

**Perspectives on Restorative Practice in a High School:  
An exploration of Early Implementation**

by

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An Exploration of Early Implementation**

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School discipline has become an area of concern in our nation due to the rising discipline gap between certain subgroups of students, particularly black and brown boys and students with a low socio-economic status. Terms like the school-to-prison pipeline have inundated educational civil rights activists, the Department of Justice and even the White House with a call action. To fully understand the disparities in school discipline, we have to examine school codes of student conduct, Board policies, disciplinary procedures and the implementation of focused interventions for students. A key element to closing this discipline gap is to arm educators with the tools to communicate and implement behavioral expectations within their schools and classrooms. Forging positive relationships with students and understanding their background and circumstances, will enable more students to remain in the classroom instead of being removed and subject to exclusionary discipline. The longer students are engaged in learning, the more successful they become. This study will examine an early implementation of restorative practices in a small urban high school and its effect on students and staff.

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## 1.0 Introduction

According to a 1975 report by the Children’s Defense Fund, African-American students were two to three more times more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010). Since then, the gap has only widened for black students compared to white students. Black students who were suspended at least one day increased 120 percent from 1972 to 2000, while white student suspensions increased 64.2 percent (Kinsler, 2011). More recent data from the Department of Education indicates that “although African-American students represent 15 percent of students in the CRDC (Civil Rights Data Collection) they make up 35 percent of students suspended once, 44 percent of those suspended more than once, and 36 percent of students expelled and over 50 percent of students who were involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American” (Perry, 2014, p.1).

A major shift in school discipline has occurred with the implementation of zero-tolerance policies. More students were being suspended and/or expelled. Zero-tolerance is defined as “school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments (such as suspension and expulsion) for a wide degree of rule violations” (Zero Tolerance and Alternative Strategies: A Fact Sheet for Educators and Policymakers, 2001, p.1). One consequence of zero-tolerance policies is that they create predetermined mandates that limit the intervention options for school leaders in correcting behaviors and addressing underlying issues of those behaviors.

One example of how districts are addressing this consequence and moving from zero-tolerance policies took place in Oakland, California. In response to the 2016 presidential election, several high school students in the Oakland United School District cut class in order to protest.

The Oakland USD supported peaceful demonstrations in order for students “to express their feelings,” explained their restorative justice coordinator, David Yusem. This action, along with others, “is part of a transformation in the district, which has sought to replace zero-tolerance policies with alternatives designed to eliminate the racial divide in school discipline” (Ablamsky, 2017, p.1). If zero-tolerance policies can be amended to meet the needs of students, it is possible to limit exclusionary discipline and to implement policies that help to correct student behavior.

Alternatives to suspensions can also help to mitigate harsh discipline policies. Current research surrounding trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) illustrates the importance of positive relationships between educators and students and the effects on school discipline outcomes.

### **1.1 Problem of Practice**

Charter High School (Charter HS) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is a public brick and mortar charter school that serves students in grades 9-12. In 2002, the charter application was approved by the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the first class graduated in 2006. Charter HS explains their mission to be “*a technology infused public school, with a mission to graduate students who are academically, technologically, personally and socially prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, training, or employment. Using a team approach, Charter HS cultivates a safe, supportive and academically rigorous environment by recognizing and nurturing individual talents, needs and skills*” (Charter HS, 2019). Charter HS prides itself on its six core beliefs: connections to the real world, continuous challenge, individual responsibility for learning, personal

academic connections, safe and caring environment, and finally, collaboration. These beliefs have led to a culture of high expectations and the formation of strong student-teacher relationships.

Charter HS recognizes that there is racial disparity in their discipline reporting and has also utilized some alternatives to suspension to address the racial discipline gap. Examining Charter HS's historical discipline data, along with their approach to discipline in the form of restorative practices and other interventions, can yield a better understanding of the racial discipline disparity in a unique charter school setting.

### **1.1.1 Researcher Positionality**

Charter High School (Charter HS) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is a public brick and mortar charter school that serves students in grades 9-12. In 2002, the charter application was approved by the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the first class graduated in 2006. Charter HS explains their mission to be “*a technology infused public school, with a mission to graduate students who are academically, technologically, personally and socially prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, training, or employment. Using a team approach, Charter HS cultivates a safe, supportive and academically rigorous environment by recognizing and nurturing individual talents, needs and skills*” (Charter HS, 2019). Charter HS prides itself on its six core beliefs: connections to the real world, continuous challenge, individual responsibility for learning, personal academic connections, safe and caring environment, and finally, collaboration. These beliefs have led to a culture of high expectations and the formation of strong student-teacher relationships.

Charter HS recognizes that there is racial disparity in their discipline reporting and has also utilized some alternatives to suspension to address the racial discipline gap. Examining Charter HS's historical discipline data, along with their approach to discipline in the form of restorative

practices and other interventions, can yield a better understanding of the racial discipline disparity in a unique charter school setting.

### **1.1.2 Problem of Practice**

In a 2011 study, UCLA's Center for Civil Rights Remedies determined that nearly 3.5 million public school students were suspended out of school at least once in 2011-12 (Losen, Hodson, Kieth, Morrision, & Belway, 2015). An estimated 18 million days of instruction were lost by U.S. public school children in just one school year because of exclusionary discipline (out of school suspensions or expulsions). Minority students, especially Black and Latino populations, contributed to 23.2 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively, of all suspensions at the secondary level (Losen et al., 2015).

This study investigates the relationship between the response to discipline and the disparities of out of school suspensions and alternates to suspensions and certain interventions. A historical review of suspension data will shed light on patterns in suspensions within this charter school, particularly those of black and low-income students. Suspension rates among subgroups of students will be compared to the suspension rates of students in grades 9-12 who attend Pittsburgh Public Schools. The comparison to Pittsburgh Public Schools is important because 80 percent of the student body reside within Pittsburgh Public Schools. In addition, Pittsburgh Public Schools holds and approved the charter for Charter HS.

Interviews and focus groups of the CEO/Principal, administrators and teachers helped to determine the current climate and culture Charter HS and how restorative practices have been implemented in the school. Perspectives from these stakeholders on how restorative practices have impacted student outcomes were investigated. Finally, student voice is critical to the investigation

of disproportionate suspension rates; therefore, a student survey was given to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to determine how restorative practices have influenced behavioral outcomes and expectations.

## **1.2 Inquiry Questions**

To explore discipline disparities and restorative practices at Charter HS, three inquiry questions will guide the study:

1. What historical (2016 to 2020) discipline referral patterns (out of school suspensions and types of offenses) exist for students at Charter HS, disaggregated by race, gender, special education status and socioeconomic status?
2. What Restorative Practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of those stakeholders who have implemented them (CEO/principal, grade level administrators and teachers) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?
3. Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?

## **1.3 List of Terms**

School discipline and the demographics of student subgroups have warranted many definitions in the literature and in my research. School interventions and the nuances of

disciplinary interventions are constantly changing and being revised to meet the needs of the research and the students. The following is a list of terms used throughout this dissertation that need an explicit definition for proper understanding.

- **African American** – identifying ethnicity of people of African descent, can also be referred to as Black.
- **Black** – identifying ethnicity of people of African descent, can also be referred to as African American
- **Hispanic** – identifying ethnicity of people of Latin decent, can also be referred to as LatinX
- **LatinX** – identifying ethnicity of people of Latin decent.
- **Multi-racial** – identifying the ethnicity of people of a mixed ethnic background.
- **Objective Offenses** – disciplinary infractions that violate a specific code, with little room for discretion
- **Subjective Offenses** –disciplinary infractions in which the violation is subject to interpretation by an individual
- **Suspension Rate** – the total number of students with one or more day of out of school suspension divided by the total student body enrolled at that time.

## **2.0 Review of Literature**

This purpose of this chapter is to review current research related to the key concepts of this inquiry, including theories and hypotheses for change, as well as what questions are being asked and what practices seem appropriate and useful.

An estimated 18 million days of instruction were lost by US public school children in just one school year because of exclusionary discipline. Minority students, especially African-American and Latino, contributed to 23.2 percent and 10.8 percent respectively, of all suspensions at the secondary level (Losen et al, 2015). As educational leaders, we must look to alternate means to suspensions and interventions to address concerns about student behaviors.

### **2.1 Key Issues and Current Status of School Discipline in the U.S.**

There is disparity in school discipline in the United States and an overrepresentation of African-American students who face exclusionary discipline as a response to behavioral issues in school. An example of this overrepresentation is described by Fenning and Rose (2007): “African-American students in a school could receive 30 percent of all suspensions, yet only compose 15 percent of the total population. If a group is represented in a particular category at a rate 10 percent or higher than their representation in the overall population, they are overrepresented in that category” (p.540).

Such overrepresentation can lead to negative outcomes for these students, including entrance into the juvenile justice system and dropping out of high school. Zero tolerance policies

add to this overrepresentation because of the limited range of responses implemented by administrators (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010). Problems resulting from exclusionary discipline are described in the following sections.

### **2.1.1 Exclusionary Discipline is Harmful to All Students**

In academic year 2011-12, nearly 3.5 million public school students were suspended out of school at least once (Losen et al, 2015). Earlier studies, including a report by the Children's Defense Fund (1975), showed that African-American students were two to three times more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Racial disparity in school discipline referrals by teachers to office administrators contribute to the overrepresentation of African-American students in school discipline systems. As the discipline gap widens, more and more minority students suffer harsh consequences for their actions.

As researchers looked at disciplinary referrals, they found that white students were referred to the office for smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language. African-American students were more likely to be referred for disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering (Skiba, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). African-American students are being referred for subjective offences, while their white counterparts are being referred for objective offences. Similarly, African-American students received different consequences for similar offenses of white students.

These disparities in teacher referrals may reveal implicit bias. Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, and Pollock (2014) define implicit bias as "deep-seated attitudes that operate outside conscious awareness" (p. 4). These attitudes and stereotypes can contribute to African-American students receiving differential treatment because of the reactions of their teachers, leading to subjective

referrals by teachers and punitive responses by the administrators. Classroom management techniques, coupled with implicit bias, also contribute to the negative outcomes experienced by students of color exposed to excessive exclusionary discipline.

In 2017, the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) conducted a study entitled *State of Discipline: 2016-2017 School Year*; in that report was a significant amount of national data on exclusionary discipline. OSSE data shows that in 2016-2017:

- 38 percent of students were suspended more than once.
- 10.7 percent of students identified as at-risk and 4.2 percent of students not identified as at-risk received at least one out-of-school suspension.
- At-risk students were 1.5 times more likely to receive at least one out-of-school suspension compared to those students not identified as at-risk. (OSSE, 2017)

At-risk students are identified as having one or more of the following identifiers: receives free or reduced lunch, are homeless, are in the care of child services, or are overaged (high school only). The data also shows the racial disparity between students subjected to exclusionary discipline. Of students receiving at least one day of out of school suspension, 94.5 percent were African-American, 4 percent were Hispanic/Latino students, and 0.5 percent were white students (OSSE, 2017).

A deeper look into the 2016-2017 data reveals that African-American students were 7.7 times more likely to receive at least one out-of-school suspension compared to white students. African-American Students were also 2.8 times more likely to receive at least one out of school suspension compared to Hispanic/Latino students, and Hispanic/Latino students were 2.8 times

more likely to receive at least one out of school suspension compared to white students (OSSE, 2017, p. 29).

The previous data sets prove that historically these numbers have been rising without proper solutions, further leading to the discipline gap and the overrepresentation of minority students receiving exclusionary discipline. A recent phenomenon known as the school-to-prison pipeline has emerged mainly because of excessive exclusionary discipline.

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the role in which schools and their discipline policies play on putting many “at risk” students on the pathway to the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, many of these students are African-American and Latino boys. Once these students are removed from school, they experience “difficulty being ‘readmitted’ to the general school building after the exclusionary disciplinary response was revoked; therefore, the school-to-prison pipeline research supports the argument that school discipline policies are used to push poor students of color out of school through the abuse of suspension and expulsion” (Fenning and Rose, 2007, p. 543). Students that are excluded from school due to disciplinary infractions are at risk of not completing school and are likely to fall into the school to prison pipeline.

Jim St. Germain (2015), the founder and director of a non-profit mentoring program in Brooklyn, spoke of the broken windows theory of policing. This theory “emphasizes cracking down on small public offenses to deter more serious crimes” (para.4). This practice led to the placement of more police officers in schools, which criminalized minor offenses and led to students being funneled into the juvenile justice system, illustrating the process of the school-to-prison pipeline. Broken windows theory in schools puts harsher punishments on low level infractions in an effort to improve the overall environment in the school. As St. Germain states,

“At any high school in America, this sort of behavior is part of the culture of being a teenager, African-American or white” (para.4).

Exclusionary discipline is harmful to students. Due to exclusionary discipline, a discipline gap has been created with the overrepresentation of minority students receiving out of school suspensions. This gap can lead to low academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and the criminalization of youth.

### **2.1.2 Zero Tolerance and School Engagement**

School codes of conduct have contributed to the excessive number of exclusionary discipline outcomes due to limited disciplinary responses to behavioral offences. Many codes of conduct were revamped in the 1990’s to establish zero-tolerance policies. This was triggered by the passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act which made a mandatory 1-year expulsion from school if a student brought a firearm to school (Maxime, 2018). "Zero-tolerance" policies have come under fire by various stakeholders as arbitrary, prejudicial, and unreasonable methods to distribute punishment for various misbehaviors (Henault, 2001). Because of these policies, many school administrators are forced to impose strict punishments on students for certain offences, thus widening the discipline gap. These zero-tolerance policies have negatively impacted student achievement due to lost instructional time, which leads to engagement in unsupervised activities outside of the school setting (Lewis, et al., 2010). Simply stated, when students are not in the classroom, they are at a huge disadvantage and likely to become disengaged in school, permanently.

Keeling and Young (2015) refer to school polices, such as zero-tolerance, as implemented without taking some degree of “common sense into consideration” (p. 52). As an educational

system, schools have a responsibility to teach children not only academic skills, but skills to help them navigate through childhood and life. Zero-tolerance policies and their inflexibility impact schools' basic purpose: to educate. If a student makes a poor decision, the result of the consequence received can lead to unfavorable outcomes. School policies must be structured with the "well-being of the whole child in mind, not as knee-jerk reactions to unfortunate situations" (Keeling & Young, 2015, p.52).

### **2.1.3 Discipline and Achievement**

Smith and Harper (2015) found that "out-of-school suspensions in ninth grade are also significantly and negatively correlated with high school graduation, as well as postsecondary enrollment and persistence. If a student is suspended even one time during their freshman year of high school, they are 50 percent more likely to drop out of school" (p. 4). Once students are expelled and/or suspended, there is increased likelihood of participation in juvenile and criminal justice systems. This overrepresentation of minority students impacted by such discipline policies and practices has unquestionably helped to sustain the "school-to-prison pipeline".

Some schools use exclusionary discipline to encourage students to drop out of school, as explained by Kinsler (2011), "Dropout rates are also consistently higher for suspended students and some research indicates that schools actually use suspensions to push troublesome students out of school" (p. 1371). The constant removal of students from and reentry into school, together with the loss of instructional time, can profoundly disrupt a student's academic progress and performance. An achievement gap begins to form as students miss classroom instruction, resulting in low achievement. Students who struggle academically tend to exhibit disruptive and aggressive behavior, leading to exclusionary discipline practices.

Once struggling students become frustrated with school due to the lack of engagement because of out of school suspensions, they lose confidence in their ability to perform academically, thus leading to disruptive behavior (Gregory et al., 2010). The same research suggests that when considering grade point average and examining the relationship between discipline and achievement, race remains a predictor of suspension. Due to the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline, minority students are failing academically, resulting in “failing” school systems due to the correlation of absenteeism and student achievement.

Students who are regularly suspended become more at risk for not changing behaviors and in danger of becoming less “bonded” to school. School bonding is essential for academic achievement. Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, and Saylor (1999) explain that “adolescents who form a positive affiliation or social bond with their school are more likely than adolescents who fail to establish this social bond to engage in a variety of prosocial behaviors and achieve up to their potential academically” (p. 102). This further suggests that when students have positive bonds to school, they are less likely to engage in problematic behaviors such as fighting, bullying, and substance abuse. Once students lose that bond and drop out or are “forced” to leave school, they are at a greater risk to place in a direct link to the prison system, the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Wald & Losen, 2003).

#### **2.1.4 Federal Government Recognition and Response**

In July 2015, President Obama’s administration released a report, *The Economic Costs of Youth Disadvantage and High Return Opportunities for Change*. The report describes long-standing disparities in education, stemming from inadequate funding and the segregation of schools based on poverty and race. The report further explains how the school discipline system

is linked to the juvenile justice system because of the increased use of zero-tolerance policies (Economic Costs Of Youth Disadvantage And High-Return Opportunities For Change, 2015). These overly punitive policies have led not only to the disproportionality of school discipline but the criminalization of youth of color. This criminalization of youth has further reinforced the school-to-prison pipeline.

In 2014, the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and the United States Department of Education (DOE) issued a joint “Dear Colleague” Letter to school districts across the country. In the letter, the DOJ and the DOE clearly state that “federal law prohibits public school districts from discriminating in the administration of student discipline based on certain personal characteristics” (2014). They also commissioned the “School Discipline Consensus Report” (2013) with detailed recommendations for schools. The DOJ and DOE committed to providing guidance to districts in their approach to this issue. With this document, the federal government recognized that disparities in school discipline is a civil rights issue and school districts and policy makers have to reevaluate their policies and discipline practices to provide the interventions that students need to be successful.

The disparity in school discipline and overrepresentation of minority students is undeniable. It has been over 40 years since the Children’s Defense Fund’s report on school discipline, and yet it is still a problem in our school systems today.

The problem has been discussed that exclusionary discipline is harmful to all students, especially minority students. Zero-tolerance policies are driving exclusionary discipline practices. As educators, we need to find solutions, alternatives and interventions to combat this problem and keep all students in school and out of the school-to-prison pipeline. Below I discuss possible interventions and recent alternatives to suspensions.

## **2.2 Recent Responses to Exclusionary Discipline**

School administrators and teachers have limited options for addressing inappropriate student behaviors. These limited resources have contributed to the discipline gap and overrepresentation of minority students in exclusionary discipline. Due to recent research and a national spotlight on this problem, educators are being exposed to new research-based solutions to suspensions.

### **2.2.1 Trauma-Informed Care**

Before we can begin to use alternatives to suspensions, we must first begin to identify and understand why certain behaviors are occurring within our students. Trauma-Informed Care is a starting point to understanding the behavioral issues students experience in school.

Trauma-Informed Care is a theory that treats students from various communities as victims of trauma. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a federal organization, provides the standard definition for trauma-informed care, “an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives” (Trauma-Informed Care, 2016, para. 5). It is estimated that two out of every three children are likely to have experienced at least one traumatic event by the age of 17 (Perfect, Turley, Carlson, Yohannan & Gilles, 2016). This statistic drives the need for trauma-informed schools and using alternatives to adverse behaviors.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is a common and pervasive problem in dealing with children with trauma. There are three types of trauma that they define: acute, chronic and complex, most of which are considered complex resulting from extended abuse by caregivers over

time (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016). The effects are not always visible and mostly manifest through behaviors at school. Most schools do not have the capability of dealing with these levels of trauma, but through proper interventions and the understanding of trauma, appropriate solutions can be implemented in response to adverse behaviors in the classroom.

Jane Adams (2013), describes “trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed” teaching in which teachers are trained to “look at how their tone may contribute, knowingly or unknowingly, to combative interactions with traumatized youth” (para. 2). Trauma-Informed Care forces educators to look at a child holistically and to ask, what has happened to you, rather than, what is wrong with you. Trauma-informed interventions focus on realizing the impact of trauma and integrating it into policies and practices.

Trauma-informed teaching as described by Adams, (2013), “teaches students how to self-regulate and calm down by taking a break, taking a deep breath and becoming aware of their surroundings also instruct teachers to build rapport with students by praising progress and speaking kindly” (para. 16). These interventions are meant improve school culture and lower exclusionary discipline.

Trauma-informed schools respond to the needs of students through the changing of school culture by incorporating effective practices, programs and procedures that impact the culture of the school (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). One such program that can help begin the healing process is restorative practices.

### **2.2.2 Restorative Practices**

“Originating from ancient spiritual and indigenous traditions, restorative justice entered contemporary societies via the judicial system in the 1970s as a means for addressing harm within

communities” (Vaandering, 2014, p. 509). Zehr (2003) defines the foundational questions that restorative justice asks: who has been hurt, what are their needs, and whose obligations are these? It focuses on inclusive practices and responsibility and relationship building rather than punishment.

Restorative practice, particularly restorative justice, is a philosophy that focuses on repairing the harm done when a student violates the rules or code of conduct of the school as opposed to just administering a consequence. As stated by Porter (2007) “restorative approaches can transform student behavior and build healthy school communities”. School communities determine the climate and culture of the school. It is a restorative approach instead of a punitive approach that requires a cultural shift in the school culture (Restorative Justice Overview, 2014).

Restorative justice practices in schools have different variations, depending on the individual school climate. Circles are a basic restorative practice. Often known as “peace or community building circles,” these gatherings give students the opportunity to have their voices heard while problem solving in a safe and respectful environment. Circles involve students and staff as they discuss specific incidents; students are encouraged to share their feelings and their voices with the intent of respecting each other and resolving conflict. Circles provide both prevention and intervention (Restorative Justice Overview, 2014).

Peer jury is another aspect of restorative justice. Peer jury is simply defined as “a youth-led practice where a panel of students hears cases involving minor infractions with their peers” (Restorative Justice Overview, 2014, p. 2). A peer jury, led by a trained facilitator, focuses on making the situation right and guiding the development of a plan or contract for the student to repair the harm done as a result of their actions. The peer jury method allows for the students to

take ownership of their school and for the referred student to be restored back into the school community.

Restorative practice “enhances social and emotional intelligence, the ability to identify and navigate emotions with oneself and others.” (Abregu, 2012, p.2). It also “sensitizes participants to the value of relationships within and between social groups, and it strives to teach responsibility, accountability, honesty, empathy and the satisfactions provided by work” (p. 3). To that end, restorative practice introduces everyone involved -- students, parents, and administrators – to listening. It starts with the offender listening to the people whom he harmed and what the victim has gone through because of his harm. The offender is exposed to the hurt and confusion he caused. The offender then can be heard for the first time, and he is exposed to others listening to him. He is asked to contribute to the process, and he can “own up” to his behavior and be an integral part of the solution. He is taken seriously and learns that he is a player in his own destiny; he has taken ownership. “Restorative justice cannot recast past history to redistribute its effects, but restorative justice processes can do good and can do a lot better than the classic zero-tolerance model” (Abregu, 2012, p.3).

Teasley explains that “restorative justice is based on the development of a value set that includes building and strengthening relationships, showing respect and taking responsibility” (2014, p. 132). This value set must have buy-in from school-based personnel and a shift from punitive discipline to restoring relationships. Everyone needs to be responsible to repair the damage that has occurred and hold the student accountable, with the emphasis on respect, repair of harm, restoration of the community, listening, and being heard.

As trauma-informed schools are created and restorative practices are implemented, school administrators will have more resources to deal with student behaviors and will not always have

to resort to exclusionary discipline. The section below offers considerations for interventions in classroom management and discipline policies.

### **2.3 Supportive Culture for Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline**

School personnel perceive particular student groups (e.g., African-American males) as “not fitting in with the norm of the school.” Because these students are perceived as not fitting in, they are seen as dangerous. These “dangerous” students are more frequently removed from school for non-violent infractions, and most of those who are punished are African-American and/or low-income students (Fenning & Rose 2007).

Fenning and Rose (2007) also find that teachers are afraid of losing power or control of their classrooms and, subsequently, “students of color are targeted as a part of this fear and anxiety and are more likely on the receiving end of our most punitive discipline consequences” (p. 537). The exchanges between teachers and students of color that lead to removal from the classroom, most of the time resulting in suspensions, “seem to be rooted in a fear of loss of control and identifying these students as troublemakers” (Fenning & Rose, 2007, p.552). Once these students are removed from the classroom and possibly the school, the discipline gap will inadvertently widen as suggested in the previous research.

Lewis et al., (2010) cite the theory of cultural synchronization, which means balancing disciplinary practices with students’ lived reality to have better classroom management outcomes. “The theory of cultural synchronization posits that if practitioners would balance their school disciplinary practices with those that mirror the students’ lived reality, particularly their home disciplinary practices, then they (i.e. the practitioners) will be more successful with these students

in managing classroom engagements” (p.10). Understanding of students and awareness of their backgrounds is vital in closing the discipline gap.

### **2.3.1 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

Classroom strategies that align with evidence-based social and emotional programs to support traumatized students are part of a system known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS (Adams, 2013). PBIS is a “whole-school prevention model that is a non-curricular universal prevention strategy that aims to modify the school environment by creating improved systems (e.g., discipline, reinforcement, data management) and procedures (e.g., office referral, reinforcement, training, leadership) that promote positive change in staff and student behaviors” (Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008, p. 101).

PBIS provides three tiers of behavioral interventions that enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. “PBIS is a prevention-oriented way for school personnel to (a) organize evidence-based practices, (b) improve their implementation of those practices, and (c) maximize academic and social behavior outcomes for students” (PBIS FAQ's, 2015). Many schools have implemented school-wide behavior supports and other interventions to prevent high suspension rates. Gregory et al. (2014) describe theories of conflict prevention and conflict intervention. Both theories require constructive responses to conflict. Providing “healthy instructional climates” can help in this process of closing the discipline gap. Research shows that “effective discipline creates a shift from a climate in which many students are suspended, expelled, over-policed, or punished regularly, to a culture that promotes healthy relationships and academic success across classrooms, hallways, and lunchrooms” (p.3).

For PBIS to be effective, students need consistent rules and expectations that are developmentally appropriate and stated positively throughout the school. All classroom rules should be aligned with the school-wide expectations using a common language. PBIS promotes a positive school climate and involves explicitly teaching, modeling, practicing and reinforcing desired behaviors across the school setting (James, Smallwood, Noltemeyer, & Green, 2018, p. 115).

The underlying theme to these interventions is the classroom climate, which is controlled by teacher expectations. “The classroom climate is a compilation of factors including, social interactions between students and teachers, behavioral and academic expectations, as well as the physical environment of the classroom” (O’Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014, p. 126). Teacher-student interactions foster the overall classroom climate. Teachers need to be reminded that they directly impact the climate of their classroom and the school based on the expectations and relationships formed in their classrooms.

### **2.3.2 My Brother’s Keeper**

To provide context to the discipline gap and the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline, former President Obama, in September of 2014 launched the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) initiative to address the opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color from early childhood into young adulthood, and to ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. President Obama challenged communities across the country, in the form of a call to action, to become MBK Communities and to form alliances with many organizations to help encourage youth to become successful members of society. The MBK initiative is centered on six challenges:

- “Ensuring all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally ready
- Ensuring all children read at grade level by 3rd grade
- Ensuring all youth graduate from high school
- Ensuring all youth complete post-secondary education or training
- Ensuring all youth out of school are employed
- Ensuring all youth remain safe from violent crime” (The White House, 2014, para.10)

In July of 2015, the White House hosted a national convening on school discipline, entitled, Rethink Discipline. I was fortunate to attend this convening on behalf of my school district. This convening was an extension of the MBK initiative that focused on disparities in school discipline across the nation. The major theme from this convening was moving from zero-tolerance policies to providing interventions to combat and prevent disruptive behavior.

The intent of My Brother’s Keeper is to focus on keeping youth on an academic path that will allow for success in school and in the workforce. To ensure that these initiatives are sustained, educational systems must keep young people in school and provide the proper interventions to make them successful. Interventions are meant to resolve conflicts and educate students, not banish and discipline them. Districts have a responsibility to engage in long-term change efforts in their approaches to discipline. Positive school culture and climate is a vision and goal of most schools in America. To attain this, academic and behavioral success is the key to unlocking every schools’ and every students’ potential.

### 2.3.3 Federal State Mandates

Guided by the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA), many states have adopted alternatives to suspension and behavioral interventions. States are revising their school codes to reflect alternatives to discipline that provide interventions and supports for students. ESSA mandates using the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to help struggling students both behaviorally and academically by using appropriate interventions and supports to meet the needs of the individual student. Schools are now more accountable for exclusionary discipline and more focused on interventions, supports, and reintegrating students back into the school, classroom, and community.

For example, four states, California, Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania are mandating suggested interventions and supports. California has alternatives to discipline: community service, conferences, counselor referrals, study and guidance team plans, anger management/prosocial behavior programs, restorative justice, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and after school programs (Education Commission of the States, 2018).

Virginia has a treatment approach to alternative discipline that mandates that “the Board of Education must establish guidelines for alternatives to suspension for consideration by local school boards, including: positive behavior incentives, mediation, peer-to-peer counseling, community service, and other interventions” (Education Commission of the States, 2018, para. 48).

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) explains Ohio law “Boards of education may allow students to perform community service in addition to, or in place of, suspension or expulsion. Effective November 2018, the State Board of Education must update its current policy

and standards for the implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports framework” (para. 36).

Finally, Pennsylvania school code has been revised to reflect the following, “Non-punitive supports may be available: Office for Safe Schools may make grants to address school violence, including school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports and restorative justice” (Education Commission of the States, 2018, para. 39).

Classroom and school management systems like PBIS have proven to change the culture and climate of schools through relationship building and positive outcomes for students. As states recognize the needs of the “whole” student, teachers and administrators will have flexibility and resources in dealing with student behaviors.

#### **2.3.4 Student Voice**

The culture of any school is guided by the discipline perceptions of the teachers, students and families. A 2019 study of 104,000 secondary students by Youth Truth Survey, indicated that less than half (40%) of students feel discipline at their school is fair. However, breaking down the data by the students’ self-reported race, their experiences vary: 49% of Asian students, 39% of white students, and 39% of Hispanic students agree that discipline at their school is fair, while only 34% of multiracial students and 28% of African-American students agree that discipline is fair at their school. A student response in the survey is quoted as: “Not all the students in the school receive fair and respectful discipline. Students are not treated with the discipline that they should be treated with because rules, policies, and procedures that should be followed are not.” (Youth Truth, 2019). This survey indicates how important student voice in defining and following policies and procedures that impact their school environment.

Students need to be recognized as a stakeholder groups when guiding discipline practices and policies in schools. “When students are able to form authentic partnerships with teachers and school administrators, it can set the stage for lasting bonds and important mentoring relationships “(Shafer, 2016). It is the relationship building that will help foster trust between staff and students.

Gretchen Brion-Meisels, a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, identifies five ways schools can prioritize student voice, quoted below:

1. Regularly solicit student feedback.
2. Engage students in studying and assessing their school.
3. Include authentic student representation on leadership teams.
4. Invite students to any discussion related to their own learning.
5. More broadly, consider young people as stakeholders and partners in their schools.

(Shafer, 2016, para. 5)

Using a technique like this one will allow real reform to take place within a school. “Reforms initiated with student input are likely to improve the learning environment for all students, not just those involved in the reforms” (Shafer, 2016, para. 8). By recognizing and including students as stakeholders, school leadership can empower students to lead change efforts that provide not only student voice but a level of equity and accountability.

## **2.4 Gaps in the Literature**

Previous and current research provides a foundation for my problem of practice. What we already know is that the discipline gap exists, and a majority of the research focuses on the gap between African-American students and the rest of the school population. Data released in 2011

determined that the rates of African-American students suspended for at least one day increased 120 percent from 1972 to 2000, while for white students suspended at least one day the rates increased by 64%.<sup>2</sup> (Kinsler, 2011). Most research is situated in urban schools with high enrollments of students with low socio-economic and/or minority status. We need to look at the discipline gap between our minority and low SES students by gender as well as students living in rural areas. Exclusionary discipline is harmful to all students, and more students need to be included in the research.

In exploring why a discipline gap exists, researchers have referred to zero-tolerance policies and school codes of conduct as foundations for the gap. African-American students were two to three more times more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts (Gregory et al., 2010). Zero-tolerance policies have negatively impacted student achievement due to the lost instructional time, which leads to engagement in unsupervised activities outside of the school setting (Lewis et al., 2010). Zero-tolerance policies have led to harsher disciplinary measures for students, thus helping to form the school-to prison pipeline.

There is much research on trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and PBIS, which schools have begun to implement as an alternative to exclusionary discipline. We will begin to have more data on the effectiveness of these interventions as states implement such interventions into school code and policy.

### **3.0 Applied Inquiry Plan**

Classroom looping is defined as a “teacher spending two or more years with the same group of classroom students” (Bielefeld, 2016, p.1). Charter HS has a unique structure that loops students beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, which is designed to create a culture of community and trust. Such a culture is believed to curb discipline issues because of the connectedness and conversations that occur between the student and the teacher. These conversations lend themselves to the larger notion of restorative practices.

Charter HS administration has done a “soft” launch of restorative practices with the staff using “community building circles” with pockets of students. In December 2018 the school had a two-day training by the International Institute for Restorative Practices with all of the staff. That was the first time they conducted a school-wide training on restorative practices. They centered restorative practices in conjunction with the equity work that they had begun at the school. Teachers implemented circles as openings of their classroom as part of warm up or as their exit tickets. Restorative practices were also used in resolving issues with students by administration. For the 2019-2020 school year, it was decided that Charter HS would center their professional development in culturally responsive practices and then formally add restorative practices as an “arm” of the equity plan. Full implementation of restorative practices is now a goal of their upcoming accreditation.

The intent of this research is to learn if the use of restorative practices has influenced disciplinary incidents and suspensions. Historical data analysis of disciplinary sanctions will be explored to identify any gaps and/or discrepancies among subgroups of students and to note emergent patterns in the data. Additionally, an interview with the principal/CEO will be conducted

in order to gain an understanding of how restorative practices were introduced and implemented with the staff and students. A focus group of other administrators and interviews with teachers was conducted to explore implementation and effectiveness of restorative practices and the culture of “conversations” at the school. A student survey was distributed and taken by students to gain their experiences and perspectives of being a student at Charter HS.

### **3.1 Inquiry Setting**

The research site for this study is Charter High School, located in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Charter HS serves 543 students in grades 9 through 12. The student demographics are as provided by the Future Ready PA Index 2019 are: 50.6 percent Black, 37.2 percent White, 66.1 percent economically disadvantaged, and 17.3 percent special education. The 2017-2018 Future Ready PA Index also designates proficiency in English language arts at 71.2 percent proficient or advanced, mathematics at 42.3 percent proficient and advanced, and biology at 48.6 percent proficient and advanced, all measured on the Keystone Exam, Pennsylvania’s State Assessment. The school also meets statewide growth expectations in each area tested. Student regular attendance exceeds the statewide average at 86 percent, and the graduation rate is 95.9 percent.

The building has a total of 90 staff members including four administrators. Eighty-three percent of the staff are white, 10 percent are African-American, the remaining seven percent are an equal split of Hispanic, multi-racial and Asian. Sixty percent of the staff are female and the administration is comprised of three females and one male. Thirty percent of the staff has worked

for the school for ten or more years, while seventy percent have been at the school for less than ten years.

Admission to Charter HS occurs in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade only. Charter HS is an approved charter school by Pittsburgh Public Schools and has a limited grade level enrollment of 180 students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. As stated on Charter HS's website, the enrollment procedure has three main factors: first-come, first-served enrollment, sibling preference and preference for students who attend Pittsburgh Public Schools. The sibling preference is for 8<sup>th</sup> grade siblings of current students; however, those students must submit their application between October 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. Siblings do not receive preference after October 31<sup>st</sup>. Any sibling application received after October 31, will be processed like any other application. The Pittsburgh Public School District resident preference window is from November 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The number of seats available at this point is 180 minus the number of siblings who have already applied. Any Pittsburgh Public School District resident application received after November 30<sup>th</sup> will be processed like any other application. If by the first weekday of December there are more than 180 applicants, a lottery will take place, siblings will not be included in the lottery. If there are fewer than 180 applicants, then students from suburban districts will be admitted. Once 180 applicants have been admitted, a waiting list is generated. Students remain on the waiting list until January 31<sup>st</sup>, after January 31<sup>st</sup> they are then placed on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade waiting list.

In order for students to be admitted for their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, they need to meet all of the academic requirements for current 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and be on the waiting list. A complete academic review will occur and if they meet the requirements, they will be admitted. Admission only occurs during September of their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year. There is no admission of 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

### 3.2 Stakeholders

Various stakeholders will be impacted by the results of this study. The primary stakeholders will be the CEO/Principal and the administrative staff. They determine disciplinary decisions in the school and can make use of the findings to reflect on their practices as well as the perceptions of the teachers and students. Teachers are also primary stakeholders who can directly benefit from this study due to their ability to change their classroom practices with students. They will be able to reflect on their own individual biases as well as evaluate how their classroom expectations can be modified to fit the needs of their students.

The Board of Trustees will be indirectly impacted by this data through the determination of school policy among teachers, principals, and students. They may revisit current disciplinary policies and procedures and amend them to meet the needs of the school, students, and the community.

The communities that make up the school are important stakeholders because they have direct access to the perceptions and beliefs of the students and parents they are serving. They can use findings to impact family and community engagement within the school system.

Finally, students are also primary stakeholders who will be directly affected by this study. Change in disciplinary policies and practices, coupled with clear information, may help student's augment their behavior and assist in a more academically supportive environment.

### 3.3 Approach

This mixed-methods approach focuses on using information toward improvement of policies and practices. The inquiry uses historical data sets, interviews, and focus groups of stakeholders to explore disciplinary interventions.

### 3.4 Design and Methods

Historical disciplinary data, interviews and focus group transcripts and student survey results will provide an understanding into the inquiry questions posed and help to further guide understanding of disciplinary disparities and teacher/student expectations, and how positive relationships and restorative practices may assist in a positive school culture.

#### 3.4.1 Research Questions

Three research questions guided the inquiry. The questions and research methods described for each is reflected in Appendix F as well as in the following narrative.

**3.4.1.1 Question 1: What historical (2016 to 2020) discipline referral patterns (out of school suspensions and types of offenses) exist for students at Charter HS, disaggregated by race, gender, special education status and socioeconomic status?**

Four-year historical data analysis was conducted on the total number of Out of School Suspensions (OSS) by grade, race, gender, special education status and socio-economic status

across four years. An analysis of state reportable violations across the four years compared with student code of conduct violations were also compared. Suspension rates for each subgroup was also determined for each year and compared with the suspension rates of students in grades 9-12 who attend Pittsburgh Public Schools. Patterns were determined by comparing the number suspensions across four years and the suspension rates per year.

These data sets assisted in identifying patterns in discipline, as well as to gain a holistic view of the discipline disparities that exist within the school. This analysis will give statistical evidence on the effects of out of school suspensions on certain subgroups of students and will define to what extent a discipline gap exists.

**3.4.1.2 Question 2: What Restorative Practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of those stakeholders who have implemented them (CEO/principal, grade level administrators and teachers) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?**

The methods used for this question included a qualitative and quantitative approach using an in-depth interview and focus groups along with a student survey. The interview with CEO/Principal was semi-structured with an emphasis on how and why the decision was made to implement restorative practices into Charter HS. Doyle, (2019) defines the semi-structured interview as “a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. They will ask more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format” (p.1). The semi-structured interview allowed for more dialogue with the CEO/Principal. The protocol for this interview can be found in Appendix A.

Key concepts discussed with the CEO/Principal centered on why the decision was made to implement restorative practices within the school and what specific practices are being used with students and staff.

A focus group was conducted with administrators in the school. Lavrakas, (2008) defines focus groups as “a qualitative research method in which a moderator conducts a collective interview of typically six to eight participants from similar backgrounds, similar demographic characteristics, or both” (p. 2). Focus groups often create open lines of communication and provide powerful and diverse insights into policies and perspectives. All administrators at the school were invited to attend, and they all accepted the invitation. Five administrators participated in the focus group which lasted forty-five minutes and covered topics including discipline, restorative practices and relationship building.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers from Charter HS. An email was sent by the Principal/CEO inviting all teachers to a focus group, however, only three teachers participated at separate times and the focus group became individual interviews. Each teacher offered their perspectives on the same topic areas as the Principal/CEO and administrators. Each interview was scheduled for one hour and the full hour was utilized by each participant.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in the Spring of 2020, I was unable to conduct focus groups with students due to the statewide closure of schools, therefore, surveys were distributed to all 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students using the Qualtrics system. In developing the survey, I used the idea of construct validity. Trochim, (2020) defines construct validity as “the degree to which inferences can legitimately be made from the operationalizations in your study to the theoretical constructs on which those operationalizations were based” (p.1). This is based on the

research questions pertaining to how restorative practices are impacting the school in the area of student behaviors.

The survey was developed using the same questions from the original focus group but written in a way in which a Likert scale was used to indicate the degree to which the students agreed with the statements. The “Likert scale is a five (or seven) point scale which is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement” McLeod, 2008, p. 1). There were also multiple choice questions used to indicate demographic data and the like.

The consent and/or assent to participate in the survey was emailed to all 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and their parents by the Principal/CEO. The student information manager for Charter HS who managed the emails reported that 213 students and 321 parents received the consent and/or assent forms. The forms were created electronically and the actual consent/assent was recorded through Qualtrics. Once I received the consent form from the parent and the assent form from the student, I compared them to be sure that I had both forms, then the survey link was emailed to the student.

The response by the parents and students was minimal. After the initial email, I received less than five responses. A second email was sent to all students and parents a week and a half after the initial email. The first email was sent on a Friday with the intent that parents and students would view it Monday morning. The second email was sent on a Wednesday to enable students and parents to receive it during a school day and be more likely to respond. The second attempt was more successful as I received 25 total responses from students and parents.

The total number of students who responded to the survey was eleven. This low respondent rate led me to only use the results to enhance other concepts that arose from the various

stakeholders. Of the student respondents, five were in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and six were in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The gender of the respondents was five males, five females and one student who identified as non-binary. The racial breakdown of the 11 respondents is one American Indian, one Asian, four African Americans, three white and two listed as “other”. Finally, of the 11 respondents, two have been suspended from Charter HS at least once.

The specific questions asked for each group in the study focused on three subject areas, with associated sub-categories:

- School Climate and Culture
  - Positive Student Outcomes
- Student Disciplinary Outcomes
  - Consistent
  - Equitable
- Relationship Building
  - Authentic

The complete list of questions is listed in Appendix A, Table 1.

Concepts discussed focused on the implementation and types of restorative practices used within their classrooms and throughout the school. The focus was on the relationship building between students and teachers. The administrative focus group concentrated on how well they believe restorative practices are contributing to the desired disciplinary outcomes and how and what restorative practices are working well with students and teachers. Both teachers and administrators were asked about similar concepts and they relate in their perspective roles as teachers and administrators.

These data were transcribed and coded for themes and keys concepts and areas of alignment and divergence among the CEO/Principal, administration and teachers. The process of both inductive and deductive coding was used during the content analysis of the results of the qualitative data. Zhang & Wildemith, (2005) state that “inductive coding, which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher’s careful examination and constant comparison as compared to deductive reasoning which generates concepts or variables from theory or previous studies is also very useful for qualitative research, especially at the inception of data analysis” (p. 2). Both the interview and focus groups data was coded based on the themes that emerge from both inductive and deductive reasoning. A coding scheme can be derived from three sources: the data, previous studies and theories, however, where no theories exist, you must generate coding categories inductively (Zhang and Wildemith, 2005).

### **3.4.1.3 Question 3: Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?**

The method used were focus groups of administration and Principal/CEO and teacher interviews as well as the student survey of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The concepts discussed focused on the types of restorative practices implemented within the school, the relationship building skills of the teachers and how discipline outcomes have changed with the introduction of restorative practices. These data were transcribed and coded for themes and keys concepts and areas of alignment and divergence among the CEO and teachers. The same logic for inductive and deductive reasoning and coding described above applied to these focus groups and interviews and the data they produced.

### **3.5 Proposed Deliverable Product**

The proposed deliverable product of my dissertation of practice will be a presentation and detailed report on the disciplinary data and focus group data that will be presented to the CEO/Principal and her team. The presentation will detail the different types of infractions that warranted the most out of school suspensions. They will also be given the suspension data for the all of the students, as well as the subgroups of minority and low-income students. The types of infractions will be presented along with the frequency of those infractions. I will also present the focus group data and align it with student disciplinary outcomes. This presentation will enable the staff to have a clear understanding of the behavioral issues in the school as well as the responses to disciplinary infractions by teachers and administrators.

I will also provide the themes and key concepts that emerged from the study as they relate to implementation of restorative practices as well as the looping strategy used in the school. This data will be beneficial in examining the further implementation of restorative practices and the implications of this data comparison.

## **4.0 Student Disciplinary Outcomes**

### **4.1 Introduction to the Data**

The first research question posed for this study relates to student disciplinary outcomes for Charter HS. The question is, “What historical (2016 to 2020) discipline referral patterns (out of school suspensions and types of offenses) exist for students at Charter HS, disaggregated by race, gender, special education, and socioeconomic status?” To answer this question, I received several data sets from the school, which were organized by school year beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, I accessed public data files from Pittsburgh Public Schools District (PPS) using their website. PPS data provides an appropriate benchmark for comparison because approximately 80 percent of the student population at Charter HS reside in the City of Pittsburgh, and PPS holds the charter for Charter HS.

The first data set listed discipline incidents across four years beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Incidents or suspensions were disaggregated by race, gender, economic status, and special education status. These data were analyzed by each category for each individual school year beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. The second data set included counts of infraction type over the four-year period starting with the 2016-2017 school year. The third and fourth data sets included the 2018-2019 Pennsylvania Safe Schools Report and suspension rates data for school years 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 for PPS to use for comparison.

The incident counts or disciplinary actions were organized by state code violations and school code of conduct violations. State reportable infractions are those infractions identified by the state which are mandated to be reported on the yearly Safe Schools report. They include

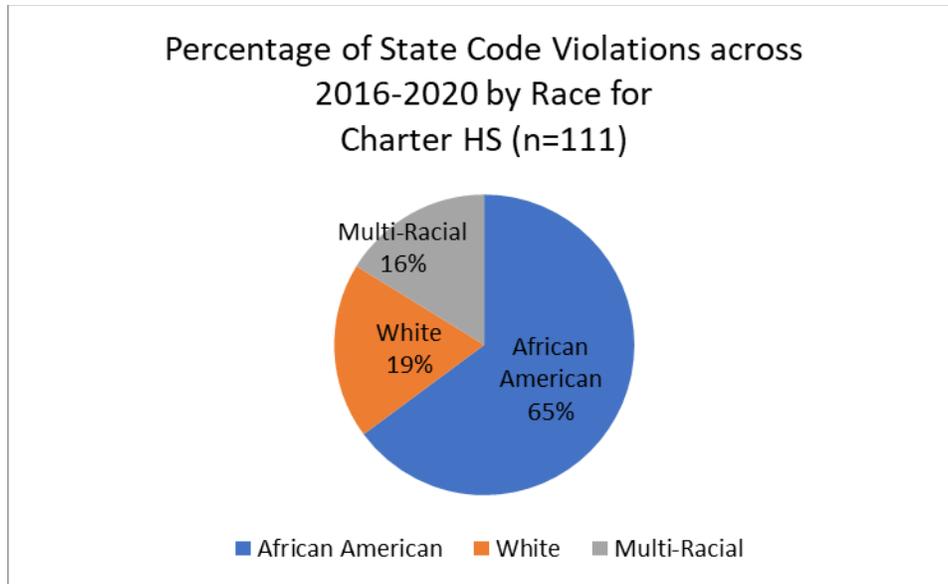
infractions such as sexual assault, possession of a weapon, and fighting. School code of conduct infractions are those that violate the specific code of conduct approved by the Board of Trustees at Charter HS.

#### **4.2 Disciplinary Actions (Across the Last Four Years)**

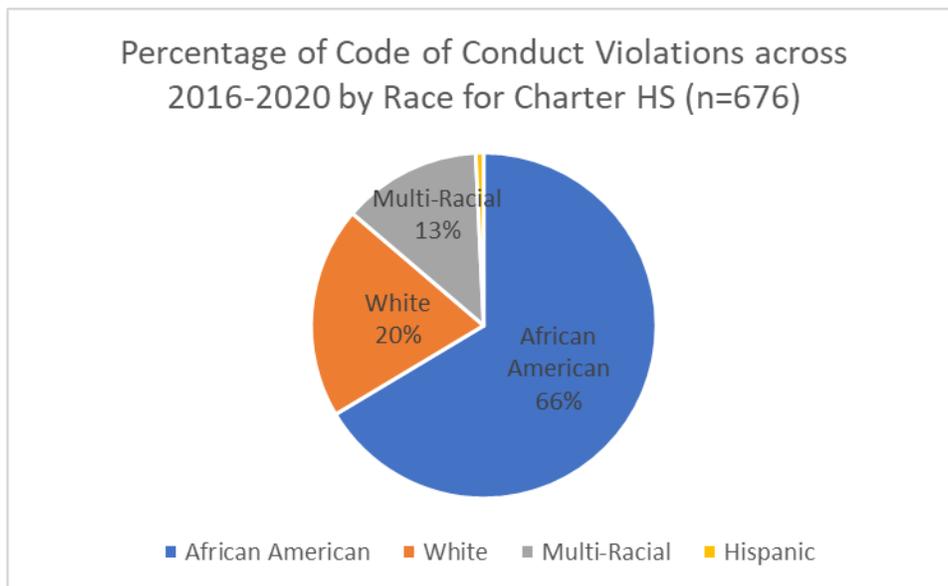
Some disciplinary actions, typically the most serious, are reportable to the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the annual Safe Schools reporting system. The Office of Safe Schools requires school entities to report to the state how many infractions fall into the 52 categories defined for reporting (Safe Schools, 2020). Other suspensions that do not fit into a state category but are infractions to the student code of conduct are reported to the state as a code of conduct violation, but not a specific violation category.

Across the four school years, there were a total of 787 disciplinary infractions, 111 of which were deemed reportable to the state. The remaining 676 (86%) of the infractions were school code of conduct violations. Fourteen percent of Charter HS's infractions were reportable to the state, compared to 28 percent of PPS reportable infractions for a similar time frame. The infractions for Charter HS are mostly related to the school code of conduct, which identifies student behavior that does not rise to the level of serious infractions. Of those infractions, a majority (65%) are committed by minority students.

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of state reportable infractions, disaggregated by race, that occurred at Charter HS during the four-year period beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Figure 2 illustrates school code of conduct violations, disaggregated by race, during the four-year period beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.



**Figure 1. Percentage of State Reportable Violations Across 2016-2020 by Race for Charter HS**



**Figure 2. Percentage of School Code of Conduct Violations across 2016-2020 by Race for Charter HS**

The average racial breakdown across the four years for Charter HS students is 52 percent African-American, 35 percent white, 10 percent multi-racial, and 3 percent Hispanic. Of the state code violations, 72 (65%) violations were committed by African-American students, 21 (19%)

violations were committed by white students, and 18 (16%) violations were committed by multi-racial students. African-American students are three times more likely to commit state code violations than white students across all four years.

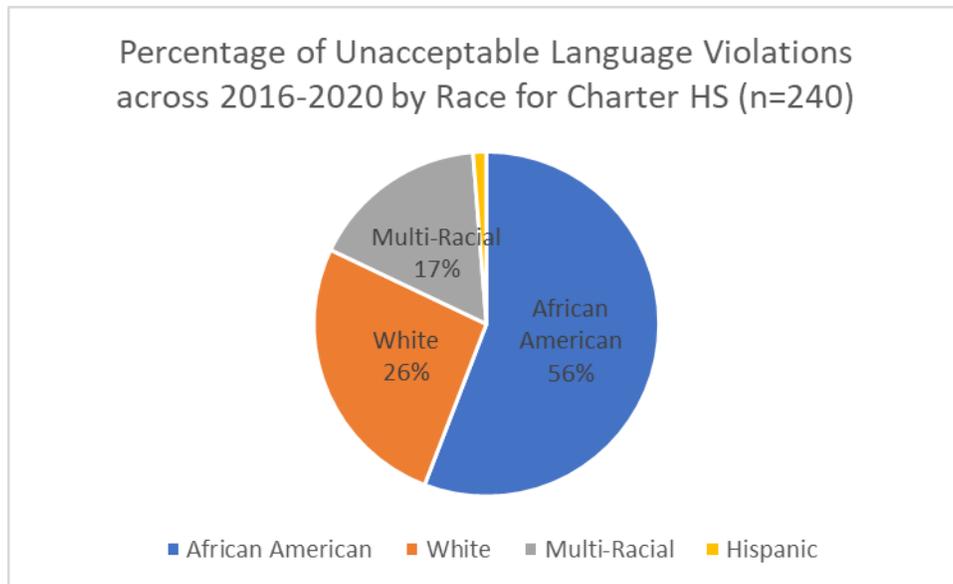
The violations of the student code of conduct are similar to the state codes: 449 (66%) violations were committed by African-American students, 134 (21%) violations were committed by white students, and 88 (13%) violations were by multi-racial students. The same pattern emerges with African-American students; they are three times more likely to commit violations of the student code of conduct. While both patterns indicate over-representation in offenses (both state reportable and school code) by African-Americans, the data does not show any differences among severity of offenses (state reportable events are considered more serious in nature).

These patterns, while present, are low compared to PPS. Across the data set in PPS for state reportable infractions, 78 percent were committed by African-American students, 14 percent were committed by white students, and 7 percent were committed by multi-racial students. The severity of the infractions by Pittsburgh Public School students resulted in 64 percent of the violations being considered violent.

State reportable offenses are more concrete and follow a specific set of guidelines, whereas school code of conduct infractions are unique to the school and are usually interpreted by the staff. This situation presents opportunities for more subjective perceptions and the possibility of implicit bias. The lack of a different pattern between state reportable and school code violations does not point towards bias; however, the over-representation of African-American students still presents serious issues for further discussion.

Of all 787 violations across the four school years, 39 percent (n=307) of the violations were due to student use of unacceptable language. Originally, a zero tolerance policy applied to use of

unacceptable language. This infraction resulted in an automatic suspension whether the language was used in jest or directed to an individual. White and Young (2019) suggest that zero-tolerance policies represent a type of “binary thinking, and, as such, they do not recognize subtleties, but rely on equality of consequence without considering equity of intent. Equity must come first in order to achieve true equality” (p. 2474). With the implementation of restorative practices to support equity, the school changed the policy and instituted a more restorative approach to unacceptable language infractions. McNeal and Dunbar (2010) indicate that zero-tolerance policies tend to negatively impact minority students. Figure 3 illustrates unacceptable language violations by race across the last four years at Charter HS.



**Figure 3. Percentage of Unacceptable Language Violations across 2016-2020 by Race for Charter HS**

Of the unacceptable language violations, 134 (56%) were committed by African-American students, 63 (26%) were committed by white students, and 40 (17%) were committed by multi-racial students. African-American students are two times more likely to be disciplined for this violation than white students.

### **4.2.1 Conclusions**

Charter HS has a small percentage of violations (14%) that result in being reported to the state (Safe Schools Report, 2017-2019). Other violations result from school code of conduct infractions. These tend to be based on subjective interpretations of the rules by teachers and administrators. The school code of conduct also allows for policy changes to better meet the needs of the students. The example of student use of unacceptable language being changed from a zero-tolerance policy resulted in a marked decline of out-of-school suspensions over the four-year period.

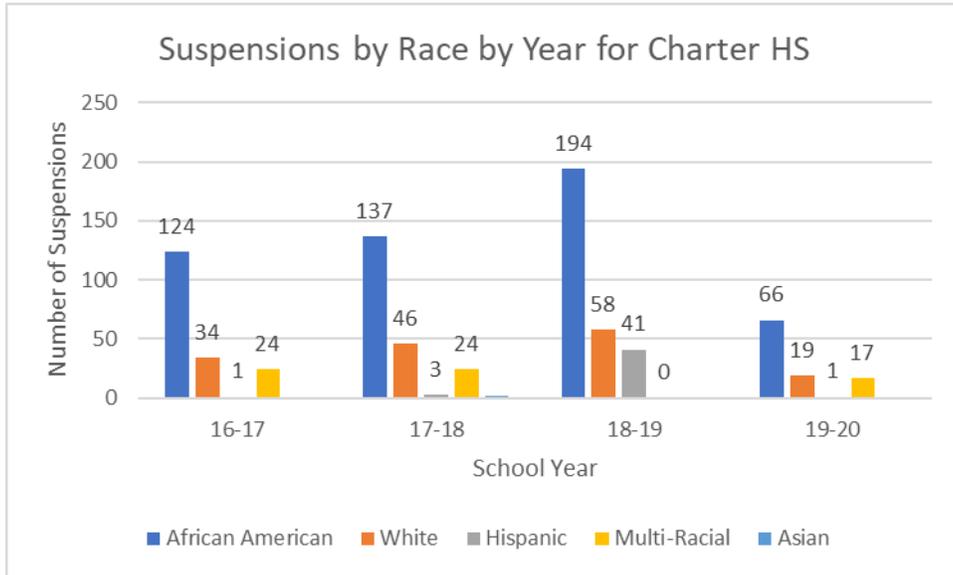
Across the four years 64 percent of African American students were suspended at least once, compared to 20 percent of white students suspended at least once. When considering a specific infraction, unacceptable language, the outcome was similar. There is a racial disparity in the disciplinary outcomes of students across four years. The elimination of zero-tolerance policies is one way to begin to address the racial disparity and provide more equitable student outcomes.

The next sets of data consider referral patterns and suspensions across four years to determine if changes have occurred over time and if the disparity among subgroups is decreasing.

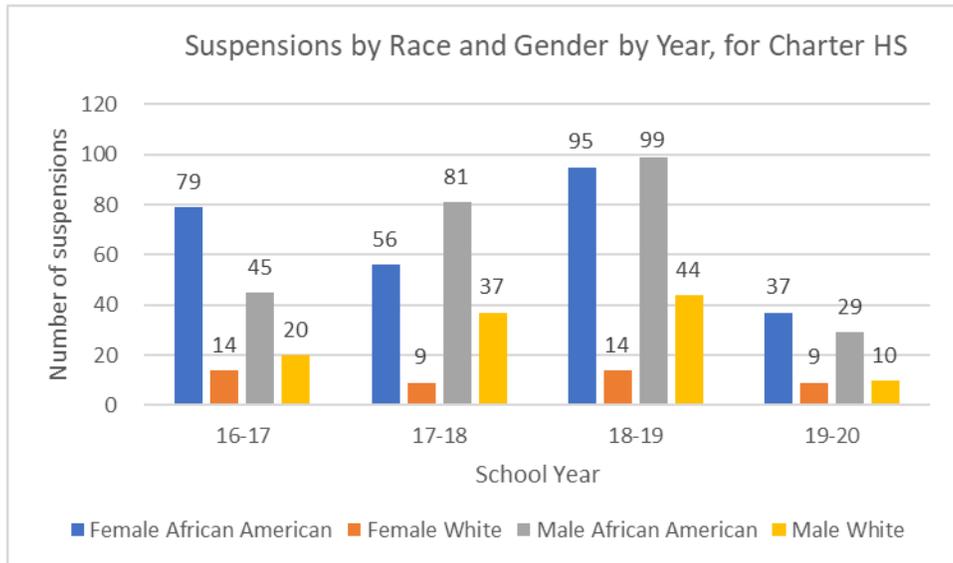
### **4.3 Referral Patterns (Across the Last Four Years)**

The next data set includes the referral patterns at Charter HS over the last four years, beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Data from 2019-2020 is incomplete due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools by the Governor on March 13, 2020. These data sets include referral patterns by race, gender, economic status, and disability status. Figures 4 and 5

illustrate the referral pattern according to race (Figure 4) and the disaggregation of referrals by race and gender (Figure 5).



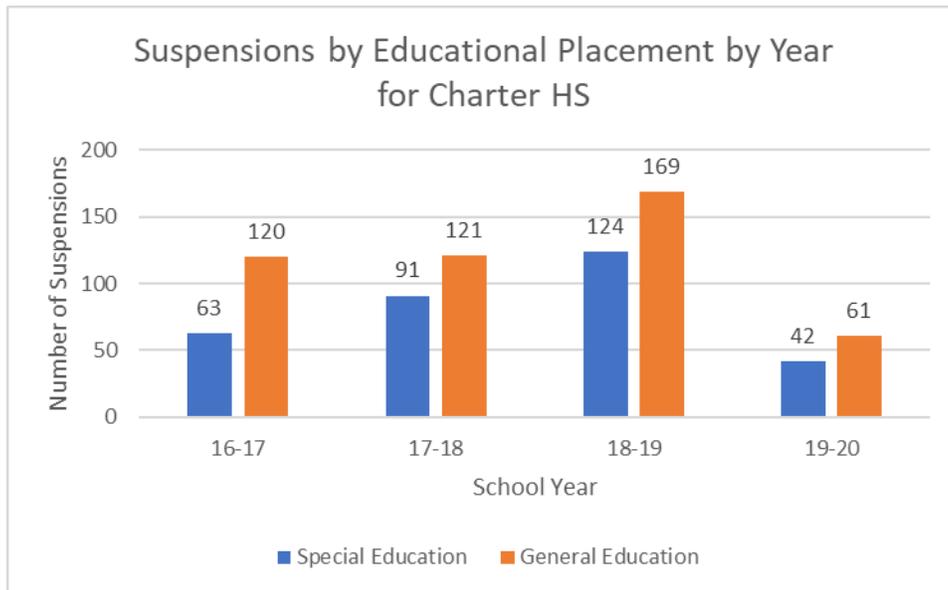
**Figure 4. Suspensions by Race by Year for Charter HS**



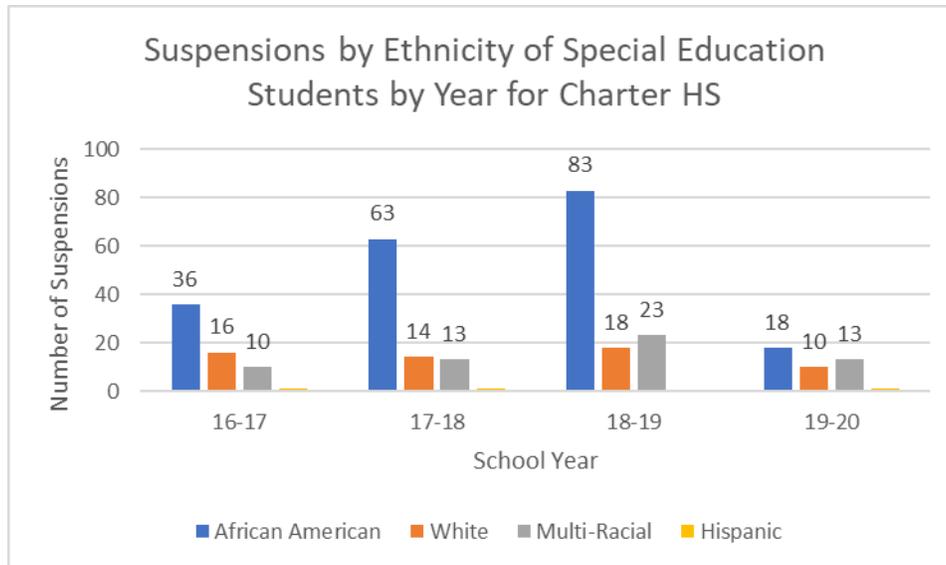
**Figure 5. Suspensions by Race and Gender by Year for Charter HS**

The average enrollment at Charter HS across the four years is 55 percent female and 45 percent male. In two school years (2016-2017 and 2019-2020), females were more likely to be suspended than males. However, in school years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, males were more likely to be suspended. Regardless of gender, African-American students were always suspended more often than any other race. From 2016 through 2019, the number of suspensions for all ethnic groups rose; however, the rate for African-American students was four times higher than white students during the 2018-2019 school year. Although schools closed in March of 2020 due to the pandemic and there is not a full year of data, the number of suspensions are down substantially for each group, especially when comparing African-American and white students.

The next data set includes special education students and general education students as well as special education student data disaggregated by race. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the total suspensions by special education students and the suspensions of special education students by ethnicity.



**Figure 6. Suspensions by Educational Placement by Year for Charter HS**



**Figure 7. Suspensions by Ethnicity of Special Education Students by Year for Charter HS**

The average enrollment of special education students at Charter HS across the four-year period is 19 percent; however, from 2016 to 2020 there was an 8 percent increase in the enrollment of special students at Charter HS. Of the special education students, 55 percent are African-American and 30 percent are white. Across all school years, students not in special education were suspended more often than students in special education. However, when examining the special education students who were suspended, African-American students were two to four times more likely to be suspended than their white peers who were also in special education. The suspension of special education students dropped substantially in the 2019-2020 school year due to the early closing of schools; however, there is enough data to indicate the disparity of African-American student suspensions has also decreased and is now almost even with white students in special education placements.

### **4.3.1 Conclusions**

Between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years, there was a 65 percent decrease in suspensions (from 293 suspensions to 103 suspensions). While this change could be due to policy changes, suspensions ceased in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing school closure. However, the disproportionality of most suspensions dropped significantly between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020; even with school closure, the number is very small and is encouraging as the school moves to a more restorative approach to discipline.

Special education students are suspended at a lower rate than general education students, and both of those rates have remained stationary over the last four school years. However, when examining special education and ethnicity, African-American students are suspended at a substantially higher rate. There was a slight decrease from the 2017-2018 school year to 2018-2019 school year, which may be due to the change in leadership and policies. These data show that disparities do exist between sub-groups of students, particularly African-American students, regardless of gender or special education status.

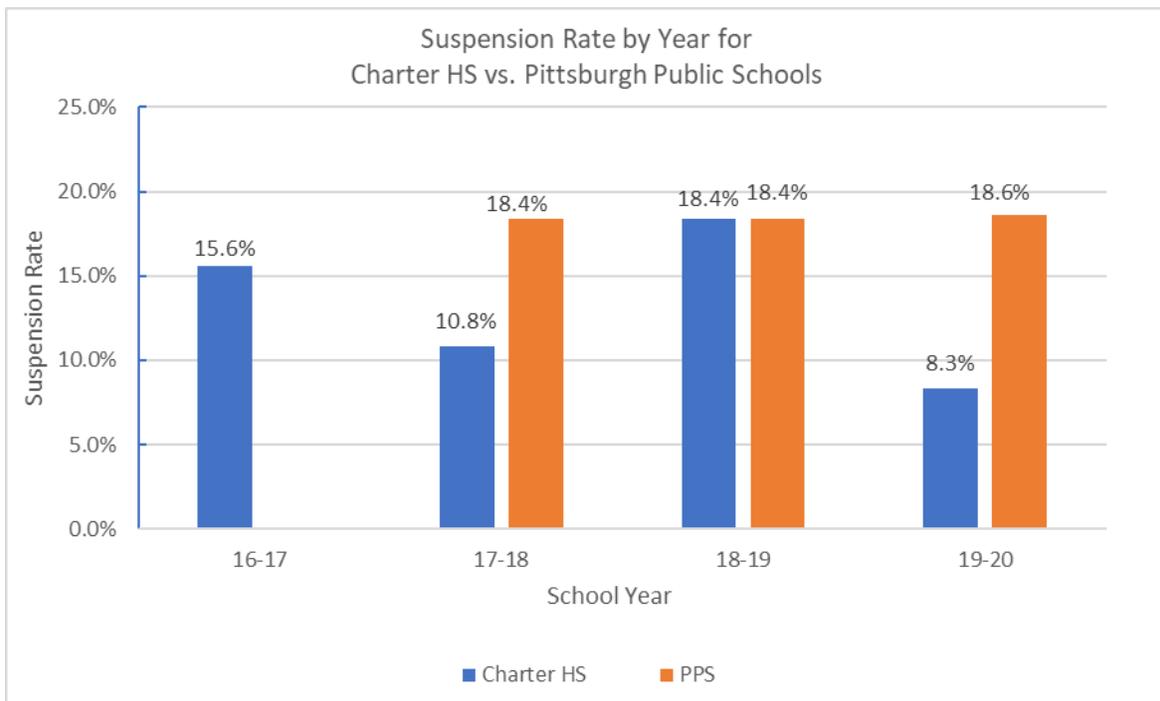
The next section will examine suspension rates across four years and compare those rates to PPS.

### **4.4 Suspension Rates by Subgroups (Across the Last Four Years)**

These data sets include grade 9 through 12 PPS suspension rates for each school year beginning in the 2017-2018 school year (as data was not available for 2016-2017), disaggregated by race, gender, economic status, and disability status. As defined by PPS (2020), the suspension

rate is “the number of students who have received one or more out of school suspension divided by the number of students enrolled at any time during the school year” (para 2). I used the same formula when determining the suspension rates for Charter HS.

Figure 8 illustrates the overall suspension rate for Charter HS and PPS across four years beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. For all comparisons in this section, data for the PPS was only available for the 2017-2018 school year and beyond. There is one extra year of data for Charter HS (2016-2017 school year), but the comparison of the data and the trends are available despite this lack of data for one academic year.



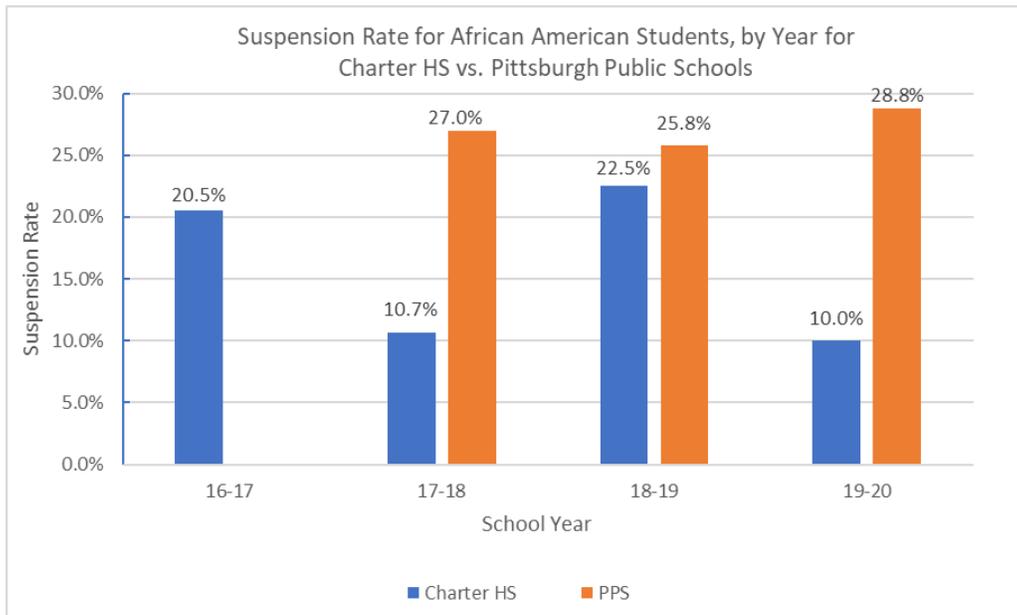
**Figure 8. Suspension Rate by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**

The suspension rate for Charter HS was 15.6 percent in 2016-2017 and 10.8 percent in 2017-2018. It went up to 18.4 percent in 2018-2019 and dropped to 8.3 percent for the 2019-2020 school year, compared with PPS, whose suspension rate has remained at 18 percent over the past

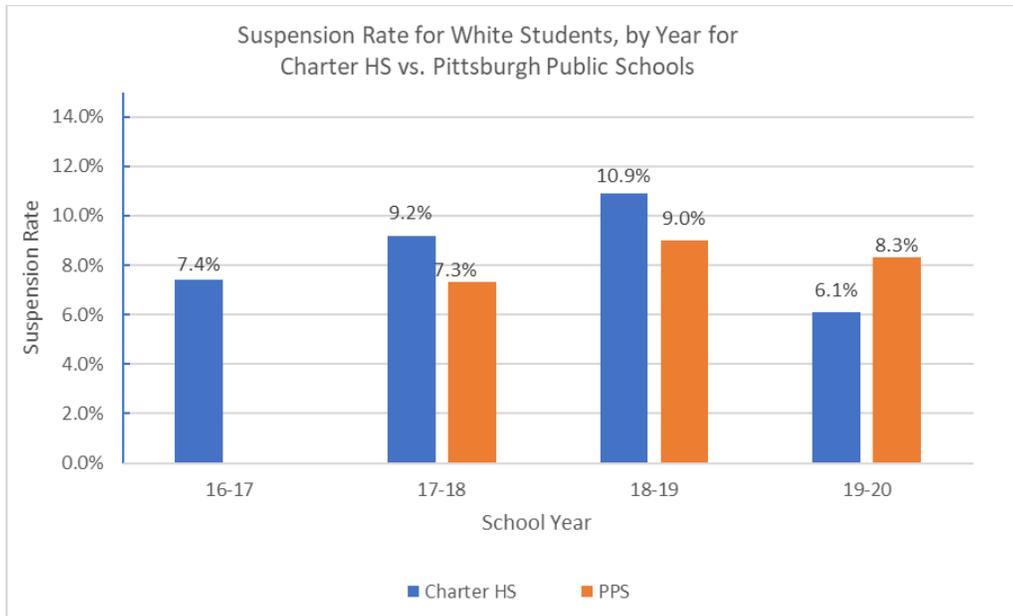
three years. Charter HS has an overall lower suspension rate, which is trending downward. Policy changes and a move to a restorative environment could have contributed to the 10 percent decrease in the suspension rate for the 2019-2020 school year.

#### 4.4.1 Suspension Rate by Race

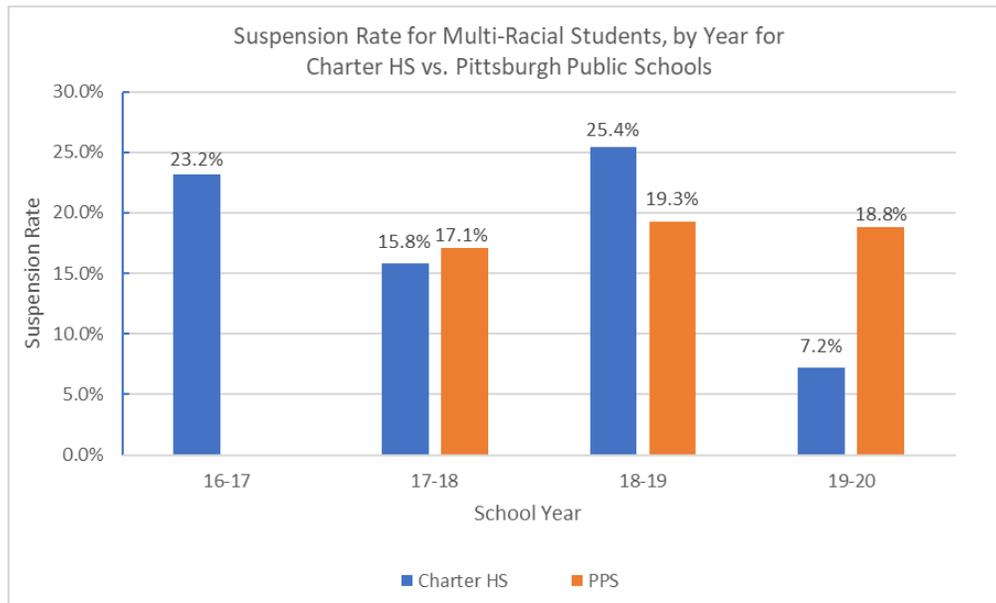
Figures 9, 10, and 11 illustrate the suspension rates, disaggregated by race (African-American, white, and multi-racial) at Charter HS compared to PPS.



**Figure 9. Suspension Rate of African American Students by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**



**Figure 10. Suspension Rate of White Students by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**



**Figure 11. Suspension Rate of Multi-Racial Students by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**

These data illustrate that suspension rates by race at Charter HS have dropped significantly in the last two school years for all ethnic groups, despite a spike in the data for the 2018-2019

school year. In comparison with PPS, the trend is similar; however, Charter HS has a lower suspension rate. The suspension rate is 10 percent for African-American students in the 2019-2020 school year at Charter HS, compared to 28.8 percent at PPS, which increased 3 percent from the previous year. This is a substantial difference of 18 percent. School leaders believe that policy changes contributed to the decrease in the overall suspension rate of the students, despite a surge in the 2018-2019 school year.

#### 4.4.2 Suspension Rate by Gender

The suspension rate for gender at Charter HS shows an overall higher suspension rate for females than males. The data trended in the same direction for both groups over the four years, with both showing an increase in the 2018-2019 school year and a decrease for the 2019-2020 school year. Figure 12 illustrates the suspension rate for Charter HS compared to PPS by gender.

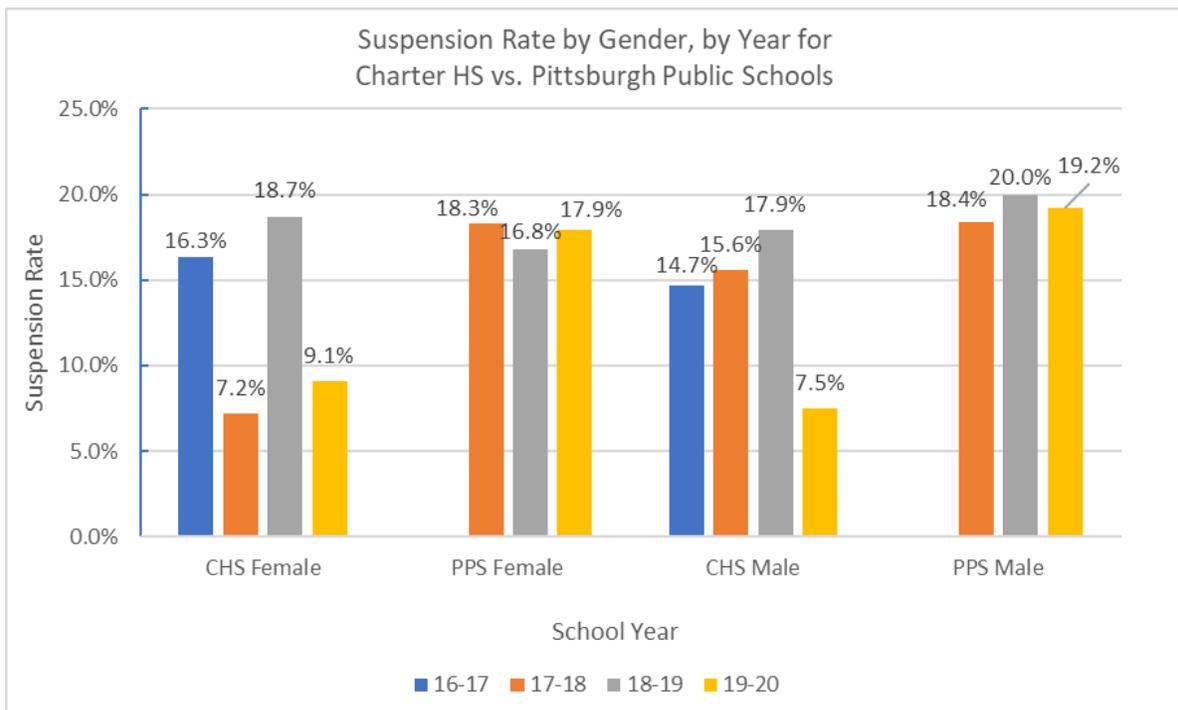
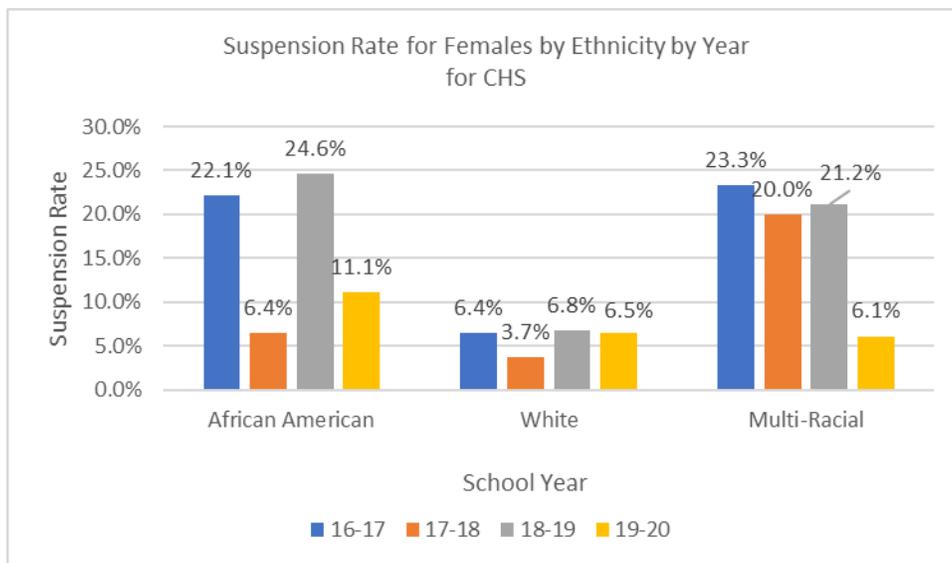


Figure 12. Suspension Rate by Gender by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS

In comparison to PPS the trend is similar; however, PPS has had a consistent suspension rate for males and females at 20 percent and 18 percent respectively. PPS had a much higher suspension rate for females during the 2019-2020 school year, at 17.9 percent, compared to 9.1 percent at Charter HS. The same is true for the male suspension rates, as Charter HS is 7.5 percent and PPS is at 19.2 percent. As seen in the previous data sets, Charter HS rates are decreasing as PPS rates are remaining stagnant or increasing.

According to a 2014 study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students (p.3). A report by the Women’s Law Center finds that “Black girls are 5.5 times more likely to be suspended than white girls” (Crawford, Patrick & Chaundry, 2017, p.13). When examining the data from Charter HS, I found the data to be similar for males and females of color compared to their white counterparts. The data for the suspension rate of females by ethnicity at Charter HS is illustrated in Figure 13.

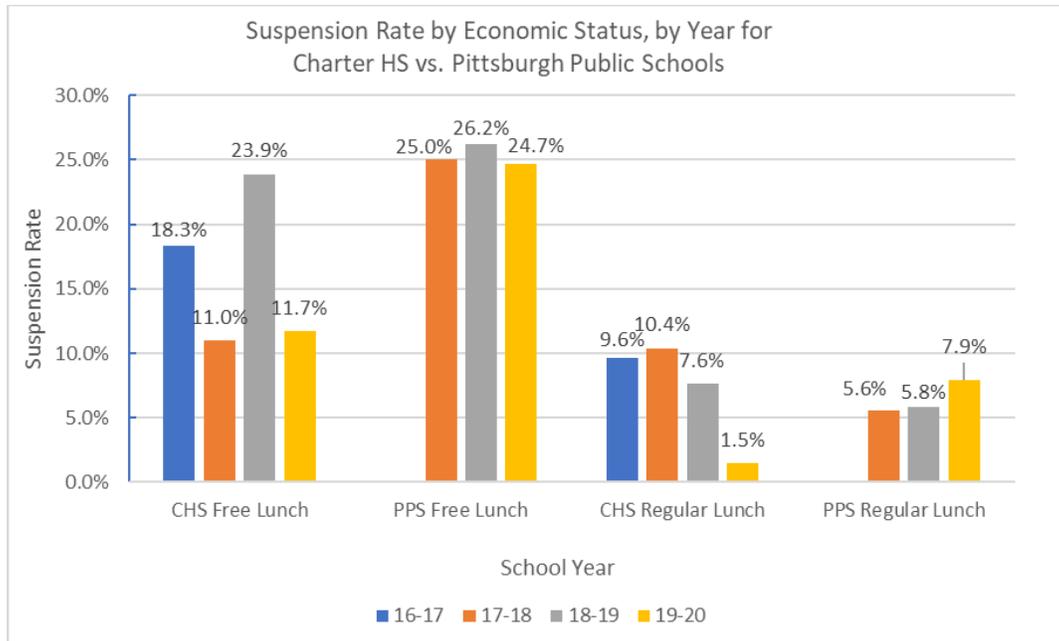


**Figure 13. Suspension Rate for Females by Ethnicity, by Year, for Charter HS**

The average student enrollment for females at Charter HS between 2016 and 2020 is 55.7 percent African American, 30.2 percent white, and 9 percent multi-racial. Consistently from 2016 to 2019, African-American and multi-racial females were suspended at a rate three times higher than white females. This trend leveled off in the 2019-2020 school year with the suspension rate of African-American females at 11.1 percent, white females at 6.5 percent, and multi-racial females at 6.1 percent. Although the disparity in the suspension rate of females of color is high, it is encouraging to see that the rate is flattening and is not as disproportionate as in prior years.

#### **4.4.3 Suspension Rate by Economic Status**

Student economic status is determined by qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The average number of students enrolled at Charter HS who qualified for free or reduced lunch was 64 percent and the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch at PPS is 68 percent. Figure 14 illustrates the suspension rate for economically disadvantaged students at Charter HS compared to economically disadvantaged students at PPS.



**Figure 14. Suspension Rate by Economic Status by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**

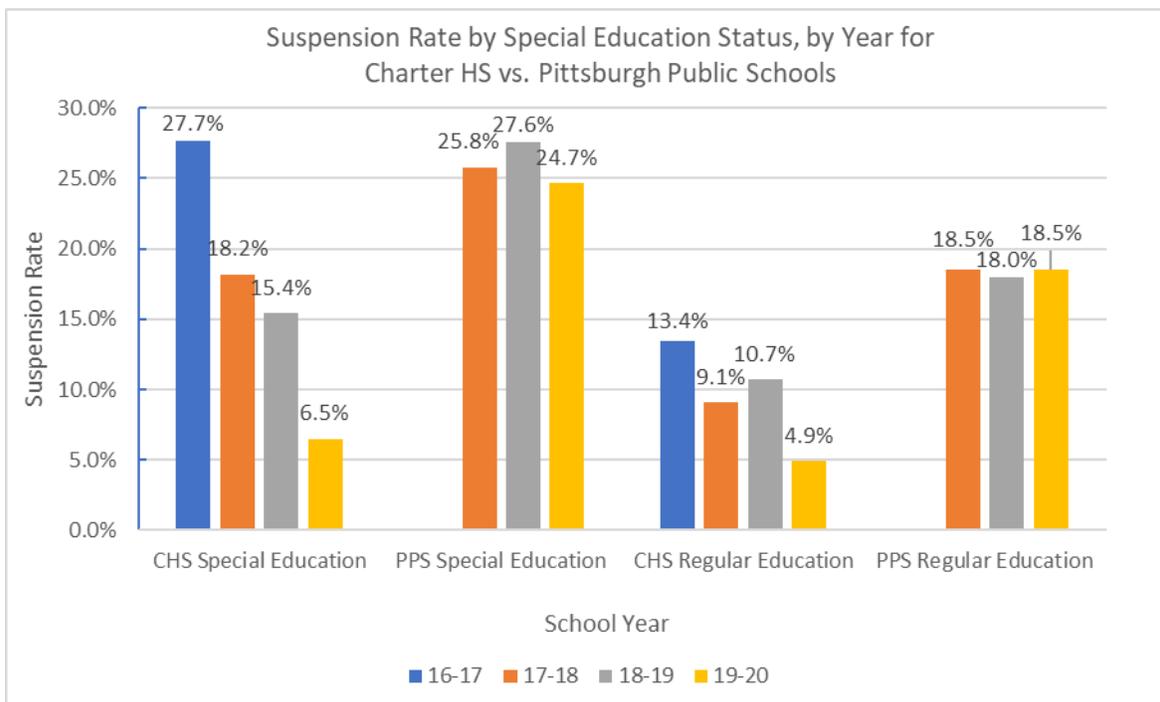
The data for Charter HS show a trend similar to other subgroups, as the data fluctuated for three years and decreased for the 2019-2020 school year. The major shift in this data, however is that for school years 2016-2017 through 2018-2019, students who received free or reduced lunch were twice as likely as their peers to be suspended; in the 2019-2020 school year, however, that number increased to three times more likely to be suspended than their peers.

The data for 2019-2020 illustrates a suspension rate of 11.7 percent for students who receive free or reduced lunch, compared to only 1.5 percent of students who do not qualify. This data trend illustrates the most substantial disparity of all subgroups for the 2019-2020 school year.

PPS has a much higher suspension rate for economically disadvantaged students, as those students are five times more likely to be suspended. This data is the same across the three years of reportable data used in this study.

#### 4.4.4 Suspension Rate by Disability Status

As stated previously, the average special education population at Charter HS across the school years 2016-2017 through 2019-2020 was 19 percent, and the current enrollment of special education students is 23.5 percent of the student population for the 2019-2020 school year. Figure 15 illustrates the suspension rate for special education students and general education students over the past four school years compared to the suspension rate of special education and regular students in PPS.



**Figure 15. Suspension Rate by Special Education Status by Year for Charter HS vs. PPS**

The suspension rate for special education students, while higher than that of general education students, has been decreasing every year since the 2016-2017 school year for Charter HS. It dropped from 27.7 percent in 2016 to 6.5 percent in 2020. Compared to PPS, which has an

average suspension rate of 25 percent for its special education students, Charter HS has a considerably lower suspension rate for special education students. PPS's special education suspension rate for the 2019-2020 school year was 24 percent, which is four times higher than Charter HS. The difference between the suspension rate of special education students at Charter HS and general education students is at the lowest it has been in four years at just under 2 percent. This subgroup of students is the only one that shows a downward trend across the four years. Special education students had suspension rate of 27.7 percent in 2016, which decreased to 6.5 percent in 2020; this is a difference of 21 percent. While the suspension rate decreased, the disparity between general education students decreased as well. The difference in the suspension rate between the two groups was 14 percent in 2016 and is only 1.4 percent in 2020, a 12.6 percent decrease over four years.

#### **4.5 Overall Conclusion**

Suspensions and suspension rates at Charter HS are generally lower than those for PPS. Charter HS has a lower percentage of state reportable offenses, 14 percent compared to 28 percent for PPS. The data for Charter HS fluctuated over the four school years beginning in 2016-2017. This fluctuation may be due to several factors, including a change in leadership in the 2018-2019 school year. One substantial change involved the unacceptable language policy that shifted from zero-tolerance to a restorative approach has been effective in lowering suspensions. Charter HS had a leadership change in the 2018-2019 school year with the appointment of the new Principal/CEO. As the new leadership and leadership team established themselves and began to change policy and implement restorative practices, suspensions and suspension rates decreased.

While the data shows a disparity between African American and multi-racial students compared to white students across all subgroups, it is encouraging to see those disparities begin to drop with the changes in leadership and policies and procedures. Compared to PPS, Charter HS has fewer suspensions, a lower overall suspension rate, and lower suspension rates between subgroups of students.

The differences in suspension rates between African-American and multi-racial females compared to white females is concerning, although those rates have dropped significantly and are now almost level between the subgroups. The most noteworthy disparity is between students receiving free and reduced lunch and the students who do not. This disparity was considerable for the 2019-2020 school year. The trend has been decreasing, so hopefully in future years the data continue to decrease and this disparity will close.

Charter HS is in the early implementation phase of restorative practices. Data show a positive change in suspension rates. It is likely that leadership and policy changes have largely contributed to these decreases. In the following chapters, I will look at qualitative perception data from administration, teachers, and students to explore their feelings on change in the discipline culture and to what extent those changes are associated with restorative practices.

## **5.0 Implementation of Restorative Practices (Addressing Research Question 2)**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Restorative practices were formally introduced to Charter HS by the current CEO/Principal in 2018, soon after she was hired. All staff completed a two-day training in December of 2018 on restorative practices and focused their efforts through equity. Charter HS's focus on relationship building through looping mirrored some aspects of restorative practices; however, they were not defined as such nor fully evolved for restorative characteristics. This chapter addresses implementation of restorative practices in the school: *What restorative practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of those stakeholders who have implemented them (CEO/principal, grade level administrators, and teachers) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?*

### **5.2 Data Sources and Analysis**

The data sources and analysis were derived from interviews and a focus group conducted with the Charter HS staff. To collect these data, interviews were conducted with the CEO/Principal and teachers, and a focus group was conducted with the administration. Each session took approximately 45 minutes, and the questions above were asked to each group. The approach to these sessions were semi-structured interviews and a focus group during which questions were asked to establish an organic dialogue about the climate and culture of Charter HS and to gain

perspectives on the implementation of restorative practices from stakeholders. The semi-structured approach allowed for a more open dialogue for all participants, enabling multiple themes to emerge from the conversations.

Participants included the CEO/Principal, four administrators, and three teachers. The demographic breakdown is seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographics of Participants**

<b>Participant Type</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>
Principal/CEO	Female	African American
Administrator	Female	White
Administrator	Female	African American
Administrator	Male	African American
Administrator	Female	Hispanic
Teacher	Female	White
Teacher	Female	White
Teacher	Female	Mixed Race

Prior to the start of each session, each participant completed the “Consent to Act as a Participant in a Research Study” form and provided demographic information. In the focus group of administrators, each participant was given a number between 1 and 4 and used that number to identify themselves when speaking. Each session was conducted at Charter HS and recorded using an audio-recording application on my smart phone. Since the conversations were being recorded, I was able to focus on the conversations, taking only notes on the overarching ideas that emerged from the conversations.

Once interviews and focus groups were completed, I uploaded each recording to a website that completed the transcription for each conversation. The transcription was then downloaded and printed, and I began to review the documents and conduct the initial coding of the data.

A student survey was also conducted, and while limited in response, I was able to connect some degree of student perspectives to the findings. The survey was distributed to 240 eleventh and twelfth grade students after parental consent and student assent documentation was received. The survey included 18 questions focused on climate and culture, disciplinary outcomes, and relationships. While only 12 students responded, I consider their perspectives as applicable across the findings.

### **5.2.1 Coding and Themes**

The codes were determined through reading the transcripts of each conversation and highlighting the words and phrases that appeared the most often and were common across all conversations. Once the codes were determined, I extracted the relevant text and placed statements in the table in order to help organize the codes and themes. (Table of the Codes and Themes is in Appendix G and H).

Inductive coding was done in order to identify codes that emerged from the data, and deductive coding defined codes that matched concepts from current research and theory. The inductive codes that emerged from the data were family, inclusivity, equity, safety, community, and high expectations. The deductive coding was used for relationships, community building and culturally responsiveness.

As I began to review the text and define the codes, I noticed that the teachers were very passionate about the culture and climate of the school. They deal with the students in a more

intimate way than other classroom teachers through their daily interactions, instruction and as a result of looping. The administrators are clearly aware of what is going on in the school; however, they just were less animated in their responses.

Once I defined the codes, I began to process the information and themes began to develop from the codes. I separated the codes that reflect question two within the climate and culture section of the interview and focus group as climate a culture questions directly related to question two.

To determine themes, I went through the extracted text and coding to find common concepts. The major themes that emerged from this data include relationship building, community building, and the use of restorative techniques to inform decisions that impact climate and culture. The most common theme was relationship building, which was mentioned in every interview and in the focus group. Other themes emerged from the data that align with **building relationships**, such as **family**, **community building**, **looping**, and having **conversations** with students as a means to solve problem and avert disciplinary outcomes. In all, relationships were the major theme. All of the themes are outlined in the next sections.

## **5.3 Findings**

### **5.3.1 Family Environment That is Inclusive and Supportive**

When asked about the culture of the school, every respondent answered with the word, “family.” It was evident that the “family” atmosphere that Charter HS strives for is top of mind for each individual in the building. When describing family, the teachers spoke of the looping

concept and how they are able to build bonds and connections with their students. One teacher stated, “I feel the overall culture here is very much like a family. I mean very much about building relationships, collaboration, and you loop with a team of teachers”.

### **5.3.2 Relationship Building Through Community Building**

Relationship building was also a key theme central to most responses. Respondents were able to articulate the need for having strong relationships with the students and each other. Teachers said that more focused implementation of restorative practices has enhanced the sense of community in the school. Although relationship building can also be connected to a sense of family, as one administrator stated, “the culture has always been here where we build relationships with students”, it was mentioned so frequently that I categorized it as a specific theme.

### **5.3.3 Safe and Caring Environment With High Expectations**

When asked about the beliefs of the school, the most common response was a safe environment that has been established at Charter HS. This belief is central to the administration and the teachers. There was great pride in their responses; they all felt safe in the building, but they also know that the students feel safe and cared for, all while still having high expectations for their academics and behavior. One teacher stated that they have “pride in having a safe and caring environment.”

In the student survey, participants were asked if they felt physically and emotionally safe at school. Of the respondents, 72 percent agreed that felt physically safe at Charter HS and 90 percent agreed that they were emotionally safe at Charter HS.

### **5.3.4 Daily Conversations to Build Relationships**

As I asked about their perspectives about restorative practices, most respondents were familiar with the concept because of the many conversations that they have with students throughout the day. Teachers referred mostly to these as “hallway conversations” in which teachers have short, private conversations with students who are in conflict or seem frustrated. A teacher stated that her experience with the conversations allows for “a cooling off period and then kind of a check in with the kid”. Although these conversations are not technically associated with restorative practices, the concept of using restorative questioning and other strategies are becoming consistent among staff.

### **5.3.5 Culturally Responsive as Foundation for Restorative Practices**

The staff feel that being culturally responsive to the needs of the students has led to the implementation of restorative practices. They view it as a method to help lower suspension rates among students and also help change policies that were adversely impacting student disciplinary outcomes. As teacher one stated, “We are recognizing that a significant number of our students come with some trauma” as a main reason for moving towards restorative practices to meet the needs of their changing population of students.

### **5.3.6 High Suspension Rates Drives the Need for Equitable Outcomes**

Staff recognize that Charter HS had a high suspension rate and articulated that restorative practices are a good way to lower those rates while providing equity for student outcomes. A

teacher stated that the need for restorative practices was “probably our really high suspension rate, and recognizing that a significant number of our students come with some trauma and drama”. They also mentioned changing the policy relating to profanity as a mechanism of restorative practice has been beneficial in providing equity. As an administrator stated, “we have changed some of our policies, so it feels like we send less kids home”. This theme captures the “why” for implementing restorative practices.

### **5.3.7 Clarify Terminology of Restorative Practices to Ensure Implementation and Follow-Up**

A major theme from administration was making sure that staff and students use the correct terminology when using restorative practices. It is imperative that there is a unified message to staff and students and that it can be implemented with fidelity. A tenured administrator stated “to me, I don't feel like we've done anything drastically different. We may not use the same language, but that's been our model from the very beginning; how we interact with students, how we interact with parents, how we interact with each other. That's what we've always done”. While the foundation is present for restorative practices, the defined process is absent for a variety of stakeholders. Teachers expressed their desire to have more follow-up training, but also to be able to have follow-up conversations with students once they are they sent to the office for a disciplinary infraction.

### **5.3.8 Using Circles, Conferences, and Daily Conversations to Integrate Restorative Practices**

The final theme regarded how to improve the implementation of restorative practices at Charter HS. Teachers are committed to using circles, conferences, and their daily conversations with students as the foundation of restorative practices. They feel that these skills will lead to a fully restorative school. As one teacher stated, “the use of circles allows for a student’s voice to be heard”.

Of the students who responded to the survey, 54 percent stated that they have never participated in a circle. However, 75 percent of respondents have experience hallway conversations with teachers.

## **5.4 Summary**

The findings as they relate to research question two: *What restorative practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of those stakeholders who have implemented them (CEO/principal, grade level administrators and teachers) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?* provided a diverse perspective that had common themes of relationships, communication, and safety.

There is a feeling of family and togetherness within the school, yet they strive for safety and equity and building a stronger community. Relationships are key to the success of the school, and the staff feel that the daily conversations they have with students builds a family foundation. High expectations and relationships formed through looping were key themes in staff interviews

and focus groups. They believe that the structure of the school has allowed for better relationship building and trust between staff and students.

Prior to the arrival of the CEO/Principal, restorative practices were not defined; however, the administrators believe the staff was utilizing restorative practices without the formal designation. Restorative practices were introduced to the staff by the new Principal/CEO due to her previous work with restorative practices in another district. Ensuring equitable outcomes and decreasing the suspension rate were key reasons for the decision to implement restorative practices.

Staff members feel comfortable using circles in their classrooms; however, they need restorative practices to be better defined for the particular school culture and climate. Based on the limited survey results, circles are not being used consistently in all classrooms. In addition, restorative practices are not clearly defined for students.

The climate and culture at Charter HS provides a good foundation for the continued implementation of restorative practices across the school. Teachers and administrators still need a defined structure for the full implementation of restorative practices; nonetheless, individuals are finding success with certain aspects of the training they have received on restorative practices.

## **6.0 Effect of Restorative Practices on Discipline (Addressing Research Question 3)**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Restorative practices were introduced to Charter HS shortly after the arrival of the new CEO/Principal in 2018. Findings from chapter 5 described the climate and culture of the school and how the staff perceive restorative practices implementation at the school. While a formal training was presented in 2018, teachers and administrators continue to work toward a clearly defined restorative practices program. This chapter explores how discipline indicators and relationship building have been affected thus far. This chapter addresses research questions three: *Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?*

### **6.2 Data Sources and Analysis**

The data sources and analysis were derived from interviews and a focus group conducted with the Charter HS staff. I used a coding process similar to the work with Research Question 2 (See Chapter 5) to identify codes and themes. Those codes and themes are found in Appendices G and H.

### **6.2.1 Data Sources**

The data sources included the transcripts and notes from the interviews and focus group with the Principal/CEO, administration, and staff at Charter HS. All participants were asked the same series of questions relating to school disciplinary outcomes and relationship building. The questions were grouped in this manner to explore how restorative practices are impacting student behavior and outcomes. The questions were open-ended in order to lead to open dialogue from each participant.

The questions centered on restorative practices that have recently been implemented at Charter HS and also on practices associated with restorative practices, such as giving people the opportunity to repair relationships that have caused harm. Each participant was specifically asked how often restorative practices are used and by whom and also if they feel that restorative practices are leading to better relationships and outcomes for students.

Another data source was the responses from the student survey that was sent to all eleventh and twelfth grade students. Regrettably, only 11 students responded to the survey; therefore, I will consider data from those responses as they pertain to specific findings from the interviews and focus group.

To gather these data sources, the same type of protocol described in chapter 5 was used to collect this data for research question 3. Those protocols involved recording the sessions with staff, uploading the recordings to be transcribed, and reviewing the transcribed interview data to begin my data analysis.

## 6.2.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis for research question three required the same process used for research question two. Once I received the transcripts from the interviews and focus group, I was able to read through them and highlight common phrases, words, and examples generated by the staff responses.

Once I had all of the transcripts highlighted, I created a table (Appendix G) in which I documented the question that was asked and the person/group it was asked of; I then extracted the highlighted text from the transcripts. Once the table was complete, I added a column to document the codes. As I read through the extracted text, I was able to identify the codes that emerged from the data.

I had three sources of extracted text: the responses from the Principal/CEO, the administrators, and the teachers. Each question generated its own series of codes. Some codes were repeated throughout multiple questions, and I listed repeated codes in the table to have a complete concept of the text. Inductive coding was done in order to identify codes that emerged from the data, and deductive coding aligned with concepts from current research and theory. Inductive coding resulting from the data included daily conversations, positive interactions with students, relationships, and community. The inductive codes that emerged from the data included policy, student engagement, alternatives to suspensions, use of restorative circles, and trauma.

### 6.2.2.1 Daily Conversations, Positive Interactions with Students, Relationships and Community

These inductive codes were most apparent in the text. **Daily conversations** with students was a code that derived from questions about how often restorative practices are used in the school.

Respondents viewed the daily conversations with students as restorative because they are “being pro-active with students, getting them to reflect on their behaviors and get back on track.”

**Positive interactions** with students was another code that emerged frequently in the data. This code surfaced from several questions including how to ensure students are being treated fairly and how positive relationships are formed with students. Respondents consistently mentioned how being more restorative included more positive interactions with students through conversations, mediations, consistency in dealing with behaviors, and having group discussions or circles in class.

**Relationships** was a major code that emerged across the entire interview and focus group process in relation to the topic of discipline and relationship building. Policies, procedures, class scheduling, and staffing at Charter HS is grounded in relationships. When asked about how discipline has changed or if restorative practices had made a difference, participants spoke most often about positive influence on relationships.

The use of looping staff across grades with students was mentioned when discussing relationships. Staff’s ability to loop with their students enables them to build better relationships with students across time and development. As one participant explained, “Building a strong relationship and allowing teachers to open up to students about their feelings helps with conflict resolution because the relationship is foundational.” Relationships also create a safe space for students, especially for those who have caused harm, to grow and to be reintegrated back into the school community, helping to extend “enhanced relationships.” Teachers feel that restorative practices have improved the relationships between students and administration. They feel the students have “bought in” to restorative practices.

**Community** was also a significant code emerging from these data. There is a strong feeling of community among staff, and they feel that restorative practice enables their school

community to thrive and flourish and begin to make a positive impact on discipline. There is strong sense that their students are part of the community, and, even if they are disciplined, whether suspended for a few days or longer, they are “coming back as a part of this community.”

#### **6.2.2.2 Policy, Alternatives to Suspensions, Circles, and Student Trauma**

**Policy** was one of the first changes that resulted from the introduction of restorative practices. Policy is defined as any rule or regulation defined by the Board of Trustees and/or the administration designed to define student and staff expectations. All respondents identified that an early policy change occurred related to the use of unacceptable language by students. Prior to 2018, if students used profanity, there was an automatic suspension. This type of zero-tolerance policy had led to disproportionate suspensions of minority students. The zero-tolerance policy was eliminated, and inappropriate language was considered on a more individualized basis. Teachers have linked the elimination of this policy to increased student engagement: “The biggest benefit of the restorative practices is the elimination of zero tolerance, one strike, boom, you're out, these are these bright white lines, it is by implementing the new policy and becoming more aware of opportunities for restorative practices, we're able to keep more students in school and engaged.”

**Alternatives to suspensions** is also a code that aligns with the adjustment of zero-tolerance policies to include more options for keeping students in school and connected. Students are able to experience a wider variety of consequences, such as staying after lunch to clean or staying after school to assist a staff member. Teachers and administrators feel that alternatives to suspensions enable them to build better relationships with students and build trust with them, so they are able to defuse future student behaviors.

When asked about specific restorative practices, teachers mentioned the use of restorative circles. A restorative circle is a technique that is used in the classroom to promote a feeling of community. Typically, students are arranged in a circle and everyone is afforded a chance to speak freely on a pre-determined topic or issue that has arisen and needs to be addressed. Usually a facilitator ensures that protocols are followed and that the topics are relevant. Students speak in a sequential order, and everyone is afforded an opportunity to speak without interruption (International Institute of Restorative Practices, 2020). Staff feel the most comfortable with the use of circles because they are quick to facilitate conflict resolution because students are able to better build relationships in the classroom and with each other.

Teachers also use restorative questioning cards that prompt them in their conversations with students. Restorative questioning cards are tools that have common restorative questions for quick reference and to help begin a conversation. Questions are directed towards certain individuals or certain behaviors that need to be addressed. For example, there are questions for the responsible party, the affected party, or the mutually responsible parties. Questions for the mutual responsible parties include:

- *What happened?*
- *What were you thinking (or feeling) at the time?*
- *What have your thoughts (or feelings) been since?*
- *Who has been affected by what happened?*
- *In what way have others been affected?*
- *How have you been affected?*
- *What was your part in this?*
- *What can you take responsibility for?*

- *What do you think you need to do to make things right?* (Restorative Solutions, 2020)

These community building circles are key to further developing the relationships between students and teachers.

The Principal/CEO and administrators recognize that the student population is changing and more students are experiencing or have experienced **trauma**. As one administrator said, “Oftentimes hurt people hurt other people, so they're hurting someone else because they've already experienced some sort of pain or trauma, and they just don't know how to deal with it. So it's important that they get help to stop that crazy cycle.” In recognizing trauma as a cause or symptom of behavior, staff are ready and willing to use alternatives to suspensions, including restorative practices, to help foster growth for the students.

The coding process enabled me to determine the most common concepts emerging from the interviews and focus groups. Once the codes were categorized, I was able to begin the process of identifying themes as they related to restorative practices, discipline, and relationship building at Charter HS.

### **6.3 Findings**

Once the codes were created, I began to identify patterns among them, which enabled me to develop broader themes by combining several codes together. The major themes that emerged from the data include **policy changes**, a **proactive approach to discipline**, and **relationship building**. All of the themes are discussed in the next sections.

### **6.3.1 Policy Changes Leading to Better Outcomes**

Teachers and administration both recognized that a change in policy has resulted from the implementation of restorative practices. A common discussion point was the policy on student use of unacceptable language. Prior to the arrival of the Principal/CEO in 2018, students were automatically suspended for using specific types of profanity. Teachers now speak about giving students chances to work out their behaviors, and they believe the students know and understand that they are trying to work with them and not just automatically suspend them.

These policy changes have improved student outcomes as the rates of suspension for unacceptable language have decreased substantially. Thirty-nine percent of the code of conduct infractions for students at Charter HS over the four-year period beginning in 2016-2017 were for unacceptable language. This change in policy was accomplished both as a result of a cultural change towards restorative practices, and as a catalyst for consideration of additional restorative practices.

A major assumption of zero-tolerance policies, according to Daly, Hildenbrand, Haney-Caron, Goldstein, Galloway, and DeMatteo (2016), is that “removal of disruptive students leads to a safer and more productive learning environment for the school’s general student body. However, a thorough search of literature did not produce any research findings supporting the claim that zero tolerance policies are effective in reducing violent and other delinquent behaviors in schools” (p.261). What has emerged at Charter HS is the belief that there is a better approach than zero-tolerance, and, if student behaviors are meant to change, then restorative practice is one avenue for that change.

### 6.3.2 Pro-Active Approach to Discipline

Administrators and teachers describe their **pro-active approach to discipline** as executed through various types of conversations, mediations, and referrals to the wellness group. As staff learn more about what it is to be restorative, they are more aware of how having impromptu conversations with students can help de-escalate situations and create a more trusting environment. Both teachers and administrators described how effective the wellness team is with students and how they refer students more often. The Health & Wellness program at Charter HS includes a full-time nurse and two full-time mental health professionals. These individuals assist in the implementation of the philosophy of the school, which calls for the “fullest realization of the potential of each child on every level – intellectual, social, emotional, and physical” (Charter HS, 2020). The wellness team offers a drop-in service for students in crisis, and students can make appointments throughout the day for any counseling or social-emotional needs they may have.

Teachers feel “fortunate to have a really strong wellness department” that focuses on social-emotional learning support through consultation and student “drop-in” opportunities. A shift from zero-tolerance to a social-emotional support model enables the staff to be proactive in their approach to discipline. Administrators also have conferences with students to help them become more aware of their behaviors and help them develop more positive outcomes.

As the administration and staff move to a more positive and pro-active approach to discipline, they are beginning to see stronger relationships being formed with students. Teachers are leading this effort with more conversations with students and a more relational approach to discipline.

### **6.3.3 Engagement in Circles, Mediations, and Small Groups**

The most utilized approaches to restorative practices at Charter HS, mentioned by every teaching participant are “circles.” They also mentioned the use of “restorative questioning” with students. Administrators tend to use mediations and small group conferences to assist students who are in crisis or conflict to calm down and mediate their problems or circumstances.

Administrators like the tiered approach to discipline that has resulted from restorative practices. They have noticed that by the time a student is sent to the office, they have more than likely had a conference or conversation with a teacher and can continue that conversation in the office. Students are becoming used to this type of philosophy and mediation protocol for resolving conflicts. Of the students who participated in the survey, more than two-thirds have experienced hallway conversations with their teachers, though about half have never participated in a restorative circle. Eight of the 11 student respondents feel that their teachers are doing a good job with restorative practices.

Considering that circles is considered the most widely approach to be used by staff, administrators must support this practice in classrooms in order to maintain fidelity and consistency across the school. Teachers mainly used community building circles to either begin or end class. More prescriptive training and implementation might be considered.

### **6.3.4 Safe and Secure Environments to Heal from Mistakes**

A major component of restorative practice is the ability for the person who has caused harm to be able to face the “victim” and restore the relationship that has been damaged. When asked about this practice, both teachers and administrators agree that the person who causes harm has

the right to be restored. The foundation of this belief is the ability to be in an environment that allows for a safe and secure space for students to grow from their mistakes.

Teachers feel that they have “an obligation to make sure everybody feels safe and secure including staff and students. Making sure that the behavior that created that harm, whether it's verbal harm or whether it's physical harm, that we are employing all of the resources we need.” These resources include restorative practices, the wellness team, and other approaches to help students grow and learn from their mistakes. Almost all of the respondents to the student survey agreed with the statement that students should be given the opportunity to change their behavior if they have caused harm. Current literature suggests that a restorative approach to discipline enables accountability, respect, and community building. “A major appeal for using a restorative approach to discipline as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies is the emphasis on respect, accountability, repair of harm, and restoration of the community rather than on punishment and exclusion” (Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010, p. 4).

The theme of **community** that was evident in the coding process emerges through this data set. A community is considered a safe and supportive environment. Both staff and students recognize the importance of a community in school and agree that Charter HS provides that culture.

### **6.3.5 Relationships Through Equity and Consistency**

The next three themes are situated in relationships. Relationships and relationship building is central to the mission at Charter HS. The most common concept that emerged throughout the study was relationships. The foundation to the relationships built at Charter HS is centered in equity and consistency. Every staff member noted that building better relationships with students has helped with discipline and that their model of looping has helped build these relationships. As

one teacher stated, “Because of the looping and the relationships we begin building in ninth and tenth grade, there's significant payoffs at the end of tenth grade through graduation.”

Because teachers and administrators know their students well, it becomes easier to respond to their behavior based on past experiences and the relationships that have been built throughout the years. More than three-quarters of the students who responded to the survey believe that restorative practices have helped build relationships between students and staff. Almost all of the students agree that building positive relationships with teachers has helped them become better students.

Teachers also feel that administration has become more equitable in their approach to discipline as a result of restorative practices. They have witnessed students trusting adults more in the school. Teachers have said, “I have heard students; I do think their relationship with administration is much better than it had been.”

### **6.3.6 Opportunities to Build Relationships/Relationships Built Over Time**

The opportunity to build relationships at Charter HS is most often attributed to staff looping and the resulting closeness of the staff with students. Staff members get to know not only the students but their families as well. Almost all of the student respondents felt cared for by the teachers at Charter HS.

One teacher mentioned believing that students have bought into the restorative practices: “They bought in; we have the relationships.” Administrators also believe that more positive relationships have developed as part of the restorative approach, in part because they are more likely to have conversations with students and not just suspend them. They are also building and sustaining relationships with the families as well as the students.

Administrators indicate that as a result of looping and the strong development of a community established at Charter HS, connections with the families are stronger. Administrators have also been communicating with families more about the positive things their students are achieving, rather than placing negative phone calls home for disciplinary issues.

### **6.3.7 Conversations and Mediation**

A consistent theme throughout the data relates to students being able to have conversations and mediations as alternatives to suspensions. One teacher stated, “I think we're getting better at helping them, giving them time and space to resolve conflicts.” Space to resolve issues and have a voice is fundamental to restorative practices.

Administrators are using mediation more often, as one described that they “have the conversation with the students separately and then have the conversation with the other student, and then determine if they want to come together to have that mediation.” This method teaches students how to resolve conflicts without fighting and subsequently getting suspended. This restorative approach to conflict has made the students more aware of their behaviors and the harm they may have caused. It also permits the teachers and administrators to learn more about the students, therefore making a deeper connection rooted in trust.

## **6.4 Summary**

The findings as they relate to research question three: *Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two*

*years?*” provided varying perspectives from all stakeholders; however, they all feel that restorative practices are the catalyst for a more social-emotionally sensitive approach to discipline.

Teachers and administrators feel comfortable with their ability to form relationships with students through conversations, circles, and the looping schedule. Students also feel cared for by the staff.

A common belief among the staff is that the elimination of some zero-tolerance policies, especially the example of use of unacceptable language, has led to a reduction in suspensions. Through conversations and mediations, teachers feel equipped to handle this type of student behavior. Students also have noticed positive changes in discipline since the implementation of restorative practices.

Staff and students both commented that students who have caused harm should be able to learn from their mistakes and given the opportunity to change their behaviors. This belief is rooted in the relationships that each group says they find in the school. The relationships that students and staff are able to develop benefits the students and makes them feel cared for at Charter HS. Looping enables these relationships to be forged as students’ progress through Charter HS.

Overall, the climate and culture of Charter HS provides the foundation for restorative practices to be implemented at the school. Staff members see early signs of improvement through policy changes and increased opportunities for students to engage in alternatives to suspensions. Relationship building and the increased opportunities to build those relationships through restorative practices is central to the success of the program. Teachers feel comfortable with the direction of the school, and students feel good about their school and the relationships they have with their teachers.

The final chapter will present overall findings and conclusions from the study and offer recommendations of the next steps of the implementation of restorative practices at Charter HS.

## **7.0 Implication and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Implications**

#### **7.1.1 Disparities in Subgroups**

Student disciplinary outcomes have been the focal point of many schools across the country. The disparities between African American and white students has remained at the forefront of this examination of disparities in school discipline. African American students are two to three times more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts (Gregory, et. al, 2010). The data that emerged from Charter HS uncovered some disparities in school disciplinary actions between African American and white students.

Overall, African American students were twice as likely than their white counterparts to be suspended in 2016-2017 and in 2018-2019. Recent data for the 2019-2020 school illustrates that the suspension rate for African American students is at 10% and the suspension rate for white students is at 6%. The suspension rates have decreased allowing the differences to decrease as well.

It is important to mention that the suspension rate for African American and multi-racial females was three to four times higher than the suspension for white females across the four-year period. For the 2019-2020 school year the suspension rate has decreased for all three subgroups, with African American females at a rate of 10% and multi-racial and white females have a rate of 6%. Hopefully, this difference will continue to close and the trend that emerged in the 2019-2020 school year can continue.

The other subgroup that had a substantial difference were the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The suspension rate for students receiving free/reduced lunch compared to students who do not qualify for free lunch was 11% to 1.5% during the 2019-2020 school year. Both rates dropped substantially from the 2018-2019 school year at 24% and 7.5% respectively. This is an alarming difference and the continued policy changes might be instituted to combat this issue.

Fergus (2019) challenges educators to “get over the habit of pathologizing entire populations of young people, as though the struggles of individual students could ever be explained merely by pointing out that they're poor” (p. 33). He continues by saying, “we need to get it into our heads that poverty is not a deterministic condition; it doesn't tell us anything about the ways in which any particular kid — from any particular race or ethnicity — will develop, the kinds of instruction they'll need, or the level of "discipline" they require” (Fergus, 2019, p. 33). This level of disparity, while the overall suspension rate has decreased, it surprising and teacher bias could possibly play a role in these data. Assumptions, if any, of students in poverty need to be uncovered and recognized for there to be further movement within the culture of the school.

### **7.1.2 Zero-Tolerance Policies**

Zero-tolerance policies are a major issue related to school disciplinary outcomes and disparities among students. As stated previously, zero-tolerance policies contribute to negative over-representations of negative outcomes for minority students. Moreover, zero-tolerance policies help to widen the disparity gap among various sub-groups of students based on race, gender, socio-economic status and disability status.

New leadership exposed a problem with the zero-tolerance policy of student use of unacceptable language. Students were automatically suspended for the use of profanity. In both the suspension data analysis and the qualitative data analysis of the focus group and interviews, teachers and administrators recognized this as a major issue with the school, but also a positive change that has resulted from a more restorative approach to discipline. The elimination of this zero-tolerance policy has helped to establish restorative practices as a new response to discipline. With this discovery, administration may want to re-examine the student code of conduct to identify if there are other zero-tolerance policies that have a negative impact on student outcomes.

### **7.1.3 Defining Restorative Practices**

Restorative practices are in the early implementation phase at Charter HS. Based on responses from teachers and administration, there has been one formal training and they have tools they use to facilitate circles and they have access to restorative questioning cards. Teachers and administrators emphasized that there has not been a formal adjustment to a full restorative model. They feel that they have been utilizing “restorative practices” through their strong relationship building techniques established in the school through the teacher looping schedule and hallway conversations with students. However, there is not a formal restorative structure within the school.

The absence of a full restorative plan that is infused throughout the school is producing an intermittent implementation with staff members who understand the concept, but whom are not officially trained in restorative practices. A common language on restorative practices is also missing from the daily efforts of the staff, which lends to a possible misunderstanding of the use and intent of the practice. The foundation of the school allows for restorative practices to be situated in their core values. It is imperative that a formal plan is adopted and implemented so

there is a continued decrease in suspensions and suspension rates, and to build a greater sense of community and trust among students and staff. continue to decrease.

## **7.2 Recommendations for Local Practice**

### **7.2.1 Tracking of Data**

Increased use of data and the tracking of certain data elements will help in the determination of how to fully implement restorative practices. In order to successfully understand if there are teacher deficits and biases, specific teacher data tracking is encouraged. Examining teacher referral patterns will help identify the level of professional development that will be needed by staff.

The teacher looping schedule also permits cohort tracking that can help determine if behaviors actually decrease as students' progress through high school, or if the relationships built leads to less subjectivity when disciplining older students.

An important consideration is how the data is imported in the student management system. There are systems that make it easy to store, manage and manipulate data. It would be beneficial to run discipline reports with each trimester to determine trends and track any disparities in the suspension rates.

Another consideration is to have a breakdown of infractions by year and by grade or cohort level will help identify which violations are most precedent in the school. This will also enable administration to uncover if a rule or policy change is having a significant impact on student behavior and suspensions.

Establishing a data and/or discipline team would also encourage the restorative approach to discipline as teachers will become larger stakeholders within the context of the school. Teachers stated in their interviews that they have noticed that students appear to have better relationships with administration. If teachers are able to analyze data and help determine what strategies are working for best for students, a more collaborative approach to discipline can be established.

The framework of a restorative environment is already in place with the shared responsibility of having conversations with students to try to get to the root causes of their issues and or behavior. Enhancing the role of the staff and allowing a shared decision approach will enable better buy-in from staff on the benefits of restorative practices.

### **7.2.2 Restorative Practices Adopted as an Intervention**

Charter HS is in the early implementation phase of restorative practices. A change in leadership and a different philosophy of student discipline are catalysts for this strategic change. Staff are aware of restorative practices but are still at the novice level of implementation. In order to ensure complete buy-in from all stakeholders including students and parents, Charter HS may want to formally adopt restorative practices as an intervention strategy to help combat disparities in disciplinary outcomes for students.

A written policy that explicitly states the details of a school-wide restorative model, may help alleviate existing disparity issues. This may enable the administration the ability to plan and execute a full restorative model and identify lead teachers and student leaders to help with the implementation. The addition of a written policy might allow for the creation of a climate and culture where students are supported in repairing the harm that they have caused, and victims of that harm can begin the process of restoring the relationship.

A restorative community culture, already established at Charter HS, will be strengthened by the official approval of restorative practices as an intervention and community building practice. Teacher and administrator looping and the family atmosphere created at Charter HS, is a strength that may farther enable a smooth implementation and transition to a formal model accessible by all stakeholders.

### **7.2.3 Policy Changes Beginning with Zero-Tolerance**

Zero-tolerance policies and their negative impact on student outcomes has been well documented elsewhere and mentioned in this study numerous times as a source of disparity in suspensions and suspension rates of minority students and other subgroups of students. A deep dive into the student code of conduct would help identify antiquated policies, some of which might be considered zero or near-tolerance, to help support more equitable outcomes for students. Teachers who were interviewed were very aware of how the zero-tolerance policy of student use of unacceptable language was negatively impacting students and was not correcting the behavior.

The simple change to that policy was a key indicator to the decrease in suspensions from 2018-2019 school year to 2019-2020 school year. If there are similar policies that can help build an equitable foundation for students, they should be evaluated and taken to the board for revision and approval. Once this occurs, a more systematic approach to evaluating school discipline policies can begin which is grounded in research and best practices.

As policies are revised, the school will be better situated to enhance the implementation of restorative practices into the culture of the school. Teachers and students will be able to see the correlation between restorative practices and a more equitable approach to discipline.

#### **7.2.4 Embedded Professional Learning for Staff**

After restorative practices are fully adopted by the school, an embedded professional learning model should accompany the changes to policy, procedures and interventions. Learning Forward is the third iteration of the Professional Learning Standards. The shift from professional development to professional learning was intentional for the professional “learning” of educators. “Standards for Professional Learning outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results” (Learning Forward, 2020). This shift to professional learning will help with the implementation of not only restorative practices, but may also lend itself to the culturally responsive practices and equity work that Charter HS has embarked on since the arrival of the Principal/CEO.

#### **7.2.5 Student Voice**

An important aspect to any type of school reform is the inclusion of student voice. Although I was unable to speak to students directly and did not have an ideal number of respondents to the survey, once thing was clear, students at Charter HS have much to say. Oftentimes critical stakeholders like the students we serve get overlooked for critical input to the policies and procedures of the school. Although I was not able to witness this happening at Charter HS, I am being cautious in assuming that student voice is not central at the school. There were few examples of formal ways for students to engage regularly and officially.

The majority of the respondents to the survey said they feel welcomed and cared for at Charter HS. This is critical to the success of restorative practices, as the foundations of strong relationships are already established. Student are surveyed annually at Charter HS, I feel it would

be beneficial for the students to take the survey I have created to better inform administration and staff on their feelings and outcomes. A student leadership team or council could be central component for the continued implementation of restorative practices into the school.

### **7.3 Limitations**

Limitations to this study include the shutdown of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limited responses to the student survey and limited access to the teaching staff.

Prior to the closure of schools, I was conducting focus groups with administration and teachers. However, due to limited teacher participation for each scheduled focus group, they turned into interviews; I was still able to use the same questions and still get rich responses and valuable input.

I was scheduled to begin student focus groups the week of March 16, 2020; however, schools were closed on March 13, 2020 and I was unable to conduct those groups. Once it was determined that schools would remain closed, it was decided to move the questions from the student focus group to a survey to be given to students electronically. Communication with students and parents were done electronically with the sending of consent and assent forms via email. Unfortunately, I only had 11 students respond to the survey, which limited the impact of student voice in the study.

I had a total of three teachers interviewed for the study. Although they ranged in age and experience at the school, it limited the amount of teacher input to the study. I intended to do another round of teacher interviews, but the closure occurred and I was unable to so.

## **7.4 Recommendations for Future Study**

The unique structure of Charter HS with the teacher schedule of looping and the family atmosphere makes the implementation of restorative practices a likely fit for the school. Future studies should include an in-depth survey and/or focus groups of students to gain their perspective on discipline, fairness and the climate and culture of the school.

A fuller exploration of student disciplinary data and outcomes should take place with particular attention to teacher referral patterns and a comparison of violent and non-violent offenses. This will enable a more complete review of the Safe Schools data to see if there are instances which are reported incorrectly.

Finally, a roundtable discussion or focus group with a variety of stakeholders should take place to ensure equal participation of key voices to the school. These data sets would enable leadership to see a full disciplinary picture of the school to determine the best course of action for further implementation of restorative practices and other research-based interventions.

## **Appendix A Focus Group and Interview Protocol**

### **Purpose of the Study:**

- The main goal of the study is to explore how the implementation of restorative practices have impacted behavioral outcomes of students in a high school setting.

### **Target Subject Population:**

- Interview of CEO/Principal
- Focus groups of administration (5-7 per group)
- Interview of teachers
- Survey of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students

### **Recruitment:**

- CEO/Principal, administrators and teachers will be recruited via emails.
- Students will be recruited via a letter distributed through their school email address.

### **Location/Setting:**

- All interviews and focus groups will be held at Charter High School in a secure location. Teacher and administrator focus groups will be conducted either before or after school.

### **Protocol:**

- Survey created through Qualtrics will be sent to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Four focus group of administration
- Procedure during focus group
  - Review purpose by the school and the research.
  - Acknowledgement of consent forms
  - Acknowledgement of agreement to record and the details and purpose of recording.
  - Demographic sheet of participants completed by researcher
  - 45minute session

- Session will be audio recorded with consent prior to focus group session.

**General Discussion Topics:**

- The main topic areas of the CEO/Principal Interview, administrator, teacher and student focus groups are:
  - School Climate and Culture
  - Student Disciplinary Outcomes
  - Relationship Building through the Restorative Process

**Moderator of the Focus Group Discussion:**

- The principal investigator/researcher will be moderating the discussion in all interviews and focus groups.

**Confidentiality:**

- To ensure confidentiality, the sessions will be audio recorded and the following will be applied:
  - Keeping the discussion anonymous or limiting the types of identifiers will minimize the risk of identification. Subjects will be reminded not to use their full name.
  - Recordings will be kept in a secure and locked area with access limited to designated researchers.
  - Recordings will be destroyed after data analysis and completion of the study.
- Sensitive information can be revealed during focus group discussion. To ensure confidentiality is maintained, subjects will be reminded that the information discussed during the focus group needs to remain confidential.
- All survey data will be stored through Qualtrics on the Pitt Cloud Server

**Duration of the Discussion:**

- Focus group will range between 45-60 minutes
- The CEO/Principal interview and administration focus groups will be conducted on the same day. Teacher interviews conducted on another day.
- The duration of the study will be 1-2 months with the interview and focus groups occurring over that time frame.

**Table 2. Interview and Focus Group Questions**

Topic	Question
School Climate and Culture	1. How would you describe the overall culture for students and adults at Charter HS? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student to student</li> <li>• Teachers and students</li> <li>• Teacher to teacher</li> </ul>
	2. What are some core beliefs in the school and what are the expectations for teachers and students? Are restorative practices aligned with those beliefs and can you give examples?
	3. What experiences led to the decision to implement restorative practices into the school?
	4. How were restorative practices implemented through the school with staff and students?
	5. What is working well?
	6. Where are areas of improvement?
	7. What specific approaches are being used in the school? (circles, conferences)
	8. How familiar are you/were you with restorative practices?
Student Disciplinary Outcomes	1. How has discipline changed, specifically student behaviors since the implementation of restorative practices?
	2. How often does the administration use restorative practices in their disciplinary outcomes with students?
	3. How are conflicts resolved at the school between students, between staff and between students and staff?
	4. Why is it important for a person who has caused harm to be given support to change their behavior?
	5. When a student causes harm, what is the purpose of the school's disciplinary response?
	6. How do ensure that students are being treated fairly when handling disciplinary issues?
Relationship Building	1. Are students easily able to work out disagreements with other students? How and when does this happen?
	2. Have restorative practices increased the development of positive relationships between students and staff and between student and student?

## Appendix B School Agreement to Participate in Research Study<sup>1</sup>

### School Agreement to Participate in a Research Study

As the authorized official of [REDACTED], I am agreeing to the participation of [REDACTED] in the study entitled "Perspectives on Restorative Practices in a High School: An Exploration of Early Implementation" By Licia Lentz under the direction of Dr. Cynthia Tananis from the University of Pittsburgh.

I have been given a full description of the project and have reviewed the following items and discussed their appropriateness with Licia Lentz, principal investigator.

- Use of Historical Discipline Data*
- Interview with CEO/Principal, Administrative Team and focus groups with teachers*
- Focus groups of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students*

I understand that school personnel will be asked to perform the following functions:

- Distribution and collection of parental consent and student assent forms
- Participate in data collection through the participation in focus groups or interviews
- Providing alternate activities for those students who decline to participate

I understand I will be provided with a report on the outcome of the study within 3 months of completion.

I understand that I will not be provided with any information which individually identifies students or staff and their responses except in cases where the student is found to pose a risk of harm to another student

I understand that I may withdraw the school's participation at any time or prohibit the inclusion of any of the measures listed above.

If I have any questions about this research study I may contact Licia Lentz, [REDACTED].

Name authorized official: [REDACTED]

Title: CEO and Principal

Phone: [REDACTED]

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: January 17, 2020

<sup>1</sup> Identifying information redacted.

## Appendix C Consent to Act as a Subject in a Research Study

Title: Perspectives on Restorative Practices in a High School: An Exploration of Early Implementation

Principal Investigator: Licia Lentz  
School of Education  
University of Pittsburgh  
5100 Wesley W. Posvar Hall  
230 South Bouquet Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
[Ll132@pitt.edu](mailto:Ll132@pitt.edu)

Co-Investigators: Dr. Cynthia Tananis  
Study Mentor

Description: You are invited to participate in a research study designed to investigate restorative practices and disciplinary outcomes of students. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. Demographic data including race and gender will be collected prior to the start of the focus group. Further, you will be asked a few questions about your thoughts on school climate and culture, student disciplinary outcomes and relationship building. The focus group will be audio-recorded with your permission. The total duration of your participation in the study is expected to be approximately 45 minutes. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

Risks and Benefits: There are no foreseeable benefits to you for your participation in this study. Although all records related to your involvement in this study will be kept strictly confidential, there is a limited risk that this confidentiality could be breached.

Confidentiality: All records related to your involvement in this research will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a participant ID number rather than by your name. Audio-recordings will be uploaded to the Pitt Box Cloud system for confidentiality purposes and erased from the local recording device. Your research data may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). You can contact the study investigator, Licia Lentz at [REDACTED] if you have any questions about the study, concerns or complaints.

Costs and Payments: There is no cost to you for participating in this study and you will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

In addition to the investigator listed on the first page of this authorization (consent) form and their study mentor, the following individuals will or may have access to identifiable information related to your participation in this research study: The Principal/CEO, [REDACTED].

Authorized representatives of the University of Pittsburgh Office Of Research Protections may review your identifiable research information for the purpose of monitoring the appropriate conduct of this research study.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this research study and, should you change your mind, you can withdraw from the study at any time. However, if you withdraw from the study, then the responses you have provided up until that point may be used as part of the study. To formally withdraw from this research study, you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on the first page of this form. Your decision to withdraw from this study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh. Per University of Pittsburgh policy all research records must be maintained for at least 7 years following final reporting or publication of a project.

.....  
Voluntary Consent: I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator. I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations that occurred during my participation. By signing this form I agree to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Certification:

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual(s), and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual(s) have about this study have been answered, and we will always be available to address future questions, concerns or complaints as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent                      Role in Research Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent                      Date

## Appendix D Parent Permission Letter

May 7, 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am Licia Lentz, a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of Pittsburgh. I have been a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent in the Pittsburgh area for over 18 years. I request permission for your child to participate in a research study to be used for my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a research project on how the recent implementation of restorative practices into Charter HS has impacted student behavioral outcomes.

Restorative practices focus on student engagement and teacher/administrator engagement to gain a better understanding of student behavioral expectations and consequences. I will be talking with administration, teachers and surveying students to see how these interventions have been progressing and how they have been helpful to student learning and student growth. As part of implementation, I am gathering information to gain a better understanding of the process to see if any changes can be helpful to its continued success. The study consists of the following research questions:

1. What historical (2009 to 2019) discipline referral patterns (out of school suspensions and types of offenses) exist for students at Charter HS, disaggregated by grade level, race, gender and socioeconomic status?
2. What Restorative Practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of stakeholders (CEO/principal, grade level administrators, teachers, general population of students and students who have been suspended for 11 or more days) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?
3. Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?

We hope to use what we learn from the study to make enhancements to the program and help inform other school leaders in the area.

The study consists of the following activities:

1. We ask your permission for your child to take part in an online survey that will focus on questions on the following topics:
  - a. School Climate and Culture
  - b. School Discipline and Discipline Policies
  - c. Restorative Practices as a part of School Culture
2. No student names or identifying information will be used, recorded or revealed in this study.

The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so.

Only I will have access to information from your child. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only. At the conclusion of the study a summary of group results will be made available to all interested parents. Please indicate at the end of this consent form whether you wish to have these results shared with you. If so, please provide your email address. If you do not want to share your email address, findings will be available in report form to the administration and board. Results should be available in approximately 3 months.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you give your permission for your child to participate, your child is free to refuse to participate. If your child agrees to participate, he or she is free to end participation at any time. You and your child are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your child's participation in this research study.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please feel free to contact me.

Licia Lentz  
Doctoral Student  
School of Education  
University of Pittsburgh  
[lll32@pitt.edu](mailto:lll32@pitt.edu)

## Appendix E Consent to Act as a Subject in a Research Study

Title: Perspectives on Restorative Practices in a High School: An Exploration of Early Implementation

Principal Investigator: Licia Lentz  
School of Education  
University of Pittsburgh  
5100 Wesley W. Posvar Hall  
230 South Bouquet Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
[L132@pitt.edu](mailto:L132@pitt.edu)

Co-Investigators: Dr. Cynthia Tananis  
Study Mentor

Description: Your child is invited to participate in a research study designed to investigate restorative practices and disciplinary outcomes of students. If you provide permission for your child to participate, s/he will be asked participate in an online survey. Demographic data including grade, race and gender will be collected prior to the start of the survey. Further, your child will be asked a few questions about his/her thoughts on school climate and culture, student disciplinary outcomes and relationship building. The total duration of your child's participation in the study is expected to be approximately 10 minutes.

Risks and Benefits: There are no foreseeable benefits to your child for his/her participation in this study. Although all records related to your child's involvement in this study will be kept strictly confidential, there is a limited risk that this confidentiality could be breached.

Confidentiality: All records related to your child's involvement in this research will be kept strictly confidential. Your child's identity on these records will be indicated by a participant ID number rather than his/her name. Your child's research data may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). You can contact the study investigator, Licia Lentz at 724-622-2945 if you have any questions about the study, concerns or complaints.

Costs and Payments: There is no cost to your child for participating in this study and your child will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

Right to Withdraw: Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary. Your child does not have to take part in this research study and, should s/he change his/her mind, s/he can withdraw from the study at any time. However, if s/he withdraws from the study, then the responses your child has provided up until that point may be used as part of the study. To formally withdraw your child from this research study, you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to

the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on the first page of this form. Your decision to withdraw your child from this study will have no effect on his/her current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh. Per University of Pittsburgh policy, for projects involving children, research records must be maintained for 5 years past age of majority (age 23 per PA State law) after study participation ends.

Who will know about my child’s participation in this research study?

In addition to the investigator listed on the first page of this authorization (consent) form and their study mentor, the following individuals will or may have access to your child’s identifiable information related to your child’s participation in this research study: Principal/CEO, Dr. Dara Ware Allen.

Authorized representatives of the University of Pittsburgh Office Of Research Protections may review your child’s identifiable research information for the purpose of monitoring the appropriate conduct of this research study. In unusual cases, the investigators may be required to release identifiable information related to your child’s participation in this research study in response to an order from a court of law. If the investigators learn that your child or someone with whom your child is involved is in serious danger or potential harm, they will need to inform, as required by Pennsylvania law, the appropriate agencies.

.....  
**VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

The above information has been explained to me/my child and all current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator(s) listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number(s) given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

By clicking “yes” below, I give permission for my child to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

**IF PARTICIPANT’S AGE IS LESS THAN 18 YEARS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child’s Printed Name

I understand that, as a minor (age less than 18 years), the above-named child is not permitted to participate in this research study without my consent. Therefore, by completing this form, I give my consent for his/her participation in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s Name/Legal Guardian (Print)                      Relationship to Participant (Child)

Yes, I give my consent for my child to participate in the research study.

No, I do not give my consent for my child to participate in the research study.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ASSENT**

This research has been explained to me, and I agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Child-Subject    Date

Yes, I agree to participate.

No, I do not agree to participate.

## Appendix F Research Questions Methods and Alignment to Interview/Survey Questions

**Table 3. Research Question Methods**

<b>Method, Data and Analysis Question</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Analysis and Interpretation</b>
1. What historical (2016 to 2020) discipline referral patterns (out of school suspensions and types of offenses) exist for students at Charter High School, disaggregated by, race, gender, special education status and socioeconomic status?	Four-year historical data analysis of total number of Out of School Suspensions and Suspension Rates (OSS) by race, gender, special education status and SES per year.	Explore data sets from the previous four school years and examine the disciplinary patterns of number of days of OSS based on race, gender, special education status and socioeconomic status.	Patterns will be determined by comparing the number of days OSS per year race, gender, special education status and SES status. Suspension rates per year by race, gender, special education status and SES status will be determined and compared to PPS.
2. What Restorative Practices have been introduced at Charter High School, and what are the perspectives of those stakeholders who have implemented them (CEO/principal, grade level administrators and teachers) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?	Interview of CEO Focus Group of Administration Interviews of Teachers Survey of Students	Transcription of focus group and interview responses and survey responses.	These data will be transcribed and coded for themes and keys concepts and areas of alignment and divergence among the CEO, administration, teachers, and students where applicable.
3. Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?	Interview of CEO Focus Group of Administration Interviews of Teachers Survey of Students	Transcription of focus group and interview responses and survey responses.	These data will be transcribed and coded for themes and keys concepts and areas of alignment and divergence among the CEO, administration, teachers, and students where applicable.

**Table 4. Research Question Alignment**

<p>Research Questions</p>	<p>2. What Restorative Practices have been introduced at Charter HS, and what are the perspectives of stakeholders (CEO/principal, grade level administrators, teachers, general population of students and students who have been suspended for 11 or more days) regarding implementation and discipline referral patterns?</p>	<p>3. Has the implementation of restorative practices led to changes in discipline referrals or consequence data across the last two years?</p>
<p>Interview/Focus Group Questions</p>	<p>1. How would you describe the overall culture for students and adults at Charter HS?                  2. What are some core beliefs in the school and what are the expectations for teachers and students? Are restorative practices aligned with those beliefs and can you give examples?                  3. What experiences led to the decision to implement restorative practices into the school?                  4. How were restorative practices implemented through the school with staff and students?                  5. What is working well?                  6. Where are areas of improvement?                  7. What specific approaches are being used in the school? (circles, conferences)                  8. How familiar are you/were you with restorative practices?</p>	<p>1. How has discipline changed, specifically student behaviors since the implementation of restorative practices?                  2. How often does the administration use restorative practices in their disciplinary outcomes with students?                  3. How are conflicts resolved at the school between students, between staff and between students and staff?                  4. Why is it important for a person who has caused harm to be given support to change their behavior?                  5. When a student causes harm, what is the purpose of the school’s disciplinary response?                  6. How do ensure that students are being treated fairly when handling disciplinary issues?                  1. Are students easily able to work out disagreements with other students? How and when does this happen?                  2. Have restorative practices increased the development of positive relationships between students and staff and between student and student? Can you give some examples?</p>
<p>Student Survey</p>	<p>Q4 These statements reflect the experience you have as a student at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.                  Q5 These statements reflect how student behavioral expectations are communicated. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.                  Q8 How often do you experience or have observed the following restorative practices? Please indicate how often:</p>	<p>Q6 The following items ask about student discipline at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.                  Q9 These questions describe how restorative practices are impacting your experience at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.                  Q10 These items describe the impact of relationships on student behavior. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.                  Q15 These items are about your experience in an alternative school. Indicate your level of agreement with each item.                  Q16 These items describe your experience while being suspended. Indicate your level of agreement with each item.</p>

## Appendix G Coding

**Table 5. Coding for Research Question 2**

Question	Group	Interview Extract	Coding
<p>1. How would you describe the overall culture for students and adults at Charter HS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student to student</li> <li>• Teachers and students</li> <li>• Teacher to teacher</li> </ul>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very connected to one another, like a family environment</li> <li>• the culture is inclusive</li> <li>• They don't make people feel bad about themselves.</li> <li>• People are just accepting</li> <li>• I would say inclusive, supportive, very much focused on learning</li> <li>• the culture is so connected</li> <li>• the administrative office is like one team</li> <li>• connectedness, like family environment the, it's an interconnected or interdependent culture,</li> <li>• Relationships are big thing</li> <li>• the most connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Accepting</li> <li>• Inclusive</li> <li>• Supportive</li> <li>• Team</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Looping</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The culture has always been here where we build relationships with students.</li> <li>• we're like a family</li> <li>• the family atmosphere leads the students to be protective of each other.</li> <li>• The staff knows the students. They know what makes them tick.</li> <li>• For going through the loop, they really continue to have relationships with them</li> <li>• become more accepting of each other in people's differences, in struggles.</li> <li>• accept people's differences</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel the overall culture here is very much like a family. I mean very much about building relationships.</li> <li>• collaboration and you loop with a team of teachers. We do shared decision making on grade level teams.</li> <li>• one on one relationship with each of the students and really getting to know them as individuals.</li> <li>• focusing on areas of growth.</li> <li>• all hands on deck about knowing what's going on with our kids.</li> <li>• long-term relationships, developing that level of respect for one another, and realizing that these are adults who are committed to the students and their families to see their students be successful. So an extended family I think is probably the best way to think of that.</li> <li>• respect for one another, kindness to each other.</li> <li>• family relationships because we loop for 4 years,</li> </ul>	

<p>2. What are some core beliefs in the school, and what are the expectations for teachers and students? Are restorative practices aligned with those beliefs, and can you give examples?</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to work hard. So they don't always have to achieve excellence, but we do expect them to exert their best effort</li> <li>• beliefs that all students can learn.</li> <li>• connections to the real world</li> <li>• individual responsibility</li> <li>• pride in having a safe and caring environment</li> <li>• The relationships also play a role in us being a safe school.</li> <li>• continuous challenge</li> <li>• content that we teach is at a rigorous level.</li> <li>• personal academic connections</li> <li>• collaboration, and that's also built into the school's model to where you work in teams. The interdependence that I was talking about when I said connectedness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Pride</li> <li>• Safe and caring environment</li> <li>• Rigor</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Engagement</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we have a really safe environment.</li> <li>• protecting our kids, making sure that they don't feel threatened or bullied, and making sure that they feel cared for.</li> <li>• So he felt safe and comfortable to report the situation and we were able to work with the family and now that student that he reported, the concern, is getting some help, getting some resources and getting connected.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think as we are becoming more overt in our progress with restorative practices and with equity.</li> <li>• So I think our move toward restorative practices definitely aligns with our core beliefs.</li> <li>• It just so happened that the relationship building and things like that were a huge part of how we move that mission forward.</li> <li>• this whole idea of rigor,</li> <li>• holding students to a higher standard because generally there was this idea of simplifying things to ensure students' success, looking at students from a deficit model versus an opportunity model.</li> <li>• Restorative practices obviously is a relatively newer concept, newer idea.</li> <li>• engagement and equality and relationships.</li> </ul>	
<p>3. What experiences led to the decision to implement restorative practices into the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences in other schools/district</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Research</li> </ul>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resources to implement a pilot within Pittsburgh public schools</li> <li>• successful steps and elements of implementing restorative practices</li> <li>• International Institute of Restorative Practices</li> <li>• being a champion for restorative practices and a learner, because I'm still learning.</li> <li>• a soft approach</li> <li>• restorative practices to enhance what we're doing,</li> <li>• 80% of it is community building and relationship building</li> <li>• the way the school was structured around the relationship building that it seemed like a perfect place to start</li> <li>• equity work</li> <li>• conferences</li> <li>• culturally responsive practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO's prior experience</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• High suspension rate</li> </ul>

	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when Dr. Allen came in, that was one of her ideas. But we also... We've had multiple conversations together as a group and in one-on-one, that the design of Charter HS, we've always been restorative.</li> <li>• That's been the nature of our school since we started. So it's, to me, I don't feel like we've done anything drastically different. We may not use the same language, but that's been our model from the very beginning, how we interact with students, how we interact with parents, how we interact with each other. That's what we've always done.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Allen came on board two years ago, no, after her first trimester here, she had people from the Restorative Justice Institute come and do a two-day training with us. That was the first time that as a school we were introduced to the framework of, really it was two days. So it was intense. But really just that was kind of all we got.</li> <li>• Probably our really high suspension rate.</li> <li>• And recognizing that a significant number of our students come with some trauma and drama.</li> <li>• suspension rates</li> </ul>	
<p>4. How were restorative practices implemented through the school with staff and students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was it introduced?</li> <li>• How many professional development sessions?</li> <li>• On-going supports</li> </ul>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students have only been introduced as they experience it, but not through a formal training.</li> <li>• participated in a circle</li> <li>• number of staff who would know much the language other than the initial training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Conversations</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm just trying to help people come together, collaborate, work.</li> <li>• it's just now helping others have those same skills.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That's really a core of a lot of restorative practices is sort of the first thing is you have the conversation or you allow for a cooling off period and then kind of check in with the kid.</li> <li>• So I think that that's something that everybody's at a different level of understanding of like, hey, this is part of the spectrum of restorative practices and it's not something new that we have to do now.</li> <li>• Was some people self-selected to get involved in some different trainings. And as a result of their positive experiences, they brought them back.</li> <li>• So the idea of, I think it originally started with the culturally responsive teaching,</li> </ul>	
<p>5. What is working well?</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community building</li> <li>• impromptu conferences with students,</li> <li>• hallway conversation</li> <li>• try to talk things through</li> <li>• repair the harm and understand what the impact is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community building</li> <li>• Conversations</li> <li>• Not just punitive</li> <li>• Culturally responsible</li> <li>• Student voice</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative can be the way that you say good morning to a student.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hallway conversation</li> <li>• letting kids cool down before getting in a conversation with them or I think that listening to kids is something we already do.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So recognizing that our students are capable of doing anything, if we give them the opportunity. And we frame that opportunity in a way that is culturally responsible, responsive, and enculturing more student voice.</li> <li>• So from my experience I think it works well.</li> <li>• So restorative practices for me just sort of came in seamlessly with what I was already doing in the classroom.</li> <li>• they do feel like some of the restorative circles, they felt that although the student's voice was being heard.</li> <li>• I think that starting that conversation and having some professional development sessions in place has been a really good thing.</li> </ul>	
6. Where are areas of improvement?	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• always more to learn on the responsive side</li> <li>• more formal training and coaching</li> <li>• having a student restorative leadership team</li> <li>• clarifying expectations for restorative practices within the building.</li> <li>• more common, helping to clarify language and understanding of what restorative is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal training</li> <li>• Clarify expectations</li> <li>• Terminology</li> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Follow-up</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area of improvement just because I think the culture of Charter HS, as Della said, has been restorative.</li> <li>• But an area of improvement, when using the terms restorative, I think the challenge with some staff can be making sure things are restorative, but making sure our expectations remain high for students.</li> <li>• sometimes staff members use restorative and they lower expectations for students, and that's not what we want to happen at all.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One for me that I just think we've never done well here ever is the post, a conversation after the fact. So after the consequence.</li> <li>• So if a kid is sent to the office or even sent home or even it is bad enough that they're suspended, then that follow up conversation, that really is, to me the power of true restorative practices is the restoration. That almost never happens.</li> <li>• Are students going to be circle keepers? There's all kinds of different ways we can go. And that hasn't been clearly defined as a school yet.</li> </ul>	
7. What specific approaches are being used in the school? (circles, conferences)	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• circles with staff, also with administrators and students</li> <li>• conferences</li> <li>• expulsion process is restorative in that we have relationships with the families.</li> <li>• wanting to welcome them back</li> <li>• reintegration meetings</li> <li>• definitely conversations after that hearing about learning from and being reintegrated back into those.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circles</li> <li>• Conferences</li> <li>• Reintegration meetings</li> <li>• Daily conversations</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some people who will do a circle consistently.</li> <li>• it has varied in terms of what people do.</li> <li>• So we implemented clubs in 11th grade. Our kids are in teams.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hallway conversations, I would say that's restorative. The different conversations that we could reach out to parents just on good times and not just on negative terms.</li> <li>• The relationships that the advisors build with the students, the relationships that we build with the students. Those are all in my opinion, restorative,</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So a lot of teachers are using circles in their class for lots of different things. So whether it's a discussion circle about curriculum, some people are using it as a warm up. Some people are doing it at the end of the day.</li> <li>• So we'll take time to do circles.</li> <li>• I know we have this cue card. I do say, I tend to couch questions</li> </ul>	

**Table 6. Coding for Research Question 3**

Question	Group	Interview Extract	Coding
1. How has discipline changed, specifically student behaviors since the implementation of restorative practices?	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our suspension rate was higher last year</li> <li>• policies that we changed when I'm talking about this tension between high expectations for students balancing that with support is a language.</li> <li>• restorative consequence.</li> <li>• I've were students with help out, cleaning around the buildings, sweeping the steps. Things like that as their alternative.</li> <li>• tiered system</li> <li>• that number go down in terms of the number of suspensions</li> <li>• We also are getting, from what I understand, students that have more challenges, period. So that plays into things as well.</li> <li>• another principal giving a disciplinary response that's total different. So the fact that we do meet daily,</li> <li>• staying connected and communicating about their various issues. And then oftentimes we'll meet in those meetings or we'll huddle around</li> <li>• Even though there's subjectivity having that cultural I think input seems to make I think a difference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies</li> <li>• Consequences</li> <li>• Zero-tolerance</li> <li>• Alternatives to suspensions</li> <li>• Engagement</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have changed some of our policies, so I'm going to say that it feels like we may send less kids home.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we really moved from kind of a zero tolerance on certain things.</li> <li>• So we used to have zero tolerance on the F word. So anytime a kid said the F word, they would go home. That's a policy that has changed and there's a structure to the change but it's no longer just this blanket.</li> <li>• So the biggest benefit of the restorative practices is those sort of zero tolerance, one strike, boom, you're out, these are these bright white lines, is by implementing that and becoming more aware of that is we're able to keep more students in school and engaged.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So can I say that restorative practices, how that changed the impact of the student behavior? I would say that what I'm seeing is students, it's less the student behaviors as much as it is the consequences for the behavior is what I personally am experiencing.</li> <li>• a shift on how the administrators interact and react to our students.</li> <li>• I think that the students are more cognizant of the fact that, we are trying to talk through more things with them. So that there isn't necessarily these black and white boundaries all the time, which I think has its positives and its negatives.</li> </ul>	
<p>2. How often does the administration use restorative practices in their disciplinary outcomes with students?</p> <p>17.</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would say you can still be restorative even if you don't have an alternative to suspension</li> <li>• I would say they lead to a few times a week.</li> <li>• daily is because we have conversations with students all day, and it's not just for something that they would be a suspendable offense.</li> <li>• we're doing this pro-actively we're talking about, and getting him to like reflect, even though he didn't necessarily agree</li> <li>• lots of conversations like that during the day, by most of the administrators.</li> <li>• everybody was connected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily</li> <li>• Pro-active Conversations</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would say every day.</li> <li>• It's every day before a student gets down here, they've probably had redirections in the class, they've had a hallway conversation, they've had the opportunity to contact their parent on the floor to try to get them back on track.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers		
<p>3. How are conflicts resolved at the school between students, between staff and between students and staff?</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it starts with individual conversation with the student</li> <li>• So individual conversations will determine whether this will, we'll ask the student many times like, do you think you're able to sit down with the teacher and we can talk that out together?</li> <li>• engage into a conversation</li> <li>• small circle or small prompted conversations depending on whether they're one to one, or one to a threesome.</li> <li>• I have done circles with students running through the question cards.</li> <li>• We also are fortunate to have a really strong wellness department, so all they do is address social, emotional learning issues and students can drop in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations</li> <li>• Mediations</li> <li>• Circles</li> <li>• Small groups</li> <li>• Wellness department</li> <li>• Opportunity to share feelings</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I sort of see the students and the staff as one, in terms of how I deal with them. Because oftentimes the same way I'm going to deal with a kid is the same way I'm going to deal with a staff member.</li> <li>• I'm going to give them an opportunity to talk individually, prep as to if we come together, what do you want to say? What do you want to air out? Here are the rules. So I do that individually.</li> <li>• also utilize wellness a lot too</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our admin team does a lot of conflict resolution.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a lot of one on one and then circles, bringing in maybe our counselor.</li> <li>• I would say maybe it's happening more that when the conflict is between a teacher and a student they are following up, our admin team is following up to mediate and resolve those.</li> <li>• One of the things that I found eye opening let's say it was like being able to use I feel statements as a teacher because I was one of those teachers that never talked about my personal life.</li> <li>• So I think I would love more opportunities for teachers to share their feelings with students because I feel it's scary for teachers to do that. But I mean I believe that is a powerful thing to do.</li> <li>• So between students, once again, so the way the model is supposed to work is you do what you can on the floor, which means that teachers take the kids out on the floor, hey, in the classroom, what's going on? The next level would be to do an almost an intervention where you get a whole group of teachers together, and say, hey, what's going on? And then another level would be to get administration, send them to administration.</li> </ul>	
<p>4. Why is it important for a person who has caused harm to be given support to change their behavior?</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They're coming back and, or they're part of this community.</li> <li>• how to coexist without continuing to cause harm or be offensive and then perspective taking I'm trying to put themselves in another person's shoes.</li> <li>• helping them understand another person's point of view.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Coexist</li> <li>• Point of view</li> <li>• Trauma</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Recover from mistake</li> <li>• Safe and secure</li> <li>• Grow from experience</li> </ul>
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be able to function without me in a situation like this, where you don't put your hands on your boss. And so I'm trying to get you to learn that here. So, that's really what it comes down to. Life by yourself. How are you going to handle this without someone jumping in?</li> <li>• Oftentimes hurt people hurt people, so they're hurting someone else because they've already experienced some sort of pain or trauma, and they just don't know how to deal with it. So it's important that they get help to stop that crazy cycle.</li> <li>• And we do realize at the end of the day they are kids and so they don't know how to do all of these things, but we're helping them figure it out.</li> </ul>		
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's an important one because teenagers are not good at making decisions and they often don't know that things are wrong or inappropriate.</li> <li>• I think the purpose used to be a consequence. Now I feel like it's having the consequence, but also the understanding of why it was a problem and that it's happening more often now.</li> <li>• I think it's important for anybody who makes a mistake to have the opportunity to recover from that mistake. We should not be defined by singular moments. People are on a continuum. And that's one of the things I like about Charter HS is we tend to avoid those sort of more referenced goals.</li> <li>• we have an obligation to make sure everybody feels safe and secure, staff and students. And so making sure</li> </ul>		

		<p>that the behavior that created that harm, whether it's verbal harm, whether it's physical harm, that we are employing all of the resources we need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well, I think we've seen that, without those interventions or are ways to, grow from an experience, history tends to repeat itself.</li> </ul>	
<p>5. How do ensure that students are being treated fairly when handling disciplinary issues? 29.</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that is an art. It's a challenge.</li> <li>I think the group decision making I would say is one of the biggest balances right now.</li> <li>the consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group decisions</li> <li>Looping</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Understanding</li> <li>Consistency</li> <li>Fairness</li> </ul> <p>31.</p>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think that's difficult because one of the downsides of looping is you get to know kids really well and you get to know families really well. And so there may be a particular kid that you may be cut them a break</li> <li>you get to know a lot of things that you probably don't know about kids in maybe a more traditional type of setting. And so that does play into how you go about things and then there are other students where maybe I am harder on because they've been in 15 fights.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We've always treated all kids fairly, but I think the understanding, it can be frightening. That maybe the understanding of fairness or equities is the problem in some ways.</li> <li>I would have always said consistency, but I actually don't believe in consistency because I do feel like different students need different things and I feel like whereas one student, I can give them a reminder or use positive reinforcement and use those things to change behavior, modify behavior that doesn't work with another student.</li> <li>I tend to, if a few students are exhibiting a behavior, I try to focus just on the few. I try not to be that person who says, "Okay, there's too much talking. No one gets to talk anymore."</li> <li>So you develop that relationship there as well. And I think that helps with the fairness because, they know your background too and they know that 1 size doesn't fit all.</li> </ul>	
<p>1. Are students easily able to work out disagreements with other students? How and when does this happen?</p>	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>we will facilitate opportunity for students to be able to talk to each other.</li> <li>So teachers do it up on the floor and we do it in our office. The biggest thing is they both, just being willing to do that.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity</li> <li>Conversations</li> <li>Mediation</li> <li>Space to resolve conflicts</li> <li>Advisory groups</li> <li>Looping</li> <li>Relationships</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students typically come in the office and let one of us know if there's a challenge with another student because they want to figure it out. 95% of the time they don't necessarily want to fight.</li> <li>have the conversation with the students separately and then have the conversation with the other student, and then determine if you want to come together to have that mediation.</li> <li>that's just the nature of looping and being together and having ninth and 10th graders here and learning those things, versus 11th and 12th graders who are a little bit more versed.</li> <li>And they will help their other students out.</li> </ul>	

	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think we're getting better at helping them, giving them time and space to resolve conflicts. They just have a lot of them and it's often they're shifting alliances all the time.</li> <li>• I think students do. We have clubs, we have advisory.</li> <li>• the looping and the relationships, we begin building in ninth and 10th grade, there's significant payoffs end of 10th grade through graduation</li> </ul>	
2. Have restorative practices increased the development of positive relationships between students and staff and between student and student? Can you give some examples?	Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would say they've had a positive effect. I couldn't say increase because relationships have always been a cornerstone of the way the school is designed.</li> <li>• helped the experience feel more positive.</li> <li>• But I wouldn't say that it's increased relationship, I would say enhanced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive effect</li> <li>• Positive relationships</li> <li>• Family relationships</li> <li>• Circles</li> </ul>
	Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the development of positive relationships.</li> <li>• We're not always calling about a bad thing.</li> <li>• Develop relationships with parents and alumni who have family in the school. We know the families.</li> </ul>	
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do think that having restorative practice officially come into our lives has helped us with circle facilitation. I think that, we built a lot of really strong relationships.</li> <li>• They bought in, we have the relationships. I will say though, I have heard students, I do think their relationship with administration is much better than it had been.</li> <li>• but I think a lot of it happens through the advisory program.</li> </ul>	

## Appendix H Themes

**Table 7. Themes for Research Questions 2 and 3**

Category	Code	Theme
Climate and Culture	Connected Family Accepting Inclusive Supportive Team Relationships Looping High Expectations Pride Safe and caring environment Rigor Collaboration Equity Engagement CEO's prior experience Culturally responsive High suspension rate Training Conversations Community Building Conversations Not just punitive Student Voice Formal training Clarify expectations Terminology Follow-up Circles Conferences Reintegration meetings Daily conversations	Family environment that is inclusive and supportive  Relationship building through community building  Safe and secure environment with high expectations  Daily conversations to build relationships  Culturally responsive as foundation for restorative practices  High suspension rate driving equity  Clarify terminology of restorative practices to ensure implementation and follow-up  Using circles, conferences and daily conversations to integrate restorative practices
Disciplinary Outcomes	Policies Consequences Zero-tolerance Alternatives to suspensions Engagement	Policy changes leading to better outcomes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pro-active</li> <li>Conversations</li> <li>Mediations</li> <li>Circles</li> <li>Small groups</li> <li>Wellness department</li> <li>Opportunity to share feelings</li> <li>Community</li> <li>Coexist</li> <li>Point of view</li> <li>Trauma</li> <li>Pain</li> <li>Recover from mistake</li> <li>Safe and secure</li> <li>Grow from experience</li> <li>Group decisions</li> <li>Looping</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Understanding</li> <li>Consistency</li> <li>Fairness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pro-active approach to discipline</li> <li>Engagement in circles, mediations and small groups</li> <li>Safe and secure environment to heal from mistakes</li> <li>Relationships through equity and consistency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship Building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity</li> <li>Conversations</li> <li>Mediation</li> <li>Space to resolve conflicts</li> <li>Advisory groups</li> <li>Looping</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Positive effect</li> <li>Positive relationships</li> <li>Family relationships</li> <li>Circles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to build relationships</li> <li>Relationships built over time</li> <li>Conversations and mediation</li> </ul>

## Appendix I Student Survey

# Perspectives on Restorative Practices

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### Start of Block: Default Question Block

Hello and thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! The information collected in this survey will help your principals and teachers make better decisions when it comes to student behaviors and discipline. This survey will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and have an amazing school year!

---

Q1 What is your current grade level?

- 11th Grade
  - 12th Grade
- 

Q2 What is your gender?

- Female
  - Male
  - Non-binary
-

Q3 What is your race? (Check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other
- 

Q4 These statements reflect the experience you have as a student at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel physically safe at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel emotionally safe at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I am a valued member of the school community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other students feel that they are valued members of the school community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q5 These statements reflect how student behavioral expectations are communicated. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Expectations for student behavior are communicated by teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations for student behavior are communicated by principals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations for student behavior are communicated by other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q6 The following items ask about student discipline at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Discipline is fair at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adults in this school apply the same rules to all students equally (i.e. black students, white students, girls, boys).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are easily able to work out disagreements with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are easily able to work out disagreements with teachers or other staff members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The next series of questions ask about Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices are activities and interventions meant help positive student behavior and help restore a relationship that has been damaged when negative behaviors happen. Examples of restorative practices include community circles, hallway conversations, mediation and conferences with teachers, students and/or principals.

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Q8 How often do you experience or have observed the following restorative practices? Please indicate how often:

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Participating in a circle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One on one conversations (hallway conversations) with teachers concerning your behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict mediation with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict mediation with teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conference with principals to address behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers talk about restorative practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q9 These questions describe how restorative practices are impacting your experience at Charter HS. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teachers are using restorative practices well with students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discipline has changed, specifically student behaviors since the implementation of restorative practices over the past 2 years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for a person who has caused harm to be given support to change their behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are welcomed back by teachers into the classroom after being away due to a suspension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are welcomed back by students/peers into the classroom after being away due to a suspension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 These items describe the impact of relationships on student behavior. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Restorative practices have increased the development of positive relationships between students and staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative practices have increased the development of positive relationships between students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships that have been formed with my teachers have helped me become a better student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teacher/student relationship, whether good or bad, impacts student behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 Please indicate your level of agreement about the statements below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am happy at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel cared for by teachers at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel cared for by students at Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Charter HS is a better school than my previous school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend Charter HS to students who attend other schools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q12 Have you ever been suspended at Charter HS?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q17 If Have you ever been suspended at Charter HS? = No*

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Q13 How long were you suspended from Charter HS?

- Less than 10 days
- More than 11 days
- I was expelled for a period of time.

Skip To: Q14 If How long were you suspended from Charter HS? = I was expelled for a period of time.

Q14 While on expulsion

- I attended an alternative school or program.
- I received in-home tutoring.

Skip To: Q16 If While on expulsion = I received in-home tutoring.

Q15 These items are about your experience in an alternative school. Indicate your level of agreement with each item.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The academic work helped me stay on track.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My behavior improved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I formed strong relationships with the teachers at the alternative school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a positive transition back to Charter HS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was welcomed back to school by students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was welcomed back to school by the teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was welcomed back to school by the principals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 These items describe your experience while being suspended. Indicate your level of agreement with each item.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Based on my behavior, my suspension was fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My suspension taught me that my behavior was wrong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My suspension has helped me change my behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a conference with teachers once I returned from suspension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a conference with principals once I returned from suspension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to apologize for my actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt welcomed back to the school community after my suspension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 Anything else you would like to share about Charter HS, restorative practices, discipline at school, suspensions, or your experience as a student?

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