

Restorative Justice in Schools: Outcomes and Indicators

The field is producing a growing body of literature with promising evidence-based outcomes. Below is a summary of selected outcomes. To more fully understand the outcomes reported and research limitations, read the original source. All the publications referenced are cited on the back; most are easily accessed online. Please cite the source.

School Climate, Culture, and Academics

- A pilot study of a restorative conferencing program in Minnesota reported increased school connectedness and improved problem-solving among students (McMorris et al., 2013).
- In Oakland, CA, 70% of staff reported that RJ improved overall school climate during the first year of implementation (Jain et al., 2014).
- Oakland students said that the use of restorative justice circles enhanced their ability to understand peers, manage emotions, develop greater empathy, resolve conflict with parents, improve home environment, and maintain positive relationships with peers (Jain et al., 2014).
- Oakland middle schools that implemented RJ had a 24% reduction in chronic absence (OUSD, 2015b); high schools that implemented RJ experienced a 56% decline in high school dropout rates compared to 17% for non-RJ high schools during the same period (Jain et al., 2014).
- Denver Public Schools reported that students who participated in an RJ program experienced a 50% reduction in absenteeism and a decrease in tardiness of about 64% (Baker, 2009).
- Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) levels in grade 9 doubled in RJ high schools from an average of 14% to 33% (Jain et al., 2014).
- After implementation of restorative justice, Cole Middle School's California State Test (CST) scores went up by 74 points from school year 2007–08 to 2008–09 (Kidde & Alfred, 2011).
- In Ed White Middle School (TX), the number of students who passed the standardized reading and math components increased substantially after restorative approaches were implemented (Armour, 2014).
- RJ high schools within OUSD had a 59.9% increase in four-year graduation rates from 2010 to 2013 compared to schools that had not implemented RJ (OUSD, 2015a).

Discipline Policies and Practices

- Two Minneapolis Public Schools used circles in the classroom and office repair harm. One school reduced behavioral referrals by 45% and another school by 63% (Minnesota DOE, 2003, 2011).
- When Family Group Conferences were used as a restorative intervention strategy for responding to serious behavioral incidents (recommendations for expulsion or administrative transfer) in Minneapolis Public Schools, 97% of parents said they would recommend the program to a friend, and high levels of satisfaction were reported by both students and parents/guardians (McMorris et al., 2013).
- The use of restorative justice has been shown to narrow the racial discipline gap (Jain et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2014; Stewart Klein, 2016).
- In Denver, CO, district-level impact has been noted in cumulative reductions in out-of-school suspensions of over 40% compared with baseline” (Advancement Project, 2010).
- At Cole Middle School in Oakland, CA, suspensions declined dramatically, by 87%, and expulsions declined to zero during the implementation of whole-school restorative justice (Sumner et al., 2010).
- In San Antonio, TX, Ed White Middle School implemented RJ in 2012. In-school suspensions for conduct violations dropped by 65% for 6th grade and 47% for 7th grade in the 2013–14 school year. Out-of-school suspensions dropped from 57% for 6th grade and 35% for 7th grade (Armour, 2014).

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