Centering Student Voices in Understanding Restorative Practices Implementation

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Abstract

While research has measured the efficacy of Restorative Practices (RP) implementation through discipline data and the experiences of administrators, RP coordinators, teachers, and, peripherally, families and students, fewer studies center student voices and experiences with RP. Using Restorative Practices and the Social Discipline Window theoretical framework (Glaser, 1964; Braithwaite, 1989; Wachtel, 2005) as an analytic lens, this study explores how Riverdale alumni who experienced various stages of RP implementation at Riverdale High School talk about their experiences with discipline and punishment at RHS. Through a grounded theory approach utilizing semi-structured interviews and open and axial coding, I examine how students talk about their experiences of punishment as “not,” “to,” and “for” sites, and their experiences with restorative discipline as “with” sites. I have expanded the original Social Discipline Window to additionally capture sites where alumni students talked about teachers and administrators doing things “against” and “around” them. Implications of this study point to the need to center student voice as crucial to understanding RP implementation because students are closest to implementation and analysis of their experiences.

Keywords: Student Voice, Restorative Practices, School Climate, School Culture, Social Discipline Window