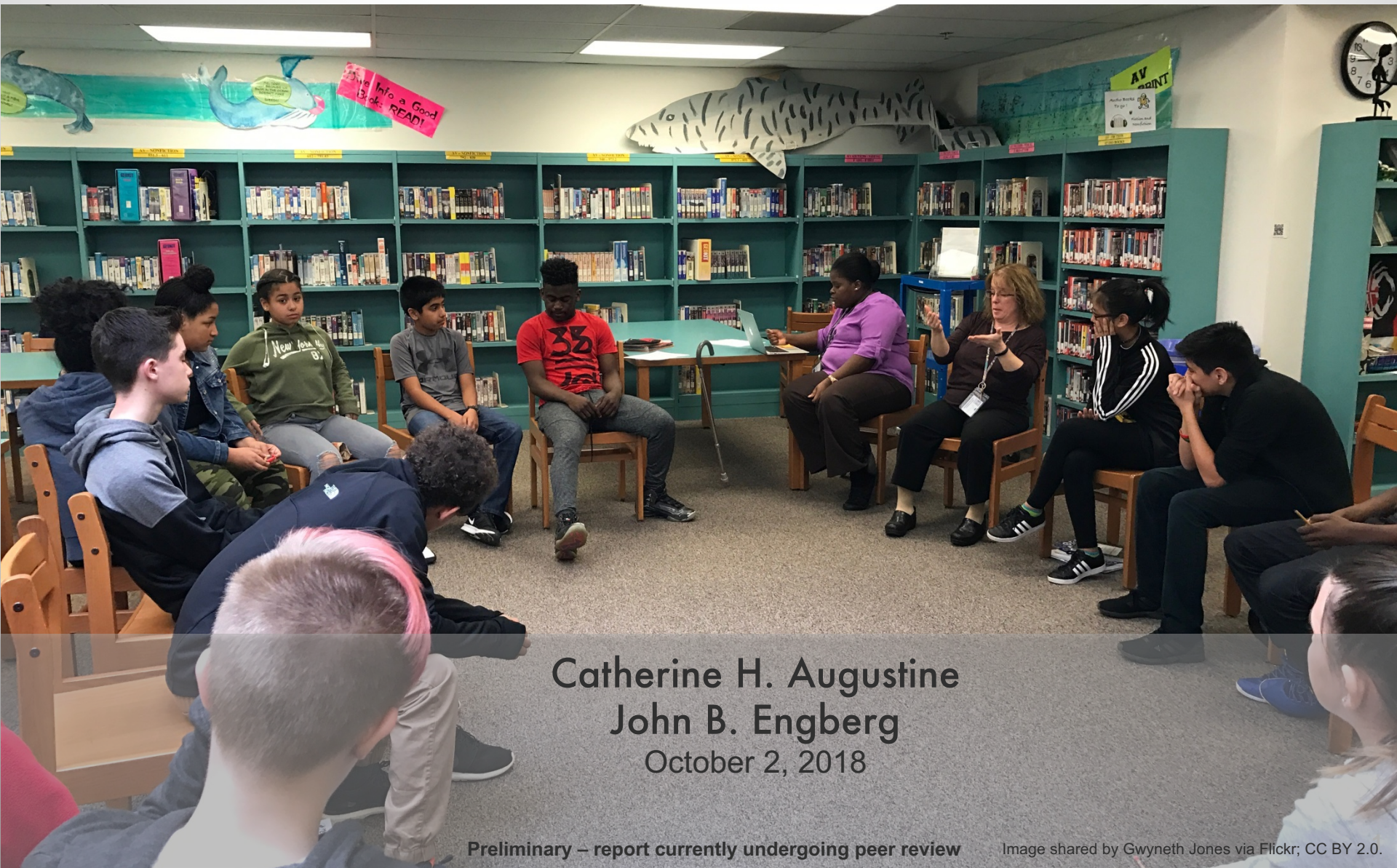


Pursuing Equitable and Restorative Communities (PERC) Initiative: Preliminary Findings



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The National Institute of Justice funded Pittsburgh Public Schools' (PPS) Pursuing Equitable and Restorative Communities (PERC) Initiative

- Motivated to increase school safety, improve school climate, and decrease suspension rates and disparities, PPS applied for NIJ funding
- Two-year initiative launched in fall 2015
- Implemented by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)
- Evaluated by RAND

PPS schools were randomized into treatment and control conditions in April 2015

- Forty-four (44) eligible schools were put in matched pairs to enhance balance
 - Matching based on grade configuration, suspension rate, staff survey conduct management factor, and student survey control factor
- Electronic “coin flip” assigned one school in each pair to participate in PERC
- The resulting 22 PERC schools were similar to the 22 control schools in several ways, including suspension rates

In Fall 2015 IIRP implemented its SaferSanerSchools™ Whole-School Change Model in the 22 PERC schools

- Four (4) days of professional development (PD) over two years for school staff
- Two (2) teleconferences per month with school-based restorative leadership team (RLT)
- Two (2) coaching visits per year
 - Seven (7) IIRP coaches assigned to 22 PERC schools
- Professional Learning Groups each month for teachers in the PERC schools

District and school leaders also provided support

IIRP Defines Restorative Practices as 11 “Essential Elements”

1. Affective statements
2. Restorative questions
3. Proactive circles
4. Impromptu conferences
5. Fair process
6. Reintegrative management of shame
7. Fundamental hypothesis
8. Restorative conferences
9. Restorative approach with families
10. Responsive circles
11. Restorative staff community

RAND evaluated PERC implementation and outcomes

- Implementation data collection
 - Surveyed staff (twice a year) in all treatment schools
 - Interviewed IIRP coaches and district leaders
 - Collected additional data in four case study schools
 - Observed circles and conferences
 - Interviewed staff
- Outcomes analysis
 - Randomized controlled trial compared 22 treatment schools to 22 control schools
- Final report to be published in December 2018

Research Questions

- How was the PERC model implemented?
- What challenged and **facilitated use** of restorative practices?
- **What were the impacts of PERC on suspension rates, academic outcomes, and climate?**
- How likely is it that PERC will be sustained in the PPS school district?

Capacity-building for the 22 PERC schools was largely successful

- IIRP training and coaching valued
 - 60-70% of PERC school staff participated in the IIRP training
 - 90% received materials from IIRP
- Almost 90% of PERC staff have at least some understanding of RP
 - 70% of PERC teachers participated in at least one PLG per month
- High buy-in was quickly established and persisted

On average, PERC staff used components of restorative practices often

- Respondents reported using aspects of RP often
 - Affective statements, proactive circles, impromptu conferences
- Use was highest in elementary schools and increased significantly in middle and high schools from Year 1 to Year 2
- High use was related to
 - attending IIRP PD
 - knowing the 11 essential elements
 - attending professional learning groups (PLGs)
 - receiving support from school administrators and/or IIRP coaches

By Spring 2017 there was a positive impact on suspension in PERC elementary grades

- Days of suspension went down more in PERC schools than in the control schools
- Rates of repeat suspensions were also reduced
- Disparities by race and by income were reduced
 - But not by IEP status or gender
- There was no impact on students' test scores

There was not a positive impact on middle school students in PERC schools

- Suspension rates were not better in the treatment schools in grades 6 through 8
- Spring 2017 PSSA scores were higher for middle school students in the control schools than in the PERC schools
- PERC did not reduce arrest rates for middle and high school students
- However, PERC reduced transfers to alternative placements for middle and high school students

There is some evidence that PERC reduced suspensions for high school students, although data problems compel caution when interpreting this estimate

As of Spring 2017, the impact of PERC on school climate was mixed

- PERC staff reported stronger relationships with students because of restorative practices
- But, PERC staff did not report an impact on school climate or conflict management
- However, TLC survey results indicate a more positive climate in PERC schools
- TRIPOD survey results show no decline in school climate due to PERC unless the teacher did not report using restorative practices
- PERC reduced absences among elementary students

Summary

- PERC staff understood restorative practices, bought into them, and used them
- Suspension rates improved for elementary grade PERC students
 - And disparities by race and income improved
- We do not see an impact of PERC on suspensions of middle grade students
 - We cannot estimate the impact for just high school students
- The use of restorative practices was thought to have improved relationships between students and teachers
 - There are some indications that school climate improved as well

