not expected until full implementation has taken place. UMN-PRC will calculate school-level distance and equity indices measuring discrepancies in rates across different racial and ethnic groups compared to overall school averages.

Second, student survey measures of school climate, our hypothesized mechanisms for change due to RP implementation, are currently collected every three years (i.e., 2016, 2019, 2022) as part of a state-wide surveillance system called the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). In particular, composite measures and example items include: 1) Safety: "I feel safe going to and from school;" 2) Caring teachers: "At my school, teachers care about students;" 3) Academic engagement: " How often do you care about doing well in school;" 4) Respectful environment: "Adults at my school listen to the students;" and 5) Social Competencies: "I say no to things that are dangerous or unhealthy." Items are derived from validated and reliable tools such as the Student Engagement Inventory (Appleton et al., 2006) and the Developmental Assets Profile (Search Institute, 2017). A copy of the 2016 MSS is included in Appendix H. RP school sites taking part in Part II activities will be asked to administer school climate modules from the MSS

in order to be able to track annual changes in student reports. Third, annual structured interviews with the RP site lead and principal for each implementing school include narratives related to outcome analysis, such as stories of suspensions prevented, challenges or accomplishments related to achieving racial equity or shifts in mindsets of educators during the school year.

    Evaluation Activities. Data collection, analysis and key dissemination activities related to the evaluation plan are noted Figure 1.

Figure 1. Evaluation Activities

Evaluation Activities	Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1 Q3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q2	Y2 Q3	Y2 Q4	Y3 Q1	Y3 Q2	Y3 Q3	Y3 Q4	Y4 Q1	Y4 Q2	Y4 Q3	Y4 Q4	Y5 Q1	Y5 Q2	Y5 Q3	Y5 Q4
Part I: Analyze and disseminate knowledge from existing SPPS RP pilot study																				
Collect and assess implementation measures	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
Collect qualitative narratives of implementation			x				x				x									
Analysis of annual outcome data collected quarterly by SPPS				x	x			x	x			x	x							
Analysis of school climate data collected in 2019 and 2022						x	x											x	x	
PSM analysis comparing outcomes at 6 schools completing 3-year implementation		x	x																	
CITS analysis comparing outcomes rates overall and by racial groups						x	x			x	x			x	x					
Conceptual manuscript and preliminary outcomes of 6 pilot schools				x	x			x	x											
Outcomes manuscript based on outcomes from 12 pilot schools																		x	x	
Practice Report: Lessons learned re: RP implementation at different grade spans													x	x						
Part II: Prepare, select, support and evaluate up to 8 "RP ready" schools in an early-phase efficacy trial																				
Monitor readiness progress of schools interested in RP	x	x	x		x	x	x													
Conduct validity testing of RP readiness process													x	x			x	x		
Finalize annual school climate measures/survey	x	x	x																	
Finalize classroom obervation measures and procedures		x	x																	
Collect and assess implementation measures					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Collect qualitative narratives of implementation							x				x				x				x	
Collect and analyze annual outcome data							x	x			x	x			x	x			x	x
PSM analysis comparing outcomes at 4 schools completing 3-year implementation															x	x			x	x
CITS analysis comparing outcomes rates overall and by R/E															x	x			x	x
Manuscript comparing fidelity and outcomes in Part II schools																			x	x
Practice Report: Lessons learned re:readiness of RP															x	x				
Practice report: Whole school approaches and impacts of restorative practices																			x	x

    Qualitative Data Analysis. Qualitative interview data will be transcribed and entered into qualitative software (e.g., NVivo 9) for management and analysis. The senior evaluator (Beckman) will code data using methods of thematic content analysis (Ulin et al., 2005). Investigator McMorris will code a subsample to establish inter-coder agreement. Analysts will add codes as needed and meet regularly to discuss observations and emerging themes (Patton, 2002; Ulin et al., 2005). Data from multiple perspectives and sources (i.e., site leads, principals, surveys, school records) will be used to triangulate findings.

For data collected to assess fidelity of implementation as described in Table 4, we will generate descriptive statistics and frequencies annually and assess against target measures tailored to the stage of implementation across the sites. To generate an overall fidelity of implementation ranking, the team will create a composite measure for each stage of implementation, such as by using scores from checklists developed by an RP expert at the MN Department of Education (Riestenberg, 2018). These ranking will be used in tests of moderated effects of RP on student outcomes (Goals 1 & 4).

Quantitative Data Analysis. Given that schools are not randomly assigned to the RP condition, quasi-experimental designs (QED) are appropriate and allow the proposed project to **meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards with reservations**. First, propensity score matching (PSM) methods (i.e., random forest, logistic regression, classification tree) will be used to identify an appropriate comparison group of students in order to evaluate impacts on discipline, attendance, and school climate data. PSM is a process involving several iterations of model specification and assessing the balance of measured baseline covariates between RP and non-RP students, that will allow the evaluation team to account for measured differences between students in RP schools and non-RP schools (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1985). During Years 1-2, the evaluation team (including SPPS REA) will use PSM to match students in the first 6 pilot schools at baseline (year prior to implementation) with students in similar, non-RP schools on the following: demographic indicators (gender, race/ethnicity, free-reduced lunch status, English learner, district area/neighborhood), academic indicators (standardized test scores), and behavioral indicators (attendance, disciplinary referrals). This matching process will also take place again in Years 4-5, as more RP schools are added to the analytic sample.

Using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), analyses of outcomes will be then estimated using two-level models (student outcomes at level 1, RP schools vs. non-RP schools at level 2), that account for student clustering within schools. In addition, potential moderator effects of degree of implementation will be included in the level 2 modeling of school effects; structural equation models, estimated in Mplus, will be used for mediation. Conservatively assuming that 8400 students will be matched (n=4200 RP and 4200 non-RP students, number to be determined) across 24 schools yield a Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES) of .19 (alpha =.05; ICC = 0.05; R2 at level 1 =.10 [due to matching]; R2 at level 2 = .55), estimated using PowerUp! (Dong & Maynard, 2013). Dropping the number of schools down to 12, increases MDES to 0.29.

Another appropriate QED for the proposed evaluation is comparative interrupted time series (CITS; Shadish, Cook, & Cambell, 2002), which utilizes repeated measurement of outcomes in the RP and non-RP schools. This technique differs from pre-post designs because it requires multiple observations both before and after initiating treatment activities (i.e., RP implementation) in order to determine if the trend during implementation deviates from the trend during the baseline phase. Because SPPS REA tracks annual changes in outcomes (and the MSS provides school climate data every three years at least), data are available for multiple years of baseline data (e.g., see Year 1 Implementation Reports in Appendix H). CITS models assess the effects of introducing RP on the level (intercept) and change (slope) of an outcome variable like ODR rates. This basic longitudinal model can compare changes in the levels and slopes in RP schools and non-RP schools during a baseline phase, and again following introduction of RP.

Summary. SPPS is poised to move forward the science informing whole school approaches to RP. The proposed project's inclusion of students at all grade levels and focus on equity represent innovative and significant advances to answer urgent questions in education.