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Promoting Student Empowerment through Autonomy Supportive Practices: Examining the Influence of Professional Development for Primary Grade Teachers

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Promoting Student Empowerment through Autonomy Supportive Practices: Examining
the Influence of Professional Development for Primary Grade Teachers

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....6

List of Tables.....7

Abstract.....8

CHAPTER ONE: Research Problem and Justification.....9

Research Problem.....9

Self-determination Theory (SDT).....11

 Autonomy.....11

 Belonging (Relatedness).....13

 Competence.....16

Self-determinations Theory and Educational Outcomes.....17

Empowerment Principles.....18

 Empowerment.....18

 Student Voice and Choice.....20

Empowerment Practices.....22

 Democratic Practices.....22

 Class Meetings.....24

 Restorative Practices.....28

Summary.....30

Implications for Educators.....31

Purpose.....32

Hypothesis and Research Questions.....33

CHAPTER TWO: Methods.....34

Effective Professional Development.....34

Research Design.....36

Researcher Perspective.....37

Setting and Context.....40

 Experimental School.....40

Promoting Student Empowerment	3
Comparison School.....	42
Data Collection.....	43
Measures.....	43
Quantitative Measures.....	44
Problems in Schools Questionnaire (PIS).....	44
Demographics.....	46
Qualitative Measure.....	46
Student Empowerment Survey.....	46
Procedures.....	47
Data Analysis.....	52
Quantitative.....	52
Qualitative.....	54
Quality Standards.....	55
Quantitative Quality Standards: Scale Reliabilities.....	55
Qualitative Quality Standards.....	55
Quantitative Preliminary Analysis.....	56
CHAPTER THREE: Results.....	57
Quantitative Results.....	57
Qualitative Results.....	61
Post-survey and Follow-up Survey.....	61
Theme 1: Adult Behaviors	64
Classroom Management	65
Positive Student Behaviors.....	65
Classroom Procedures.....	66
Facilitation.....	67
Positive Student Behaviors.....	67
Student Learning.....	69
Reflection.....	69

Promoting Student Empowerment	4
Teacher Actions	69
Theme 2: Voice and Choice	70
Academics.....	70
Environment.....	71
Research Question Results.....	72
Research Question 1: How are Teachers Providing for Student Empowerment?.....	73
Research Question 2: How Have Teachers Used Their Knowledge of Autonomy Supports to Benefit Students?.....	75
Research Question 3: What are Teachers' Ideas for Increasing Student Empowerment at Our School?.....	75
Additional Results.....	78
Summary of Results.....	79
Researcher/Educator Perspective.....	80
CHAPTER 4: Discussion and Future Directions.....	83
Discussion.....	83
Conclusions and Future Directions.....	87
Implications for Future Research.....	88
Implications for Future Practice.....	90
Educator/Researcher Perspective.....	92
REFERENCES.....	93
Appendix A1: Informed Consent – Experimental School.....	105
Appendix A2: Informed Consent – Comparison School.....	107
Appendix B: The Problem in Schools (PIS) Questionnaire.....	109
Appendix C: Student Empowerment Survey (SES)	113
Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire.....	114
Appendix E1: Professional Development Day 1	
Agenda.....	116
Educational Outcomes: Summary from PD Reading.....	121
Educational Outcomes: SWOT Chart.....	122

Educational Outcomes: Examples and Non-examples of Restorative Practices.....	125
Appendix E2: Professional Development Day 2	
Agenda.....	127
Educational Outcomes: School Voice Research.....	129
Appendix E3: Professional Development Day 3	
Agenda.....	134
Appendix E4: Professional Development Day 4	
Agenda.....	138
Educational Outcomes: Ideas and Strategies to Share with Staff.....	140
Educational Outcomes: Resources Provided	142

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Tables

Table 1: Number of Years Teaching Experience for Experimental School Participants..	42
Table 2: Participants' Number of Years Teaching at Experimental School.....	42
Table 3: Professional Development Timeline.....	50
Table 4: Number of Participants.....	53
Table 5: Pre-survey Means.....	58
Table 6: Estimates of Mean Post Survey Scores by School, Controlling for Pre-survey Scores.....	59
Table 7: Results Across Time for Highly Autonomous Subscale.....	60
Table 8: Results Across Time for Highly Controlling Subscale.....	60
Table 9: Results Across Time for Moderately Controlling Subscale.....	61
Table 10: Student Empowerment Survey (SES) Questions	62
Table 11: Student Empowerment Survey (SES) Results.....	63
Table 12: Themes and Educational Outcomes.....	64
Table 13: Research Question Results.....	72

Abstract

Adult practices and school systems disempower students when they stifle student voice and choice and focus on punishment rather than restorative practices. When teachers use autonomy supports in their classrooms, they promote student empowerment. The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers' orientations toward supporting student autonomy. This dissertation presents a quasi-experimental study utilizing an experimental and comparison group of teachers from two different elementary schools. Both groups participated in PD. PD was designed for the experimental group to study student empowerment through autonomy supports and restorative practices. Teachers in the comparison group participated in sessions centered on positive behavior supports. The Problems in Schools (PIS) questionnaire was administered as a pre-and post- PD survey, and was also used as a follow-up survey six months later for the experimental group. Qualitative data were collected from the experimental group through open-ended questions embedded in the post- and follow-up surveys. Quantitative analysis indicated that after teachers participated in the empowerment PD, their support of controlling behaviors decreased but their endorsements of autonomy supports did not increase. This could be due to the prior work the experimental school had done with character education, autonomy, belonging, and competence. Qualitative analysis indicated that teachers described themselves as responding to the experimental PD by implementing more opportunities for student voice and choice and offering more restorative responses to student misbehaviors.

Keywords: empowerment, autonomy supports, restorative practices

Chapter One: Research Problem and Justification

Research Problem

Many policies and practices used in schools today disempower students. School behavior management strategies are often based on the social control of students, usually through extrinsic rewards and punishments to reflect a ‘no tolerance’ philosophy. Adults working in schools often believe that authoritarian structures are the only way to maintain order.

These practices and beliefs make it difficult for students to develop internal guides for their behaviors and instead create students who are dependent on adult supervision in order to behave appropriately. When teachers rely on extrinsic motivation for students’ compliance they disempower them, failing to meet their psychological needs for autonomy, belonging and competence (Brooks & Young, 2011). Students who are disempowered by their school experiences are less likely to develop the ability, confidence, or motivation to succeed academically (Cummins, 1986). However, teachers can meet the psychological needs of students in classrooms that utilize autonomy supports, thus empowering students in their educational setting and rectifying the effects of adultism. Adultism “refers to behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement” (Bell, 1995, para. 2).

Research shows that autonomy-supportive settings and teachers benefit students academically and developmentally. Professional Development (PD) is a means to helping educators understand the importance of autonomy supports and ways to provide them for the students they serve. Teachers know each child is unique; however, they also need to

understand how children are alike in their needs for autonomy, belonging and competence (Watson, 2007; Watson & Ecken, 2003).

Deci and Ryan (2002) reported on a study conducted with preservice teachers that indicated teachers can learn to be autonomy supportive with students. Their research suggests that “any teacher interested in learning how to be autonomy supportive with students can do so” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p.190). What then do teachers need to learn in order to become autonomy supportive? Reeve (2009) identifies three tasks teachers need to adopt in their efforts to be more autonomy supportive with students. Teachers must maintain less controlling behaviors and language, have a desire to be more autonomy supportive, and learn strategies for becoming more autonomy supportive (Reeve, 2009). If teachers possess the inclination towards autonomy supports, professional development can provide teachers with the strategies to support autonomy and ways to lessen their controlling behaviors and language.

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers’ orientations toward supporting student autonomy. Self-determination theory (SDT) provided the theoretical framework for the basis of this study.

The principles of Self-determination Theory (SDT), including the basic human needs for autonomy, belonging and competence and their impact in the academic setting, are explored in the following pages. Next, principles and practices teachers should utilize to empower students in their educational experience are reviewed. The chapter concludes with the hypothesis and research questions this study sought to answer. Chapter Two contains information on PD components most effective for teachers’ change in practices

and was used to design the PD for this study. Chapter Three contains the results of the study and Chapter Four discusses implications and conclusions for the study.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-determination theory (SDT) helps to provide a theoretical framework for applying developmentally appropriate strategies in the classroom that support student empowerment. SDT views children as growth-orientated, active participants in their environment who seek to fulfill three basic needs: autonomy, belonging (relatedness) and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT “focuses on the dialectic between the active, growth-oriented human organism and social contexts that either support or undermine people’s attempts to master and integrate their experiences into a coherent sense of self” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 27). SDT asserts that meeting students’ basic psychological needs for autonomy, belonging, and competence in the classroom will lead to students’ internalized motivation to learn and they will be more autonomously engaged in their learning. These “...human needs specify the necessary conditions for psychological health or well-being and their satisfaction is thus hypothesized to be associated with the most effective functioning” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). Educators need to understand the importance of SDT in education as it supports children’s innate desire to learn and grow (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999).

Autonomy. According to SDT, autonomy is one of the basic psychological needs that is essential for healthy human development and functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Autonomy in education is defined as self-directed learning or learning that has become the responsibility of the student (Shrader, 2003). In

SDT, autonomy relates to experiences of freedom and self-integration (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002). “The need for autonomy refers to the experience of behavior as volitional and reflectively self-endorsed” (Niemic & Ryan, 2009, p. 135).

Reeve (2002) reported on two decades of empirical research that supports the application of SDT in educational settings. In 2009 Reeve reported results of 44 data-based studies on teacher motivating style (autonomy supportive vs. controlling) indicating students benefit when teachers utilize autonomy-supportive orientations. “The findings from virtually every one of these empirical studies point to the same conclusion— namely, that students relatively benefit from autonomy support and relatively suffer from being controlled” (Reeve, 2009, p.162). Autonomy-supportive teachers spend time listening to students, support students’ intrinsic motivation, and provide opportunities for students to work in their own way. “Autonomy-supportive teachers facilitate students’ personal autonomy by taking the students’ perspective; identifying and nurturing the students’ needs, interests, and preferences; providing optimal challenges; highlighting meaningful learning goals; and presenting interesting, relevant, and enriched activities” (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010, p.589). Teachers should include students in planning lesson topics, setting personal goals, and making choices in how to share their skills. Watson and Benson (2008) believe that autonomy is enhanced when students are allowed to do things that are important to them and have a say in classroom or academic decision-making.

Teachers can provide for student autonomy through classroom practices and structures that build on students’ ideas and initiatives. In an educational setting, “autonomy support revolves around finding ways to nurture, support and increase

students' inner endorsement of their classroom activity" (Reeve & Jang, 2006, p. 210). Teachers can provide these experiences by offering choices on how assignments are completed and by integrating students' ideas into lessons or activities. Students are autonomous when they choose to spend time and energy on an assignment, project, or work (Niemic & Ryan, 2009).

Research has shown that students benefit from autonomy-supportive teaching and environments (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, Ryan, 1981; Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1999; Reeve, 2002; Reeve & Jang, 2006). Students need to have teachers who expand on their ideas, build positive relationships with them, and encourage them through positive words and actions. As teachers encourage students' self-initiation, take the students' perspectives and provide choices and participation in decision making they are being autonomy-supportive (Joussemet, Koestner, Lekes & Houliort, 2004; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995).

An autonomy-supportive environment empowers students with opportunities to share their perspectives, accepts their thoughts and feelings, allows them choices, and supports their capacity for self-regulation (Reeve, 2009). Teachers should be empowering students with daily opportunities to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings within their classroom and among their peers.

Belonging. The concept of belonging (or relatedness) is another psychological need that needs to be met within the classroom and school community (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Students, like teachers, need to feel they are part of a group that supports, accepts, and respects one another. All humans have a sense of needing to know where and with whom they belong (Underwood & Ehrenreich, 2014). Relatedness is the basic need to

feel connected to others in a caring and secure way (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Watson & Benson, 2008).

Baumeister and Leary (1995) propose two important features that must occur in order to meet the psychological need of belonging. The first is frequent, conflict free, interactions with others. The second feature is dependent upon a bond forming that involves mutual care and concern for one another (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Teachers can provide students with these experiences through purposeful and deliberate classroom structures, activities and procedures such as class meetings. Teachers must work to know each child's abilities and strengths so they can ensure each child experiences success in feeling a part of the classroom community. This can be accomplished by cultivating positive connections between students, incorporating cooperative learning strategies and establishing a classroom environment that is focused on mutual respect and kindness (Osterman, 2000).

Belonging in the classroom means that young people must trust that the classroom environment is safe and accepting. "Once children learn to trust their caregivers (parents or teachers), they enter into a collaborative partnership with them - a partnership in service of the child's social, emotional, moral, and intellectual development" (Watson & Benson, 2008, p. 51). It is up to the teacher to help ensure that the classroom both provides for and sustains trusting relationships amongst all of the classroom members. Teachers help to foster trusting relationships by conveying warmth and unconditional regard for all students. By fostering positive connections amongst students, utilizing cooperative learning strategies, creating a culture that is built upon kindness, and facilitating the reparation of hurts in a fair and timely manner teachers develop trust with

their students (Watson, 2007; Watson & Benson, 2008). “A trusting and supportive teacher-child relationship is the foundation on which a nurturing relationship is built” (Watson & Ecken, 2003, p. 53).

Having teachers who are emotionally attentive and responsive to the needs of their students may have a greater impact on achievement than specific instructional methods chosen (Newberry & Davis, 2008). Osterman (2000) writes that understanding a child’s sense of belonging can help teachers better understand each student’s behavior and performance. “Teachers play a major role in determining whether students feel that they are cared for and that they are a welcome part of the school community” (Osterman, 2000, p. 351)

Through the values, standards, and norms teachers establish in their classrooms, they are directly influencing the peer relationships among the students. Children need to connect to and be accepted by others within their community, including their classmates (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Watson & Benson, 2008). These peer relationships can support a sense of belonging or repress it by spurring negative competition and focusing on individual achievements. Underwood and Ehrenreich (2014) reported on two studies that looked at the relationship between the need to belong and bullying. Both studies indicated bullying behaviors were driven by lower feelings of belonging or peer rejection. “Children and adolescents may engage in different forms of bullying because they desperately want, and need, to belong” (Underwood & Ehrenreich, 2014, p. 266). Cemalcilar (2010) also identifies behaviors ranging from anxiety and loneliness to severe depression as a result of a person’s need to belong not being satisfied.

Competence. Perceived competence, as defined within SDT, refers to an individual's ability to feel effective in their environment and to seek challenges that are ideal for their capacities (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Streight, 2014). "Competence is not, then, an attained skill or capability, but rather is a felt sense of confidence and effectance in action" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7). Children, and all humans, have an inherent psychological need for competence in their physical environment and social interactions (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2002).

The teacher's role is to recognize students' needs for perceived competence and provide individual, appropriate support when students are introduced to difficult or demanding tasks. Teachers need to know each child's strengths, weaknesses and interests in order support their healthy development of perceived competence. Classroom practices such as how teachers introduce a lesson or task can have an impact on students' perceived competence. How a task is introduced could allow for intrinsic motivation to flourish and deeper learning to occur, thus positively impacting a student's needs for competence (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). It would behoove teachers to ensure tasks and activities are presented in ways that are optimally challenging, while also ensuring the tasks are equal to students' individual capacities that will allow for mastery and meet their needs for competence.

In the educational setting students can exhibit competence through their choices in appropriate behaviors, attempts at a new task, or by completion of a learning task. The need for competence drives individuals to prefer tasks that are equal to their capacities (Deci & Ryan, 2002), and tasks they can grasp and master (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Self-determination Theory and Educational Outcomes

The development of social and psychological competencies, along with supportive relationships and autonomy, are necessary in helping develop caring individuals, democratic citizens, and respectful members of a community (Streight, 2014). Guay, Boggiano and Vallerand's (2001) study found that students who perceived autonomy supports from their teachers had positive perceptions of their own competency that resulted in positive educational outcomes for the students.

SDT provides the structure for all persons in a school setting who are working towards a positive and safe school culture while providing the most favorable learning conditions for all. Teachers also benefit when working conditions support their autonomy, belonging and competence (Streight, 2014). Schools and classrooms that seek to support these essential basic needs provide an environment for healthy functioning and nurture the intrinsic motivation of students and teachers (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

When teachers foster the intrinsic motivation of students and meet their psychological needs, they are providing for student empowerment. Research indicates that environments where students are empowered to support one another, have a voice in decision making and resolving conflict, have a positive effect on student achievement and school climate (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Chang & Munoz, 2006; Grey & Drewery, 2011).

In the following section I will define empowerment in relation to this study and classroom principles and practices that support student empowerment.

Empowerment Principles

Empowerment. Student empowerment has been defined and implemented in a variety of ways. McQuillan (2005) defines student empowerment using three dimensions: political, academic and social. Political empowerment involves students having influence within their school, either formally or informally. Academic empowerment includes students' ability to succeed through participation in instruction and setting their own learning goals. Social empowerment involves students feeling safe to speak with teachers and knowing all voices are respected. SoundOut is an organization started in 2001 for helping educators around the world engage students as partners to improve the educational system. They define student empowerment as:

any attitudinal, structural, and cultural activity, process or outcome where students of any age gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement changes in their own schools, learning and education, and in the education of other people, including fellow students of any age and adults throughout education. (<https://soundout.org/student-empowerment/>)

Empowerment has also been defined as a process in which learners and teachers are changing their views, practices or actions to allow students to make decisions in their classrooms. Shrader (2003) writes that empowerment is a process where learners become aware that they can have an impact on their environment. Nichols and Zhang (2011) explain student empowerment as a process of learners being in control of their learning. Denti (2012) states:

In education, *empowering* is a process that takes time and commitment on a teacher's part to ensure that children and youth develop a positive self-image,

have decision-making power, and most importantly, have a range of options from which to make healthy, informed choices. (p. 8).

Drawing from these examples and definitions, it is evident that teachers need to have structures, practices and beliefs in place to support student empowerment.

For the purpose of this study, empowerment will be defined as a combination of Denti (2012) and McQuillan's (2005) definitions. I will define empowerment as 'a process in which the adult must commit to providing opportunities for students to have influence in their school, feel safe to speak knowing everyone is respected, and participate in instructional decisions.' A goal of the PD in this study was to help teachers commit to the *process of*, and understand the *need for*, providing empowerment opportunities for students; thus defining empowerment as a process is important for this work. In looking at the remaining portions of the definition, restorative practices provide students with opportunities to have influence in their schools, while student voice and choice align with students feeling safe to speak and participate in instructional decisions. The topics of restorative practices and student voice and choice were chosen by the participants for their further learning during this research study. Both topics will be discussed further in this chapter as they relate to student empowerment.

What are the benefits of student empowerment? McQuillan (2005) presents a five year ethnographic case study on two high schools' efforts to empower students. He concludes that the schools had different results due to relational trust and practices staff put in place to empower students. One school experienced positive results (synergy, power-sharing) due to an inclusive approach to defining and enacting empowerment that preserved the trust between teachers and students (McQuillan, 2005). The other school

did not see positive results in part because the adults in charge did not access student voice as they sought to empower them (McQuillan, 2005). To empower students means teachers have to trust students' abilities, choices and decisions. To do so, schools need to look at why and how they do business. Is the focus on what is best for students? To enact empowerment requires "not only altering traditional structures and practices but changing beliefs and values as well, in particular how we conceptualize the most fundamental element of our educational system: students" (McQuillan, 2005, p. 27). Systems and practices used in schools today need to change in order to support student empowerment.

A benefit of student empowerment is positive academic outcomes. Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo & Park (2016) conducted a study exploring the construct of student empowerment with the results suggesting a link between empowered students and higher academic achievement. Results indicated "student empowerment is predicted by positive and equitable classroom characteristics and is a distinguishing factor in academic and behavioral outcomes" (Kirk et. al., 2016, p. 594). Classrooms should require respect for everyone's contributions and views creating a climate where disciplinary actions are unnecessary.

Student Voice and Choice. Autonomy is supported by student voice and choice. Student voice allows input from students on matters that are important to them, their learning and concerns about their school environment. Mitra, Serriere, and Stoicovy (2012) define student voice as opportunities for students to share their opinions about issues that affect them. Student choice allows students the freedom to choose how, when, or what to do within the context of an assignment or project. Providing choices for students in their classroom activities may increase their feelings of self-determination and

intrinsic motivation to participate in them (Brooks & Young, 2011). Combined together as voice and choice they represent interconnected ideas related to students' positive, healthy development, motivation and engagement.

Providing for student voice means the teacher is willing to share some of the power within the classroom. Student voice represents power, responsibility and allows students to give their input on what happens within the classroom (Easton, 2005; Palmer, 2013). As Cook-Sather (2006) explains, voice is reflective of the relationships and power that are present between the teachers and the students. Student voice can only be successful when students are “experiencing meaningful, acknowledged presence, but also [having] the power to influence analyses of, decisions about, and practices in schools” (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 363). Therefore if teachers are allowing students to voice their opinions, ideas or suggestions but not willing to act on them, it is for naught. When placed into authentic practice, student voice can range from the most basic level of youth sharing their opinions of problems and possible solutions, to youth taking the lead on seeking change.

“Student voice, in its most profound and radical form, calls for a cultural shift that opens up spaces and minds not only to the sound but also to the presence and power of students” (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 363). Efforts to increase student voice and choice can create meaningful experiences that help to meet the developmental needs of youth and particularly for those students who otherwise would not find value in their school experiences. “[Student voice and choice] represent power to students who have felt powerless in other educational settings. It represents responsibility to students who have not felt responsible for their education. It represents authority for what has previously

felt out of students' control: their education" (Easton, 2005, p. 54). "Increasing student voice in schools has been shown to help to re-engage alienated students by providing them with a stronger sense of ownership in their schools" (Mitra, 2003, p. 290). Using opportunities to share their voices, students can work with teachers to affect positive changes in their classrooms and schools.

Student voice describes ways students can speak about choices, their learning activities and assignments, express their views, offer solutions and have influence on decisions and practices within the classroom or school (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006; Easton, 2005; Edwards & Mullis, 2003). When teachers value students' input they begin to build a culture of democracy within the classroom.

Empowerment Practices

A culture of democracy is created when students have the potential to solve real problems that involve them and the issues they are facing. Teachers can empower students through implementation of practices that support student voice and choice and create democracy within the classroom. Two practices that empower students are further explored in the following pages.

Democratic Practices

Schools were created to provide children with an education. Historically, education in the United States was to support children's growth in becoming contributing citizens of a democratic society (Garrison, 2003). "The idea of educating children for a democratic society is central to the rationale for public education in the United States" (Pearl & Pryor, 2005, p. 1)

Dewey (1916) believed that to educate children meant to prepare them to become active participants in a democratic society. According to Dewey (1916), educators must provide children with opportunities to think critically, develop a sense of efficacy, and make decisions that impact their learning. More recently, Edelstein (2011) has written that learning democracy is learning for life and it must be a central goal of education. Yet schools today do not follow principles or practices that align with democratic beliefs. “Most school environments do not match the vision of a democratic school” (Easton, 2005).

In place of democratic environments that allow children to think critically and share their voice, schools frequently have environments that support adultism. Adultism is discrimination against children. It is characterized by adults’ beliefs that children do not need to be respected (Fletcher, 2014; Tate & Copas, 2003) and that adults are naturally superior to children (Checkoway, 1996; Shier, 2012). Adults can unknowingly sustain and proliferate adultism if they don’t develop their awareness of this form of discrimination (Davidson, 2009; Fletcher, 2014). Young people who consistently experience adultism may display behaviors that are destructive (Bredemeier & Shields, n.p.), may lack a sense of self-worth (Bell, 1995), and become detached or resentful (Ceaser, 2014). The adultist treatment of young people is not only disempowering, but lacks a sense of dignity and regard for their humanity.

Democratic practices in schools empower children with voice, choice and decision making that directly impact their academic achievement, extra-curricular activities and educational aspirations. Schools that employ democratic practices reflect a culture where decisions are made collaboratively with respect for everyone and all

stakeholders are treated fairly (Berkowitz, 2011). In order to sustain and strengthen democracy through education, students must be exposed to practices that provide them with opportunities to experience democracy in action (Garrison, 2003). This is possible when schools have empowering climates that enhance students' motivation, encourage their competencies, and provide them with opportunities to have peaceful interactions with others as they face conflicts or challenges. In such a school culture, students are empowered to make sense of their world as they have the freedom to make choices and take actions for their own learning (Garrison, 2008). Implementation of democratic practices where student voice and choice are evident support autonomy and fight the effects of adultism.

Democratic practices and character education provide students with opportunities to share ideas, solve problems, consider how one's actions influences others, and have voice in their learning, assessment and personal growth (Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012). "Nothing will contribute more to the stability of democratic ways of life and institutions than the commitment of the young generations rooted in the experience of active participation and empowerment" (Edelstein, 2011, p.135). Teachers can empower students through character education and democratic systems that provide opportunities for students to share their voice in matters that affect them. Class meetings provide a democratic structure to empower student voice.

Class Meetings. Class meetings provide a democratic structure for students to share their voice, ideas, and solutions. In class meetings students are brought together to make decisions, solve problems, share concerns, or establish procedures. "The class

meeting is an interactive discussion in which students share responsibility for making the classroom a good place to be and learn” (Lickona, 2004, p. 249).

Essentially, class meetings are times to talk – a forum for students and teacher to gather as a class to reflect, discuss issues, or make decisions about ways they want their class to be. Class meetings are not a forum for teachers to make pronouncements or impart decisions. Neither are they tribunals for students to judge one another. The teacher’s role in these meetings is to create an environment in which students can see that their learning, their opinions, and their concerns are taken seriously. The students’ role in these meetings is to participate as valuable and valued contributors to the classroom community. (Developmental Studies Center, 1996, p. 3)

Students are active participants in class meetings, determining the topics, sharing their ideas and listening to others. Teachers need to create the time, climate, and space to make class meetings a part of the daily routine of the classroom.

Class meetings, often referred to as morning meetings, community meetings, or circle time, provide opportunities for students to learn and practice respectful communication (Grey & Drewery, 2011) and can provide a framework for democratic decision-making based on rights and responsibilities (Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). “Classroom meetings held regularly throughout the school year enable the teacher to empower students to become more involved and take increased ownership for both individual and shared responsibilities and discoveries” (Pearl & Pryor, 2005, p. 105).

Class meetings also provide a structure for democratic practice. During class meetings students are participants in whole group experiences that allow them to build their classroom community, problem solve, ask questions, and discuss lesson content. Meetings provide an avenue for teachers to demonstrate to students that they are respected and valued contributors to their classroom, lessons, and activities (Schaps & Cook, 2010; Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Students' sense of community is enhanced when they are privy to dialogue about democratic values and participate in meaningful conversations with their peers (Osterman, 2000). The use of class meetings is one way teachers can work towards a democratic culture in their classrooms (Gonzalez, 1991). "Classroom meetings, if done thoroughly and regularly, can send a message that every student counts, and students' thought and decisions are valued" (Edwards & Mullis, 2003, p. 22).

Children need to feel connected to their teachers and their peers (Newberry & Davis, 2008). Class meetings provide these experiences of connectedness for students. "Active participation in whole or large group experiences has the potential to connect children in their relationships with others, thus generating a sense of *belonging*" (Leggett & Ford, 2015). Students must experience their schools and classrooms as safe, accepting, and supportive environments in which they can flourish. "When children experience positive involvement with others, they are more likely to demonstrate intrinsic motivation, to accept the authority of others while at the same time establishing a stronger sense of identity, experiencing their own sense of autonomy, and accepting responsibility to regulate their own behavior in the classroom consistent with social norms" (Osterman, 2000, p.331).

Establishing class meetings as part of a classroom's daily routine is one approach to creating an environment where students are empowered through their voices, opinions and contributions (Edwards & Mullis, 2003; Schaps & Cook, 2010). When students' voices are heard they are empowered to influence changes in their classroom, school setting, or lessons. This empowerment could result in higher academic achievement for all. "[Class] meetings are actually an investment in time, ultimately creating more teaching and learning opportunities" (Flicker & Hoffman, 2006).

Students who experience peer and teacher acceptance are more likely to support others, are more interested in their classes and receive more enjoyment from school (Osterman, 2000). "When students feel valued, safe, and empowered, and when the school is experienced as a caring community that holds students to high academic and behavioral standards, then students are less likely to engage in undesirable behaviors and more likely to work harder and ultimately flourish" (Berkowitz & Bustamante, 2013, p. 17). Class meetings provide the structure for the classroom community, the avenue for democratic practices and the ability for teachers to support students' needs for autonomy, belonging and competence.

Research indicates that the benefits of class meetings extend beyond the students and beyond the classroom. Potter and Davis (2003) found that class meetings helped the teacher to develop as an educator. Kaveney and Drewery (2011) found collegiality was strengthened among participating teachers. Leachman and Victor (2003) stated that student led class meetings resulted in student sensitivity, empathy and responsibility not only in the school setting, but also in the home and community at large. Therefore, "class meetings serve two vital functions – they motivate and guide students to academic

success and to healthy overall development” (Schaps & Cook, 2010, p.21). Class meetings can also serve as a classroom structure that supports respectful discipline practices and restorative practices.

Restorative Practices. Students will have conflicts in school. How the conflicts are handled and how teachers respond to the conflicts can be opportunities for student empowerment or disempowerment. Discipline approaches that empower students can be built on restorative beliefs and actions that appropriately support children’s development. Developmental discipline, a classroom management approach, is based on teachers building warm, caring and trusting relationships with students while also supporting and encouraging relationships between one another (Watson, 2007). Developmental discipline is philosophically rooted in self-determination theory (SDT) and offers insight into student behavior based on respect of students. When discipline practices are aligned with SDT, they both combat adultism and create an environment that is supportive of healthy child development. “When applied to school in general, [the principles of SDT] become proactive in shaping behaviors helpful to community life” (Streight, 2014, p. 90). Students are seen as partners in their discipline and such encounters are viewed as opportunities to encourage social competence, strengthen a sense of belonging or connectedness, and increase autonomy (Watson, 2007).

Likewise, restorative practices are built on developing meaningful relationships between students and staff as they collaborate on ways to resolve conflicts, establish rules or right a wrong. Restorative practice (RP) is the educational application of restorative justice that holds offenders accountable, repairs harm to the victim, gives voice to the victim and the community while helping the offender return to the community (Anfara,

Evans & Lester 2013; Chmelynski, 2005; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead & Weedon, 2008; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell & Weedon, 2008). Restorative practice looks at misbehaviors through the lens of an offense against the people and relationships as opposed to school rules that were broken (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Anfara et al. (2013) define the basis for restorative practice through the following seven principles:

- Meeting needs (both those of the victim and those of the offender)
- Providing accountability and support (within a compassionate community)
- Making things right (designed with the input from the offender)
- Viewing conflict as a learning opportunity (For the children involved as well as the adults who can learn how to better meet the needs of the offender)
- Building healthy learning communities (as opposed to punitive, control-oriented environments)
- Restoring relationships
- Addressing power imbalances (to look at school level practices imposed on children that may be creating additional harm to their development)

Adopting a restorative approach to handling student behaviors often requires that educators and adults working with young people have a change in mindset regarding why students misbehave. “Teachers would...need to understand the basis for believing that children are naturally motivated to learn and to be empathic and cooperative in a caring and nurturing environment” (Watson & Ecken, 2003, p. 9). Behavior deemed as inappropriate is viewed in relation to the self-determined needs of autonomy, belonging,

and competence. When structures and processes are put into place in schools that support these important basic needs, caring adults can help young people grow and thrive within an environment that is supportive of their moral and ethical development (Watson, 2007).

Implementing restorative practices can provide students with opportunities to express their feelings, beliefs and ideas, therefore empowering them to affect change in their behaviors, and possibly that of their peers (Flicker & Hoffman, 2006). “The goal is not to offer a tailor-made response to each misbehavior, as might happen with a discipline policy, but rather to develop the best possible response that can be envisioned both to remedy the situation and to further longer-term goals, one of which is certainly to foster self-regulation of behavior” (Streight, 2014, p. 91).

Strategies such as collaborative problem solving, reminders, social skill building, reparation, opportunities for community building, reflection, student choice, and providing opportunities for restitution all support a developmentally framed discipline process and are evident in restorative practices (Streight, 2014; Watson, 2007; Watson & Benson, 2008). Most importantly, developmentally supportive discipline practices offer a powerful opportunity to encourage autonomy, belonging, and competence in the lives of young people. “By shifting our thinking and actions from concerns of command and control, we empower our students to be caring, constructive, and creative” (Pearl & Pryor, 2005, p. 110). Through empowerment practices students learn to listen to others, self-regulate their behaviors, and contribute to a positive school culture.

Summary

Research indicates that children benefit from autonomy support (Reeve, 2009; Streight, 2014) and democratic practices (Pearl & Pryor, 2005; Thornberg & Elvstrand,

2012). Democratic practices in schools empower students with voice, choice and decision-making that directly influence their academic achievement, extra-curricular activities and educational aspirations (Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo & Park, 2016). The literature reviewed indicates that when school policies do not reflect democratic practices, they may impede children's ability to be empowered and develop autonomy (Dohrn, 2013; Hirschfield, 2008; Noguera, 2003). Adultism was presented as a structure that supports adults having power over children and thus disempowering them. Information was provided on practices educators can adopt to combat adultism and encourage student empowerment. Restorative practices were presented as a process teachers can implement that provides students with opportunities to share their feelings and ideas, thus empowering them to affect change in their behaviors, and possible their peer's behaviors (Flicker & Hoffman, 2006).

Fostering a sense of community through restorative practices and providing ample opportunities for students to express their voice and choice will help ensure all feel supported in their school community. Schools that employ democratic practices reflect a culture where decisions are made collaboratively with respect for everyone and all stakeholders are treated fairly (Berkowitz, 2011). In such a school culture, students are empowered to make sense of their world (Garrison, 2008).

Implications for Educators

School and classroom environments play a crucial role in students' healthy development. These environments can empower students by meeting their basic needs for autonomy, belonging and competence or they can be environments that sustain disempowering practices and support adultism. When schools incorporate democratic

practices and pedagogy to support processes, there can be positive effects for children's social emotional growth and academic achievement (Garrison, 2003, 2008; Mallory & Reavis, 2007; McQuillan, 2005).

Powerful, positive impacts occur for students and schools when democratic practices become part of the school culture. Mallory and Reavis write, "A democracy-centered school has great potential for filling the gap of school culture and school improvement" (2007, p. 10). As students' needs for autonomy, belonging and competence are met, they are able to trust their teachers and learn to the best of their abilities. Students' empowerment develops as they are supported by teachers and learn from their actions and choices. "This process of education as empowerment means that a classroom becomes more educative as it becomes more democratic, and more democratic as it becomes more educative" (Garrison, 2003, p. 528).

If teachers are to change their discipline practices, teaching methods, and classroom management to empower students, they will need to learn strategies and processes to implement within their classrooms. Professional development is a way to lead teachers to change, improve, or update their practices (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Suk Yoon, 2001). Therefore, the professional development for this dissertation in practice was informed by the empowerment and autonomy supports literature. The professional development design for this project is explained in the following chapter.

Purpose

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers'

orientations toward supporting student autonomy. The intent of this DIP project was to stimulate conversations with teachers that would promote the use of autonomy supports in the educational setting, thus promoting student empowerment.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

I wanted to learn whether teachers' professional development sessions on student empowerment would affect participants' orientation towards using autonomy supports in their interactions with students. Therefore, the following hypothesis was explored:

Participation in a series of four professional development sessions on student empowerment will positively influence teachers' orientation towards autonomy supports.

Through the addition of six open-ended questions added to the survey, I sought to answer the following questions:

- How are teachers providing for student empowerment?
- How have teachers used their knowledge of autonomy supports to benefit students?
- What are teachers' ideas for increasing student empowerment at our school?

Upon completion of the PD sessions, I anticipated the teachers would have increased knowledge of why student empowerment is important, and would implement classroom practices to support student empowerment. In addition, it was expected teachers who participated in the PD (experimental group) would show greater increases in their orientations towards autonomy supports than the comparison group.

The following chapter describes the design of the project, procedures, and data collection and analysis.

Chapter Two: Methods

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers' orientations toward supporting student autonomy. This chapter begins with a review of literature on professional development (PD) structures and goals that are most effective in changing teachers' practices. Knowledge gathered from this review was employed to design the PD for this study. The chapter continues with the research design, data collection, procedures and data analysis for this study conducted at two urban Missouri elementary schools.

Effective Professional Development

In order for teachers to change their practices, they must receive high quality and effective professional development (Hooker, 2008). Professional development (PD) has always been used for teachers to learn new skills, stay updated on current educational trends, or to meet the needs of school or district initiatives. However, how the PD is organized, structured and implemented is not always conducive to changing teachers' skills or behaviors. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon's (2001) study revealed that in order for PD to have the greatest impact on changing teachers' practices, it should be focused, have opportunities for active learning and be coherent with other learning activities. Church, Bland and Church (2010) found that PD should be designed to meet the needs of the staff while providing "on-target, on-time and ongoing support" (p. 44).

In contrast to the common 'workshop' format, it is recommended that study groups, mentoring, and coaching be utilized as reform approaches to PD (Garet et al. 2001 & Boyle et al. 2004). These approaches can provide teachers with opportunities to work on skills and strategies during the school day while instruction is occurring or

planning time is utilized. “By locating opportunities for professional development within a teacher's regular work day, reform types of professional development may be more likely than traditional forms to make connections with classroom teaching, and they may be easier to sustain over time” (Garet et al. 2001, p. 920). The PD design embraced by Hord (2009), Phillips, (2003) and Garet et al. (2001) is to have PD occur within the school day, focused on identified needs of the school and providing collegial sharing and learning. “[Teachers] who learn within a self-directed and problem-centered community of learners are more likely to find value in their learning and to apply this newly acquired knowledge in their classrooms” (Blitz, 2013, p. 14).

PD has often been described as a ‘sit and get’ or ‘one-shot fix’. In a longitudinal study conducted by Boyle, White, and Boyle (2004), findings indicated that these forms of PD are less effective than PD sustained over time and involves sharing with colleagues or observations of colleagues. When activities are extended over time, teachers are able to dig deeper into the concepts and may be more open to trying new methods. “[Activities] that extend over time are more likely to allow teachers to try out new practices in the classroom and obtain feedback on their teaching (Garet et al. 2001).

Garet et al. (2001) defined another feature of effective professional development as collective participation. This occurs when teachers are grouped together according to their school, grade level or department. Using this structure allows for teachers to share knowledge that can have a positive impact on their practices, share strategies that benefit specific students, and sustain practices over time (Garet et al. 2001). “[Teachers] who learn within a self-directed and problem-centered community of learners are more likely to find value in their learning and to apply this newly acquired knowledge in their

classrooms” (Blitz, 2013, p. 14). Professional learning communities (PLC), or teacher learning communities, provide the structure and framework necessary for PD to allow common groups of teachers to work together, during the school day, for a duration of time in order to fully grasp new learning.

PD for this study was designed using the points presented for effective PD. The PD took place in PLC groups, during the school hours, extended over a period of eight weeks and involved teachers collaborating and sharing their learning. Additional information on the specifics of the PD are shared later in this chapter.

Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental (comparison group) design with a mixed-methods approach for data collection. A mixed methods approach was used in order to allow for two data sources: quantitative survey questions and qualitative survey questions. “Mixed method research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research can alone” (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 13). Quantitative data were used to measure if the participants’ views, attitudes or behaviors were changed over the period of the research (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Qualitative data were pursued for the purpose of the researcher to “seek to learn from the participants in the study” (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 71).

This study was conducted with teachers who previously attended workshops and sessions involving character education, class meetings, and self-determination theory. To help support participants’ autonomy, they were given a choice of topics on student empowerment to study further for the three remaining professional development sessions.

Researcher/Educator Perspective

During the ten years I have been principal at the experimental school, I have been working with the staff to understand and implement practices that empower and respect students' abilities. When I became principal the school was known throughout the district as a good school where students out-scored their district peers on academic assessments. Although the school claimed to follow constructivist teaching methods, the district had recently mandated curriculum that teachers felt limited their abilities to effectively implement the pedagogy. Consequently, teachers moved away from the constructivist methods and began limiting student voice, choice and decision making.

My goal was to bring character education into focus for the school to support the constructivist pedagogy and strengthen our practices on developing the whole child. Constructivist pedagogy maintains that learners have the capability to ask questions, problem solve and construct their own knowledge through conversations and experiences that teachers facilitate (Yilmaz, 2008). Character education, sometimes referred to as moral development or social emotional learning, focuses on fostering positive, healthy development of children in their social and moral domains (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Berkowitz & Bustamante, 2013; Chang & Munoz, 2006; Lickona, 2004). "Character education can be defined in terms of relationship virtues (e.g., respect, fairness, civility, tolerance), self-oriented virtues (e.g., fortitude, self-discipline, effort, perseverance) or a combination of the two" (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006, p. 449). Character education can provide the means for how teachers establish concepts such as fairness, respect and self-discipline thus contributing to student empowerment. Character

education has become a necessity in schools today because so many children display problematic behaviors and attitudes (Brannon, 2008).

During my first year as principal at the school, I graduated from the Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE). LACE works with school leaders to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create, implement and evaluate programs and processes that make their schools true learning communities in which character education is a vital part of the curriculum and culture. Two requirements of the LACE program include creating a character education team for the school and writing a plan for successful implementation of a character education practices within the school.

I identified staff members for the character education team and we immediately began working on the A, B, and C of character education: autonomy, belonging and competence (Chang & Munoz, 2006). My personal vision was to develop the school's focus on developmentally appropriate practices, aligned with an engaging curriculum that would strengthen students' voice and choice in the classroom.

One of the first tasks the team undertook was to rewrite our mission and vision statements to reflect our commitment to the social and emotional development of our students. This was accomplished using input from all staff members. A new mission statement was adopted that included staff actions such as nurture and accept along with identifying children's positive growth socially, morally and emotionally as well as academically. This was the start of our journey into character education and teacher practices to provide students with voice and choice in the classroom and throughout the school. I have continued to send my assistant principals and counselors to LACE to

ensure our school's commitment to character education and its principles is permanent and sustainable.

As a result, the entire school staff experienced meetings and workshops prior to this study that focused on autonomy, belonging, competence, class meetings, service learning projects and other topics on character education. We have established ways for our students to interact across grade levels for the purpose of building relationships and creating a positive school climate. In the year prior to this study, the staff members began working to identify adultism and ways to combat it in our educational setting.

The experimental school staff members have embraced character education and worked together to determine our student and staff school-wide expectations that include, but not limited to, accepting differences, encouraging others and sharing. Our work began prior to this study and will continue after this study. Our journey continues as we experience staff changes and acclimate new members into our school, which always provides an opportunity for us to review and re-evaluate our practices and policies.

The school has been awarded an Honorable Mention for our application for State School of Character, and a Promising Practice Award for our school-wide meetings from Character.org. Our work with helping support students' social and emotional needs has been evolving and on-going. Although there have been many strides to provide student empowerment at the school, I saw a need for further learning to ensure all teachers and classrooms were more autonomy-supportive. For this reason I chose to use my school as the experimental school in this study.

The PD sessions were planned and organized around the student empowerment principles and practices presented in Chapter One. The initial PD session was designed to

review topics that support (intrinsic motivation, student voice and choice) or impede (adultism) student empowerment. The remaining three PD sessions topics were to be determined after everyone completed the first session. In an effort to support the teachers' autonomy, they were given a choice of student empowerment topics to study further in the following three sessions. Teachers collaborated in grade level teams and informed me of their choices at the end of the session.

Setting and Context

This study was conducted in two Missouri elementary schools located within the same urban district. Both schools are located in the south area of the district and serve similar student populations. The district is an inner city district that serves over 23,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten to high school. There are 46 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 14 high schools and 7 alternative schools in the district. All schools participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) under the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, which provides free breakfast and lunch to all students in the district. CEP requires a minimum of 40% of the student population qualify for free meal status. The district exceeds the requirement with most schools having more than 70% of students and families qualifying for free lunch status. The experimental school and comparison school are similar in terms of student socio-economic demographics, number of certified staff members and staff demographics.

Experimental school. The experimental group was the certified staff from one of the early childhood centers for the district. The early childhood center serves students from pre-kindergarten to second grade.

Of the 35 certified teachers at the experimental school, 28 are classified as classroom teachers, all highly qualified per state standards. Missouri teachers are identified as highly qualified when they have obtained full State certification as a teacher or passed the State teacher licensing examination and hold a license to teach in the state. Additionally the teachers have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree and have demonstrated subject-matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches as evidenced through a passing grade on the state teacher examination. Twenty-eight percent of the teachers are Black, 71% are White, less than 1% are Asian Pacific Islander or Indian, and no teachers of Hispanic race. Thirty-four percent of teachers have five or more years of teaching experience, which qualifies them as tenured employees with the district. As previously mentioned the principal is the primary investigator for this study, has been principal for ten years at the school, is a graduate of LACE and has been working with the staff on character education since appointed as principal.

The student population at the experimental school was reported as 86.24% Black, 2.75% Asian, 2.14% Hispanic, and 7.95% White. During this study there were 505 students enrolled. The school had 11% of their students receiving special education services, 4% of their students classified as English Language Learners (ELL) and 9% of their students qualified for gifted educational services. Student attendance rate was reported as 92.37%.

Tables 1 and 2 show the teaching history for the participants from the experimental school. This information was collected so I would have the ability to compare participants' survey results and look at possible correlations between

participants' responses and their years in teaching or years working at the experimental school.

Table 1: Number of Years Teaching Experience for Experimental School Participants

<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>Number of Experimental School Staff</i>
1 – 3 years	3
4 – 7 years	5
8 or more years	14

Table 2: Participants' Number of Years Teaching at Experimental School

<i>Years at Experimental School</i>	<i>Number of Experimental School Staff</i>
1 – 3 years	4
4 – 6 years	6
7 - 9 years	4
10 or more years	8

Comparison school. Originally this study was designed to use the district's other early childhood center for the comparison group. However, when the survey results were analyzed in April 2016 there was minimal participation from the comparison group and the sample size was too low to be statistically valid. A different school was selected as the comparison school, and consequently the data collection period was extended for seven months.

The comparison school is an elementary school in the same district as the experimental school and serves students from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. The comparison school had 33 certified teachers, 30 identified as classroom teachers, all highly qualified by state standards. Thirty percent of the teachers were Black, 69% White, less than 1% Hispanic, and no teachers of Asian or Indian race. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers were tenured, having more than five years of teaching within the district. Student attendance was reported as 90.5%.

Enrollment during the study was 323 students, 170 male and 153 female. The student population was reported as 73% Black, 3.11% Asian, 9.69 Hispanic, and 14.53% White. The school had 14% of their students receiving special education services, 18% of students who were classified as English Language Learners (ELL), and no students receiving gifted educational services. The principal has over ten years of experience as a principal, and was in her third year as principal of the comparison school. The principal was also a graduate of LACE. The school has been implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practices for over 12 years. PBIS incorporates tangible reinforcers to change student behaviors (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo & Leaf, 2008). “A school-wide system is developed to reward students who exhibit expected positive behaviors” (Bradshaw et al., 2008, p. 463). The comparison school was not asked for any demographic information for this study.

Data Collection

Measures. Data collection included both quantitative and qualitative measures. A pre-survey before the PD and a post-survey after the PD was administered for both groups. A follow-up survey was administered six months after the final PD session for

the experimental school only. Additionally, the pre and post surveys each included a question on the participants' teaching experience for the experimental school only.

Quantitative measure. The quantitative measure for this study was The Problems in Schools Questionnaire (PIS; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1981). This questionnaire assesses teachers' orientations toward the use of supports and controlling behavior in their interactions with students.

Problems in School Questionnaire (PIS). The Problems in Schools Questionnaire (PIS) developed by Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman and Ryan (1981) was administered to study participants (See Appendix B). The PIS was utilized as a pre, post, and follow-up survey. The PIS assesses teacher orientation towards autonomy and control (Deci et al., 1981). When the PIS Questionnaire was developed and normed, data supported the measure's ability to differentiate teacher's orientation toward control and autonomy (Deci et al., 1981). The subscales (highly controlling, moderately controlling, moderately autonomous and highly autonomous) were found to have good internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha (.73, .71, .63 and .80 respectively) and using split half reliabilities; good temporal stability as measured by test-retest reliability; and good external validity as demonstrated in the results (.35 at the .05 level) of a study of 35 teachers and 610 4th-5th-6th grade students that compared the students' perceptions of their teachers with the PIS (Deci et al., 1981). Additionally, Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) conducted a study to determine whether teachers who were rated as autonomy supportive on the PIS were indeed teaching in ways that supported autonomy. The study used observations as evidence and supported the questionnaire's validity (Reeve et al., 1999).

The PIS is designed with eight vignettes that depict motivation-related problems children may face in school. Each vignette is presented with four different response choices. Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan (1981) describe the response choices as follows:

The four items following each vignette represent four points along a continuum from highly controlling to highly autonomous. In each "highly controlling" response, the adult (either a teacher or parent) decides on the problem solution and then uses sanctions to ensure that the solution is implemented. In each "moderately controlling" response, the adult decides on the solution and attempts to get the child to implement it by invoking guilt or emphasizing that it is for the child's own good. In each "moderately autonomous" response, the adult encourages the child to use social comparison information (to see what other kids are doing) in an attempt to solve the problem. And, finally, in each "highly autonomous" response the adult encourages the child to consider the various elements of the problem and to arrive at a solution for him- or herself" (p. 643).

Some of the vignettes represent possible scenarios between a child and a parent. Survey participants are directed to answer the parent scenarios to the best of their ability if they are not currently parents.

Participants rate the appropriateness of each response on a 1 – 7 Likert scale that describes each response from "very inappropriate" (1) to "very appropriate" (7). This survey was created to assess if teachers, who are charged with motivating students, favor orientation towards controlling the behaviors of their students versus supporting their autonomy (Deci et al., 1981).

A study conducted by Reeve et al. (1999), was designed to confirm that teachers' PIS responses were aligned with how they taught. It also revealed that the moderately autonomous (MA) scale was not valid. The research indicates that the MA scale did not correlate with an autonomy orientation but with a controlling orientation (Reeve et al., 1999). The study did however, confirm that teachers' PIS responses aligned with their behaviors and actions in the classroom (Reeve et al., 1999). The impact and how the MA scale was handled for this study is discussed in Chapter Three.

Demographics. Demographic information was gathered from the experimental group only. This information was collected to see if it had an impact on participant's orientation towards autonomy supports.

Qualitative measure. Qualitative data were collected through a Student Empowerment Survey (SES), a set of six open-ended questions designed by the researcher for this study.

Student Empowerment Survey. Qualitative data are used when the "...researcher seeks a deep understanding of the views of the individuals or a group" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 75). The questions were designed to encourage participants to elaborate on their feelings towards providing student empowerment. The questions focused on their understanding of student autonomy, student empowerment, and changes in their classrooms in response to the PD. The first three SES questions were administered as part of the post-survey.

- 1) When we provide for student empowerment, what does that look like?
- 2) What does the phrase, 'supporting student autonomy' mean to you?

3) In what ways have you changed in your classroom teaching, strategies, or behaviors since participating in the sessions on student voice or restorative practices?

The last three SES questions were administered as part of the follow-up survey to determine whether teachers' knowledge or application of the concepts had been sustained and carried into the new school year.

4) In what ways have you supported student autonomy or restorative practices so far this school year?

5) What does student autonomy look like at your school?

6) Do you see an increase of student empowerment in your classroom or within the school community and if yes, how do you contribute to it? If no, what do you think we could do to increase student empowerment?

All survey responses remained anonymous in the desire to have participants freely express their practices and challenges.

The open-ended questions were designed with a text box for participants to type in their responses and thoughts. No limit was set for the length of their responses.

Procedures

Prior to the implementation of this study, approval was provided from the University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL) Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB consent was granted and the study was identified with approval identification of 83565-1. Participation in the research was offered to all certified staff members at both schools.

Participants completed the Informed Consent for Participation form required by the university. The Informed Consent also included the risks associated with the study

(none), direct benefits (none), and that the participants could withdraw their consent at any time during the study (Appendices A1 & A2).

The experimental group signed paper copies of the Informed Consent forms on February 10, 2016 after meeting with me and learning basic information about the study. At this time I shared the general purpose of the study and how the results of the study would be utilized. Participants were also informed that there were no professional risks involved with the study and all of their responses would remain anonymous.

I met with the comparison group on September 28, 2016. At this time I shared basic information about the study, general purpose of the study and how the results would be utilized. For these participants the Informed Consent form was sent via an email, on the same day, which also reviewed what I shared at the meeting. Participants were asked to indicate their consent electronically by answering 'yes' to the first question on the Survey Monkey.

As previously mentioned, due to the change in the identified comparison group, the research period was extended and a follow-up survey was added for the experimental participants to complete. Since participation in a follow-up study was not part of the original consent, another form was generated for the experimental participants. This was done electronically, via an email with the informed consent information provided, and participants indicated their agreement by answering 'yes' to the first question on the Survey Monkey survey.

All participants received the surveys via an email that contained the Survey Monkey link. The experimental group completed their pre-surveys on February 26, 2016 prior to their PD session starting. They completed post-surveys by May 12, 2016 and

follow-up surveys in November 2016. The comparison group completed their pre-surveys between the dates of September 28 and October 10, 2016, prior to their PD on October 14, 2016. They completed the post-surveys in December 2016. Both groups had three months between pre and post surveys.

All surveys were completed anonymously. Participants in the experimental group were asked to identify their surveys by selecting a number that was important to them, that they would remember. A third party, who was not involved with the research project, documented the numbers in the event the participants could not recall their numbers for the post-survey or follow-up survey. This allowed pre, post and follow-up surveys to be analyzed per participant, thus providing information on individual's changes in orientation. Participants in the comparison group, who were not known to me, were identified by initials in order for any individual changes to be analyzed. These identification features also provided me with information to match pre, post and follow-up survey results, ensuring the same participants' scores were being compared for analyses.

Both groups began this study with a 3.5 hour professional development session (Table 3). The experimental group completed their session on February 26, 2016. The comparison group completed their first session on October 14, 2016. The experimental group received professional development sessions focused on student empowerment led by the researcher, who is also their principal. The comparison group received professional development focused on Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) for students, also led by their principal.

Table 3: Professional Development Timeline

School	Pre-survey	PD Session #1 3.5 hours	PD Session #2 50 minutes	PD Session #3 50 minutes	PD Session #4 50 minutes	Post-survey	Follow-up survey
Experimental	2/26/2016	2/26/2016	3/30/2016	4/6/2016	4/13/2016	5/12/2016	11/23/2016
Comparison	9/28/2016	10/14/2016	NA	NA	NA	12/22/2016	

Note: The comparison group PD did not focus on student empowerment or autonomy supports.

The remaining three PD sessions for the experimental group were conducted during weekly grade level meeting times in March and April. Planning the sessions during regular school days follows the recommendations of Garet, Porter, Birman and Suk Yoon (2001) that PD should be designed within the teacher's regular workday, utilizing plan time. This design also supports Garet et al. (2001) research that found collective participation and trainings that continue over a length of time, impacts teachers' abilities to make positive changes to their practices.

The content covered in the initial 3.5 hour PD session for the experimental group focused on brief introductions to the topics of restorative practices and intrinsic motivation while also reviewing adultism, class meetings, and student voice. (See Appendix E1). To begin the PD the participants read an article on adultism and then created posters that summarized and highlighted the main points of the article. This served as a review for all staff members since adultism was a focus for PD at the start of the school year in August 2015 and had been a reoccurring topic throughout the academic school year. The session continued with video clips and activities for the topics of student voice, restorative practices and motivation.

In an attempt to model autonomy for the participants, grade level teams were asked to decide on a topic on which they would like to continue learning. The kindergarten and second grade teachers chose student voice. The pre-kindergarten and first grade teachers chose restorative practices.

The remaining three hours of PD focused on further study of each of these topics by looking at current classroom practices and how those align or misalign with student voice and restorative practices. Continuing the PD in February through April, in grade level teams, allowed for focused application and sharing of newly understood strategies that could be utilized in age appropriate and grade specific ways for students. Sustaining the learning throughout the second semester allowed opportunities for the participants to implement a new strategy and analyze its effectiveness in their classrooms while receiving support and feedback from peers or administrators during our session time.

Therefore, the goals for the March and April grade level PDs included participants' ability to identify changes that could be implemented in their classrooms to provide for student voice or identify classroom changes that would better support restorative practices, thus increasing autonomy supports for students (Appendices F, H, and I). These PD sessions were grade level specific so teachers were able to share and brainstorm age appropriate strategies to implement across their grade level as well as in each participants' classrooms. The goal for the final PD session was for participants to work together in finding ways that student empowerment, specific to student voice or restorative practices, could be sustained throughout the building and in all classroom settings. They also determined ideas and strategies they would share with all staff

members at our next staff meeting (May, 2016) so that all staff would have information on both topics – student voice and restorative practices (See Appendix E4b).

The PD sessions were guided by the following objectives: strengthening opportunities for student voice and choice and understanding strategies in restorative practices. In addition, the following principles were used to structure the sessions: Identify barriers to student empowerment, identify structures and strategies that can be implemented to support student empowerment, and identify methods of sustainability for student empowerment. It was my goal, through the design and content of the sessions, for participants to increase their understanding of student empowerment and be equipped with knowledge and strategies to make appropriate changes to their classrooms, behaviors, and language that would support student autonomy. I hypothesized that participation in a series of four professional development sessions on student empowerment would positively influence teachers' orientation towards autonomy supports.

Data Analysis

Quantitative. A total of 31 participants at the experimental school and 22 participants from the comparison school responded to the PIS. However, 9 experimental group participants and 3 comparison group participants did not complete the post PIS and were excluded from pre and post statistical comparisons. In addition, there was one experimental participant who did not follow the directions by responding to only one answer per vignette (as opposed to responding to all four answers for each vignette). This left a total of 21 experimental group participants and 18 comparison group participants for quantitative analysis (Table 4). As previously mentioned, a follow-up survey was

added for the experimental group when the research project was extended. The follow-up survey was completed six months after the post survey.

Although all surveys were completed anonymously, participants used numbers (experimental) or letters (comparison) to identify their surveys. This ensured that the same 21 participants' scores in the experimental group were used for pre, post and follow-up analyses. This also ensured the 18 participants' scores in the comparison group were used for pre and post analysis.

Table 4: Number of Participants

	Pre-survey	Post-survey	Follow-up survey
Experimental Group	33	21	21
Comparison Group	23	18	NA

Analyses of the results included descriptive statistics for the number of participants in each pre, post and follow up survey and determining the mean for each category: highly controlling (HC), moderately controlling (MC), and highly autonomous (HA). Scores were calculated for each of the three usable scales following the methods used by Deci et al. (1981). Highly controlling (HC) scores were calculated by averaging items 3, 10, 16, 18, 21, 27, and 32. Moderately controlling (MC) scores were calculated by averaging items 1, 9, 14, 19, 22, 28, and 31. Highly autonomous (HA) scores were calculated by averaging items 2, 12, 13, 20, 23, 26, and 29. In this study responses for items 5 – 8 were excluded from analysis due to a technical problem with the electronic survey. Eliminating these responses resulted in one less possible answer for each scale.

Qualitative. The method of thematic analysis was used in order to identify patterns across a dataset. Thematic analysis is appropriate for researchers when a low level of data interpretation is warranted (Vasimoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The patterns, or themes, within the data can be identified through an inductive or deductive process. Since the themes for this study were set a priori, a deductive process was used to analyze the data.

The qualitative data were obtained from the surveys and electronically transferred into a word document, grouped by question numbers. With the themes of adult behaviors and voice and choice identified prior to analysis, I read through all responses to get a general sense and feel for the participant’s thoughts. Next each question and the corresponding responses were re-read with common terms, words and thoughts circled, highlighted and marked. Reading and re-reading continued to ensure no data were missed or incorrectly interpreted. As the readings continued, common threads emerged.

Next I listed the sub-themes that were emerging from the individual questions which revealed 12 sub-themes. The sub-themes were cross-referenced finding congruent thoughts and the final five sub-themes were determined. Three sub-themes emerged for adult behaviors: classroom management, facilitation, and reflection. Classroom management is the dominate term accepted in the educational field and is most often used to describe teachers’ reactions to students and their inappropriate behaviors (Wallace, Sung, & Williams, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the term classroom management is used as a “holistic descriptor of teachers’ actions in orchestrating supportive learning environments and building community” (Evertson & Harris, 1999, p. 60) as this

definition is more aligned with autonomy supportive practices. Facilitation and reflection, as used in this study, are described later in this chapter.

Two sub-themes emerged from voice and choice: academics and behaviors, as these are the two areas of application the participants consistently identified. The sub-themes were then checked against the responses resulting in identifying educational outcomes each sub-theme generated. These sub-themes are defined in the next chapter and the educational outcomes are also identified.

Quality Standards

To ensure uniform practices were followed for both groups, I attempted to standardize the information shared on the study with each group as I met with them. Directions, both written and verbal, for completing the surveys were also standardized to ensure consistency.

Quantitative quality standards: Scale reliabilities. The Problems in School (PIS) questionnaire has been found to be reliable and valid in two separate studies (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999) for three of the four subscales. This study did not calculate the moderately autonomous subscale results since they were found to correlate more with the controlling subscales as previously noted.

Qualitative quality standards. Once all qualitative data were extracted from the surveys I met with one of the advisers to assist me with the coding process. As I read and re-read the data, I made every effort to remain neutral and bias free throughout the process.

Quantitative Preliminary Analysis

The scales are abbreviated using the following: highly autonomous (HA), highly controlling (HC), and moderately controlling (MC). They are identified according to the survey times which are pre-survey (Pre), post-survey (Post) and Follow-up survey (Follow).

Preliminary analyses were run to ensure all scales functioned adequately. First descriptive data analysis revealed that the mean scores and standard deviations for each scale were acceptable. Tests for skewness and kurtosis were also within acceptable limits.

Next correlational analyses of the scales revealed the moderately autonomous (MA) scales (PreMA, PostMA, and FollowMA) consistently correlated positively with the controlling scales (MC and HC) and not with the highly autonomous scale. This is consistent with research done by Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999). The MA scores were not included in further analysis for this study.

Using Cronbach's Alpha to test each scales' reliability revealed some scales to have less-than- optimal reliability (<0.70). Although some scales were below the normal cutoff, due to their proximity to acceptable reliability and the small sample size, they were kept for this study.

The following chapter shares the quantitative and qualitative results from this study.

Chapter 3: Results

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers' orientations toward supporting student autonomy. I sought to test the hypothesis that participation in a series of four professional development session on student empowerment will positively influence teachers' orientation towards autonomy supports.

The study employed a mixed-method approach incorporating quantitative and qualitative research methods. This chapter presents the results from the data analyses for this study. Quantitative results are shared first then followed by qualitative results from the open-ended questions added to the post and follow-up surveys.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative dimension of the research used the Problems in Schools (PIS) questionnaire at three times: pre-intervention (Pre), post-intervention (Post), and six-month follow-up (Follow). The PIS contains four subscales: highly autonomous (HA), moderately autonomy (MA), highly controlling (HC), and moderately controlling (MC). As noted in the previous chapter, the MA scale was dropped.

To determine if there were pretest differences in the subscales between the experimental and control schools, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Results indicated that there were significant differences between schools: $F_{(3,35)} = 4.90; p < .01$. To determine which subscale(s) accounted for the difference, follow-up univariate tests were done for each variable individually. These demonstrated that PreHA ($F_{(1,37)} = 6.92, p < .01$) and PreHC ($F_{(1,37)} = 12.86, p < .01$) were significantly different, while PreMC was not ($F_{(1,37)} = 1.24, p > .05$). In short, the pre-survey statistics

indicate the experimental school revealed lower use of highly controlling (HC) and higher use of highly autonomous (HA) orientations than the comparison school (Table 5). Because of these results, the Pretest variables were used as covariates in the main analysis.

Table 5: Pre-survey Means

	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PreHC	Experimental	31	19.26	7.071	1.270
	Comparison	21	26.76	8.024	1.751
PreMC	Experimental	31	26.68	6.096	1.095
	Comparison	21	29.62	6.830	1.490
PreHA	Experimental	31	41.61	4.022	.722
	Comparison	21	35.43	7.318	1.597

Taking into account the preliminary data analysis findings, the main analysis used a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to determine if there were significant differences across the schools, after controlling for initial differences. Specifically, the MANCOVA used the PostHA, PostMC and PostHC scores as the dependent variables and the schools as the independent variables. PreHA, PreMC, and PreHC were used as covariates.

The test of the three post variables (PostHA, PostMC, and PostHC) was significant ($F_{(3,32)} = 6.11, p < .01$) indicating the two schools differed on one or more of the variables. Follow-up univariate tests were conducted and revealed the two schools differed on PostMC ($F_{(1,34)} = 11.92, p < .01$) and PostHC ($F_{(1,34)} = 12.15, p < .01$), but not

on PostHA ($F_{(1,34)} = 0.02, p > .05$). Table 6 shows the results from this analysis and indicates the teachers at the experimental school had significantly lower moderate (MC) and high controlling (HC) orientations than the comparison school teachers.

Table 6: Estimates of Mean Post Survey Scores by School, Controlling for Pre-survey Scores

Dependent Variable	School	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PostHA	Experimental	5.594 ^a	.175	5.238	5.949
	Control	5.553 ^a	.191	5.164	5.942
PostMC	Experimental	3.224 ^a	.232	2.753	3.695
	Control	4.508 ^a	.254	3.993	5.024
PostHC	Experimental	2.508 ^a	.213	2.075	2.941
	Control	3.701 ^a	.233	3.227	4.175

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: PreHA = 5.60, PreMC = 4.07, PreHC = 3.30

To determine whether the experimental school gains (lower use of MC and HC) persisted over time, a follow-up MANCOVA was conducted. This test looks for differences in each of the three subscales between the Post-test and the Follow-up, while using the Pre-test scores as controls. The MANCOVA was not significant ($F_{(4,13)} = 0.23, p > .05$), indicating that there were no differences between post and follow-up survey across the three subscales. Since the multivariate test was not significant, no follow-up univariate tests were required. The results indicated that the lower use of MC and HC found in the experimental school following the intervention were still in evidence six months later. Tables 7-9 graphically depict the above set of results.

Table 7: Results Across Time for Highly Autonomous Subscale

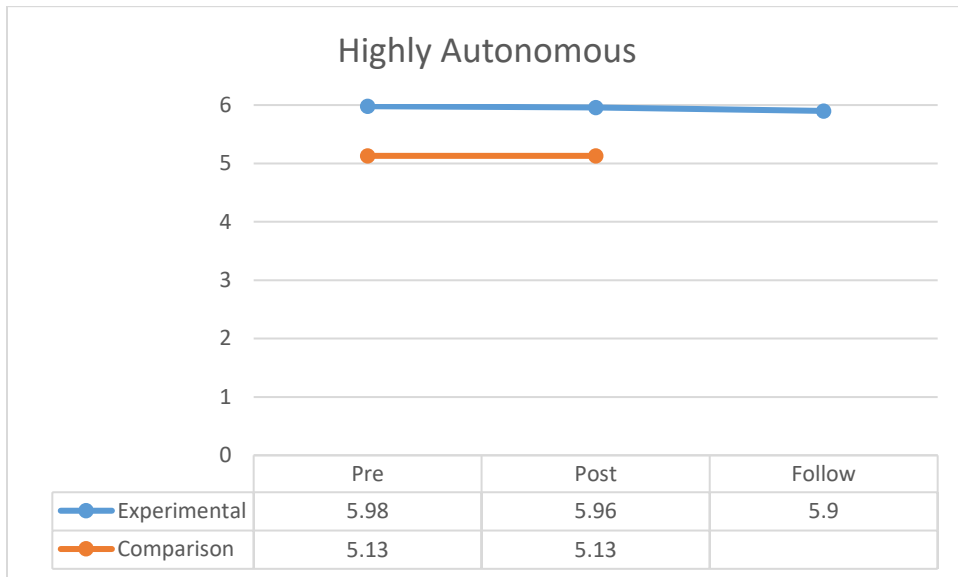


Table 8: Results Across Time for Highly Controlling Subscale

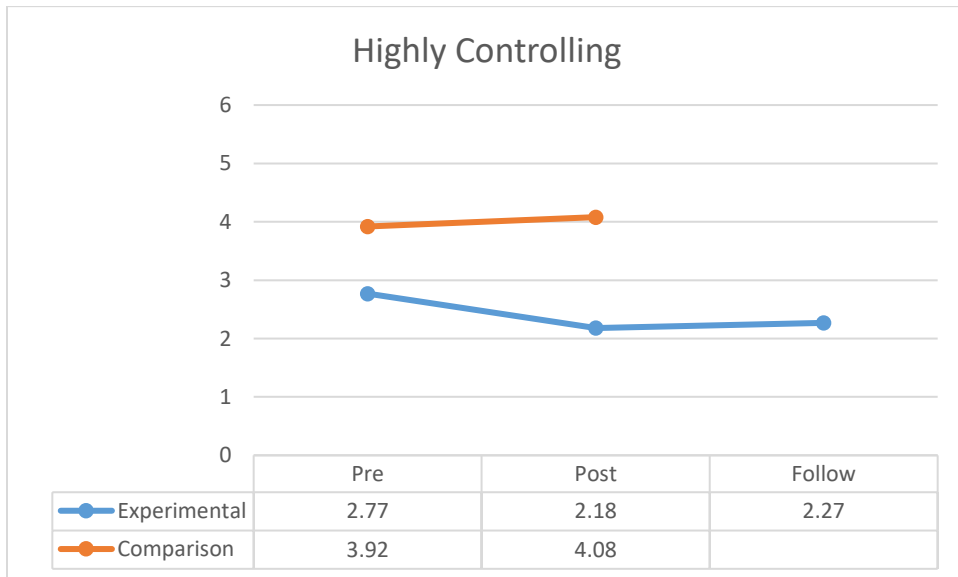
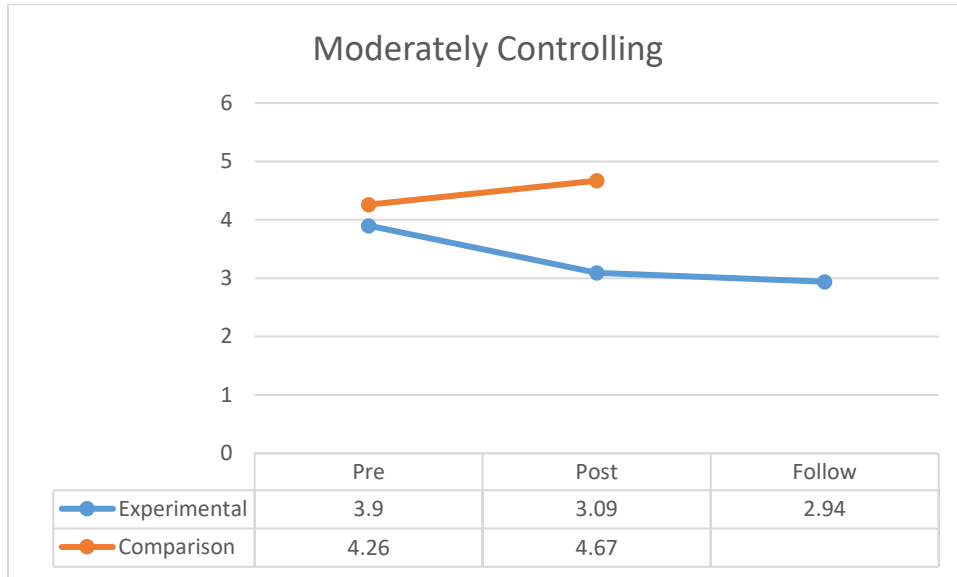


Table 9: Results Across Time for Moderately Controlling Subscale



The conclusion that can be drawn from the quantitative research is that teachers who participated in the PD at the experimental school became comparatively less oriented toward controlling practices, and that these positive changes persisted for at least six months.

Qualitative Results

Post-survey and Follow-up survey. The Student Empowerment Survey (SES) qualitative questions were included for the experimental group in order to capture additional data that would help identify trends, or common thoughts, from the participants (Table 10). The questions were designed with guidance from members of the dissertation committee and placed intermittently amongst the PIS vignettes in hope that participants would not skip the questions, as might happen if they all appeared at the end of the PIS. Three questions were added to the post-survey and different set of three questions added to the follow-up survey.

Table 10: Student Empowerment Survey (SES) Questions

Open-ended Questions for the SES Post Survey
<p><u>Question 1</u> In what ways have you changed in your classroom teaching, strategies or behaviors since participating in the trainings on student voice or restorative practices?</p>
<p><u>Question 2</u> What does the phrase, “supporting student autonomy” mean to you?</p>
<p><u>Question 3</u> When we provide for student empowerment, what does that look like?</p>
Follow-up Survey
<p><u>Question 4</u> In what ways have you supported student autonomy or restorative practices so far this school year?</p>
<p><u>Question 5</u> What does student autonomy look like at (The Experimental School)?</p>
<p><u>Question 6</u> Do you see an increase of student empowerment in your classroom or within the school community and if yes, how do you contribute to it? If no, what do you think we could do to increase student empowerment?</p>

I explored the participants’ responses for each question. The themes of adult behaviors and voice and choice were set a priori, as I was looking for changes in teacher behaviors and practices to support student empowerment. Through the data analysis described in the previous chapter, sub-themes emerged and were coded for each theme (Table 11). Adult behaviors sub-themes were: classroom management, facilitation, and reflection. The sub-themes identified for student voice and choice were academics and behaviors. The themes and sub-themes are not mutually exclusive and participants’ responses sometimes overlapped themes. For example, comments that were applicable to

components of student voice and choice were also relevant to adult behaviors. The sub-themes are defined for this study in the following paragraphs.

Table 11: Student Empowerment Survey Results

Survey Time and Question	Response Topics	# of Responses for each Topic	Theme Identified	Sub-themes Identified
Post Survey Question 1 In what ways have you changed in your classroom teaching, strategies or behaviors since participating in the trainings on student voice or restorative practices?	Providing Choices Class Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less teacher talk • Student led Listening More Questioning techniques Reflect on my behaviors	4 7 2 2 3 2 4	Adult Behaviors	Classroom Management Facilitation Reflection
Post Survey Question 2 What does the phrase, “supporting student autonomy” mean to you?	Student voice and choice Promote student independence Students make decisions	11 4 6	Voice and Choice	Academics
Post Survey Question 3 When we provide for student empowerment, what does that look like?	Student voice and choice Students make decisions Students handle their conflicts/behaviors	13 6 2	Voice and Choice	Academics Student Behaviors
Follow-up Survey Question 4 In what ways have you supported student autonomy or restorative practices so far this school year?	More active listening Allow children to fix problems Student voice and choice Class meetings Reflect on my behaviors	6 2 13 4 4	Voice and Choice Adult Behaviors	Classroom Management Facilitation Reflection Academics Student Behaviors
Follow-up Survey Question 5 What does student autonomy look like at (The Experimental School)?	Student voice and choice Students make decisions Students problem solve Teacher as facilitator	8 6 6 3	Voice and Choice Adult Behaviors	Academics Student Behaviors Facilitation
Follow-up Survey Question 6 Do you see an increase of student empowerment in your classroom or within the school community and if yes, how do you contribute to it? If no, what do you think we could do to increase student empowerment?	Student voice and choice Don’t pre-judge or assume Children support each other Adults model / facilitate	7 2 6 3	Voice and Choice Adult Behaviors	Academics Student Behaviors Facilitation

Some responses were coded for more than one theme

Classroom management, as previously defined for this study, refers to how teachers orchestrate supportive learning environments and build community (Evertson & Harris, 1999). Facilitation is used to describe teachers working in collaboration with

students to learn new topics or solve a problem. When teachers are facilitating learning, they are not directing the learning but instead guiding and supporting the students as they construct their knowledge (Cummins, 1986). Reflection, for the purpose of this study, describes teachers' ability to look back on their actions or words and learn from them. When teachers use reflection, they are able to identify their personal thoughts and feelings that may be impeding successful classroom learning (Noormohammadi, 2014).

In addition to identifying sub-themes, educational outcomes were gleaned from the data (Table 12). For this analysis I will be using the term educational outcomes to describe what the sub-themes look like in the educational setting.

Table 12: Themes and Educational Outcomes

Theme: Adult Behaviors	
Sub-Theme	Educational Outcomes
Classroom Management	Positive Student Behaviors Classroom Procedures
Facilitation	Positive Student Behaviors Student Learning
Reflection	Teacher Actions
Theme: Voice and Choice	
Sub-theme	Educational Outcomes
Academics	Student Driven
Environment	Conducive to Learning

Theme 1: Adult Behaviors

The theme of adult behaviors was set as a priori since I was looking for teachers to understand the behaviors they need to exhibit in order to provide student empowerment. If students are to be empowered, teachers have to make the necessary changes in the classroom to support autonomy (Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012). In the current study, teachers described a variety of autonomy supports. The data analyzed

described autonomy-supportive actions that include helping students talk with one another, creating environments to support students' voice and choice, and working with students to find solutions for problems. Teachers can positively affect student empowerment through classrooms that support positive relationships and collaboration with students (Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo, & Park, 2016). The theme adult behaviors has three related sub-themes: Classroom management, facilitation, and reflection.

Classroom management. Teachers know they are held accountable for all aspects of their classrooms. How a classroom looks, sounds, and feels communicates to students, administrators, parents, and other teachers who is respected and empowered within the setting. Participants shared how each of the educational outcomes of positive student behaviors and classroom procedures are impacted through the adult's empowering behaviors through classroom management. As previously stated, for this study the term classroom management is referring to how teachers orchestrate supportive learning environments and build community.

Positive student behaviors. Student behaviors are positively impacted when teachers change their approaches to student conflict. Participants shared restorative practice strategies they have implemented such as asking 'What happened?' instead of 'Why did you do that?' Other restorative practices involved opportunities for children to 'fix the problem' and having the children voice how other students' negative behaviors impact them. E2 responded to question number four with, "I'm doing more to help the kids who don't follow the expectations, hear from their peers what that does to our class." In response to question one, E13 wrote, "As the students are working out their problems we are talking more about feelings, what the feelings mean and why they feel that way.

There is more to just happy, sad, or mad. There are so many other feelings they can feel, but they don't know what those feelings are. We are talking more about those feelings.” E10 wrote in response to the same question, “I've stopped asking children 'why' they did something and instead ask, 'what' happened and then really listen to what motivated them in their behavior.”

In response to question three, EX responded that she sees adults using less controlling words or behaviors and instead having conversations with children to determine what has occurred and what can be done to fix the situation. Participant E11 wrote in response to question number 4, “We have class meetings when we need to discuss a problem or conflict on the yard, on the bus, or in the classroom. We use restorative practices as the kids generate the ways the problems can be solved, how the kids can do things differently, how saying you're sorry doesn't fix anything if you keep repeating the behaviors.” Participant E13's response to question number 4 shared, “When conflicts arise between students, I question more, ask what could have been done/said differently, model empathy, help the students understand that they aren't always going to get into trouble for their choices, help them understand why their choices may not have been the best and what could have been a better choice, having them talk it out more, facilitate.”

Classroom Procedures. Teachers described practices and procedures they have put into place to provide for student empowerment. The most frequently reported procedure was the use of class meetings. I noted that class meetings were used in a variety of ways. While the majority of the class meetings were used to discuss conflicts or problems in the school, the classroom or the playground, some responses included

using class meetings to build community or discuss academic activities. E6 responded in response to question four, “Class meetings - letting children choose activities and what they want to learn, when possible and working hard to build community.” E18 wrote in response to question one, “I have added more short class meetings to discuss how others are feeling when an incident occurs in our classroom.” Other responses indicated the participants were utilizing more class meetings, but did not specify the purposes of the additional meetings.

Five participants identified classroom procedures such as established opportunities for students to work together and plan together. In response to question five, E5 responded, “Students talk with each other to plan and problem solve throughout their day” and E6 wrote, “Students working together and finding ways to improve one another.” An additional two responses included teachers providing instruction and then allowing the students to act on their own ideas or decide what action should follow.

Facilitation. For this study, facilitation refers to teachers working in collaboration with students to learn new topics or solve a problem. Participants shared the role of the teacher as a facilitator in a variety of ways. Teachers wrote about encouraging students, listening, guiding, facilitating, asking lots of open ended questions and providing support.

Positive Student Behaviors. Listening, guiding, and supporting were the terms used most frequently in responses related to facilitating positive student behaviors. E1 responded to question 4, “[I’m] willing to listen, guide with clear concise advice, and follow up with students when social/emotional needs arise.” E15 wrote in response to question one, “When a situation arises, I will let students voice what has occurred before I give any input.” Other participants wrote about asking lots of questions and listening

carefully and closely to help understand the motivation behind the behaviors. E11 responded to question three indicating, “Student empowerment is sharing the power of communication and classwork with students...” These responses indicated that teachers are willing to facilitate conversations with students, and between students, concerning behaviors and how positive outcomes can result.

Three responses included thoughts on helping children understand logical consequences of their behaviors while also helping them learn that not all misbehaviors need to have a punishment. The responses suggest teachers are working with students to help them find ways they can fix a situation that was caused by their behaviors. The data also indicated teachers are using restorative practices in their phrasing and questioning students concerning their behaviors. E13 in response to question two shared, “Be there to provide support, redirection, and guidance towards independence and motivation to succeed in the classroom.”

Four participants wrote about establishing the environment to support students as they learn appropriate strategies to work through conflicts and to take responsibility for their actions. Calming centers were mentioned. These are designated areas in the classroom where students can go to calm themselves, reflect, and take a break. Unlike the behavior management practice of timeout, students are empowered to go to the calming area when they feel the need. The teacher facilitates the use of this area, but does not send or require students to access it. E21 commented, “Encouraging through word and deed, students taking responsibility for their own actions and learning.” Class meetings were again identified as a way teachers can facilitate conversations with students concerning behaviors of classmates or other students in the school, thus supporting an environment

for conflict resolution. E8 wrote in response to question 1, “We hold more class meetings, we talk about what happened.”

Student Learning. Two participants shared class meetings as a tool to facilitate student learning. E11 wrote for question four, “Our classroom has daily morning meetings where students share ideas on how we can best accomplish our day’s goals.” A few other participants noted talking with students about different ways to meet lesson objectives. E17 wrote in response to question one, “...I try to take my students’ perspective when there are negotiable activities or other ways to do something that would produce the result I’m looking for.” The data demonstrate teachers are looking for ways to engage and challenge students as they help them identify their strengths.

Reflection. Reflection refers to teachers’ ability to consider their actions or words and learn from them for the purpose of ensuring successful learning for all.

Teacher Actions. Reflective actions were shared in several of the participants’ responses. They wrote about not pre-judging a student and not assuming to know everything about a situation. A few participants shared that they think about their own experiences as a child and situations that made them feel successful or unsuccessful. E17 shared in response to question one, “It made me stop to remember some of my own experiences as a child and think about reactions that my teachers or other adults in my life had when I made a mistake or had my own opinion about what was happening at school/home. It make me think of how I wanted to be treated in those situations.” Others spoke in terms of becoming more aware. Becoming more aware in terms of the questions they ask, teacher talk versus student talk, and effective teaching strategies. One teacher spoke of having the students reflect on their day. E13 responded to question five,

“...asking them how they feel their day has been and reflect on the choices they made.”

One participant wrote about continuing their learning on student empowerment through additional PD opportunities.

Theme 2: Voice and Choice

Voice and choice was a focus for some of the participants' PD and responses to the survey questions indicated participants are applying their knowledge in their classroom setting. Student voice and choice was shared in general, academic and behavioral terms and was mentioned in the majority of responses. Voice and choice was expressed in terms of students making decisions about learning, having a say in situations that impact them and activities for classrooms or schoolwide celebrations. The terms, voice or choice, were used 56 times in response to the six SES questions.

Ways to utilize student voice was most often shared in terms of class meetings to discuss student behaviors. However, several participants also shared ways they address academics and content learning through student voice and choice.

Academics. Thirteen participants indicated voice and choice was provided to support student learning. Participant E5 in response to question two, “Supporting opportunities for children to make decisions that impact their learning / the classroom climate/ the school culture.” Other participants were more specific and talked about choices for skill practice, choices in how mastery will be shared, choices for final projects, and choices in what they will learn. In response to question one E1 wrote, “For my lessons I now give choices to the students about their activities for practicing skills.”

Two participants wrote in terms of students being ‘in charge’ of their learning. The same concept was expressed in terms of students deciding what they want to learn

and making curriculum choices. E3 responded to question two and expressed, “Supporting student autonomy means allowing the students to be in charge of their learning. Building off of their interests.” Other responses included students choosing who they would work with for lessons, centers, and activities. This data indicated teachers are applying the principles of student empowerment and turning them into classroom practices to benefit students’ academic engagement and growth.

Environment. Several responses focused on student ownership in classrooms that is evident through student decision-making, class meetings and problem solving. The following participants’ responses reflect decision making in response to question five. Participant E10 responded, “Having kids help make decisions that have an impact on them...like what should the consequences be for someone who doesn’t play nicely on the playground?” Responses indicated participants are empowering students to share and talk with each other concerning problems, conflicts and consequences for behavior. Participant E5 wrote, “Students talk with each other to plan and problem solve throughout their day.” Participant E21 shared, “Students making choices about rules and activities; students working independently and in groups with the teacher serving as facilitator.”

Four participants wrote about ways to give or share power with the students in their responses to question three. Participant E6 wrote, “Students feel they have the power to change the situation.” E18 responded, “Giving them the power to help choose also gives them ownership in what is happening and results in them being more connected to the school.” Other participants wrote about students making decisions and having control over situations. E2 stated, “It allows the children to make decisions or

have their own ideas without me imposing my adult rules.” E17 shared, “Student empowerment looks like students who have some degree of control over what happens in their school, or classroom.” The data indicated teachers are giving voice and choice to students so they can solve kid problems, determine rules, and generate ideas to correct situations. These behaviors result in classroom environments that are conducive for all learners.

Research Questions Results

Further analysis of the qualitative data determined responses to the research questions for this study. Using the data from the Student Empowerment Survey (SES), I was able to gather statements that supported the three research questions (Table 13). The following qualitative data provide examples of the supports teachers reported they were using in their classrooms and describes situations where students were empowered in the school setting.

Table 13: Research Questions Results

Question	Responses	Frequency	Examples of Responses used for Coding
How are teachers providing for student empowerment?	Voice and Choice	56	<p>“I have allowed students to choose a final project when we are finishing a theme unit. I have also asked them what, or how, they would like to learn a topic.” E12</p> <p>“I have given students choice in how they test, learn best during independent settings, asked them what they would like to learn about before planning a lesson.” E15</p>
	Students make decisions	18	<p>“Children making decisions about the playground expectations, deciding on what to present at Monday Morning Meetings and having a voice in how we celebrate success.” E2</p> <p>“Students making decisions about rules and activities...” E21</p>

	Class meetings	9	<p>“We have class meetings when we need to discuss a problem or conflict on the yard, on the bus, or in the classroom.” E11</p> <p>“We hold more class meetings, we talk about what happened vs. why did you do that?” E8</p>
How Have Teachers Used Their Knowledge of Autonomy Supports to Benefit Students?	Choices provided to students	32	<p>“For my lessons I now give choices to the students about their activities for practicing skills.” E1</p> <p>“I have allowed students to have more choices and make their own decisions on the curriculum.” E14</p> <p>“Letting students decide things that are happening in the classroom.” E6</p>
	Teachers listening more to students	7	<p>“Listening to children more --- Taking the time to hear their concerns, problems, etc.” E9</p> <p>“When a situation arises, I will let students voice what has occurred before I give any input.” E15</p>
What Are Teachers’ Ideas For Increasing Student Empowerment At Our School?	Empower 2 nd grade students more	1	“I think we could empower the 2 nd graders a bit more --- have them help be the role models for the younger children, make them feel ownership for the building and activities.” E10
	Peer classroom visits	1	“I think it would be good to have teachers go into each other’s classrooms and look for ways students have been empowered.” D15
	Kids solving problems	2	“I think kids are empowered when we give them ways to solve kid problems that come up --- and when adults help them through that process so they can come to their own resolutions.” E18
	Asking questions – not assuming or accusing	2	“I think the children are becoming empowered by all of us helping by asking questions and not assuming we know the situation/what happened/what’s best.” E20

Research Question 1: How are Teachers Providing for Student Empowerment?

There were a total of six qualitative questions on the SES. I looked at each participant’s six responses and found that all participants mentioned voice or choice at

least once in their responses. This indicates that participants recognize voice and choice as one way of providing student empowerment.

Participants had different levels of voice and choice reflected in their responses. Class meetings were a common response for providing voice around student behaviors and actions to be discussed with the students. Observations and visits to classrooms showed that teachers were having scheduled class meetings while also having spontaneous class meetings when teachers or students expressed a need. Several teachers added an additional daily class meeting after recess time in order to provide students with the opportunities to talk about and resolve conflicts that occurred during recess. Teachers found that conducting class meetings after recess afforded students with acknowledgement for their feelings, possible ways to handle future conflicts, and most importantly, a way to resolve the conflict, move forward, and refocus on classroom work and learning.

Eighteen responses described how teachers were providing student empowerment, by having students make decisions on their lesson activities, curriculum and the projects they implemented in the classrooms. These were described in terms of students choosing skill practices, how to show their mastery of a topic and choices in how to assess their knowledge.

Therefore, the data indicated student empowerment was being supported through opportunities for student voice and choice, expressed in terms of class meetings and restorative practices, and students making decisions that had a direct impact on them and their learning.

Research Question 2: How Have Teachers Used Their Knowledge of Autonomy Supports to Benefit Students?

Teachers indicated they allowed students to choose activities for skill practice or assessments as a means for supporting student autonomy. Teachers used students' ideas and suggestions to design and implement classroom activities and lessons.

Most participants' responses reflected the practice of listening more to children. Whether it was in class meetings, or through questioning techniques, teachers were becoming more aware of the need to listen to what students had to say and afforded them the opportunities to express themselves and their ideas.

Research Question 3: What Are Teachers' Ideas For Increasing Student Empowerment At Our School?

The final question on the follow-up survey asked participants if they saw an increase in student empowerment, eliciting a yes or no response. They were asked to elaborate on their responses and share how they contribute to student empowerment, if they responded 'yes', or sharing what we could do to increase it if they responded, 'no.' The following is a summary of the responses from this question and then data are shared from ideas participants shared during the PD sessions.

Of the 20 responses on the SES, 17 indicated they are seeing an increase in student empowerment. The remaining three didn't commit to a 'yes' but wrote responses of 'somewhat' or 'with some teachers', etc. Participant E21 wrote, "Somewhat. To increase student empowerment we need to be sure the entire staff is invested in more autonomy for students." Participant E15 responded, "In some classrooms yes, but in others no. I think it would be good to have teachers go into others classrooms and look

for ways students have been empowered.” Participant E10 suggests, “I think we could empower the 2nd graders a bit more --- have them help be the role models for the younger children, make them feel ownership for the building and the activities.” None of the participants indicated a ‘no’ response for this final question.

For the participants that responded yes, some provided examples of what they saw as an increase in student empowerment. Participant E3 responded, “I think everyone is trying to take what we’ve learned and studied and apply it to our interactions with kids every day – in all situations. We don’t accuse kids, we ask to find out what happened who was hurt, and how it can be fixed.” Participant E2 wrote, “I see kids doing more to help the school be the best it can be – helping others, keeping grounds clean from trash, recycling.” Participant E1 summarized in his/her comment, “We offer appropriate choices in students’ work and play. We model and encourage ways children can assist each other in work, play and social/emotional needs. It is evident they have been empowered as we see them supporting/assisting each other regularly. They also make good work and play choices as they have gained trust and experience from being given such choices on a regular basis.”

There were limited data collected from this question that generated additional, specific ideas for improving student empowerment at the school (Table 13). However, discussions during the PD sessions on student voice and choice elicited ideas from the participants that are summarized and shared as they directly address the question.

Discussions during PD provided teachers with opportunities to reflect on our current practices and practices we should implement. Participants shared specific ideas for increasing empowerment that included students talking during lunch time

(implementation of voice levels for noise control) to students determining what should be shared at our Monday Morning Meetings (school wide weekly meetings). Students started running the Monday Morning Meetings (MMM) during the school year of this study but teachers shared involving children more in the planning process for the meetings. Ideas generated were: students choose the character trait they want to present, pick a topic that they want to share, or give testimonials on when someone helped them, was friendly, or sharing skills learned in their classrooms.

Some teachers spoke of increasing student empowerment in terms of students helping one another – socially and academically. These opportunities can be increased by having more opportunities for the older students to work with the younger students for social and academic purposes. Currently the students spend the majority of their day with only their same aged peers, segregated from the other grade levels in the building. Recess, specialist classes (art, music, P.E.) and lunch do not occur with integrated grade levels. Teachers thought we should have more times when the students are in mixed age groups. Suggestions included different grade level classroom partnering and doing activities in the garden, having weekly club time (teachers would offer different clubs in which students could participate), and pairing pre-kindergarten students with a first or second grade student who could read to them, or join them on the playground and become a buddy for the younger student.

A few participants talked about student empowerment as students taking responsibilities for our community, from recycling to keeping the playgrounds and areas free from litter. Ideas to increase these opportunities included grade levels being responsible for different parts of the building ensuring it is kept clean and safe, creating a

recycling team that included students from different grade levels, and students creating posters to place around the building that reflected character traits, safety tips, or other topics students feel should be posted around the building.

In brief, the data indicated that participants were finding ways to provide for student empowerment in their classrooms in addition to seeing opportunities for school wide initiatives that would benefit all students.

Additional Results

Two participants indicated they have not made any changes in their classrooms as a result of the PD. Since the surveys were anonymous, there was no ability to follow-up with the participants to see if their classrooms already allowed for student voice and restorative practices; hence, they would not need to change their practices. Due to the identification system used for the surveys, I was able to look at the individual's responses to the other qualitative questions. In doing so, their other responses indicated they provide for student empowerment and may not have needed to increase or change their current practices. The PD may have served as confirmation for them that they are doing the right thing for students, as their described behaviors were already providing for student empowerment.

Demographic information was collected from the experimental group that included participant's years in teaching and years at the experimental school. The data were collected to see if there was a correlation between participants' years of experience, both in teaching and also at the school, and their qualitative responses. There were two trends noted from this data. Two of the participants, who each indicated they have been teaching at the experimental school for over ten years, responded to only one of the six

qualitative questions with brief and simplistic responses. Conversely, when looking at the responses for the other six participants with ten or more years at the school, these participants responded to all of the questions and described their understanding and implementation of student empowerment through examples and detailed responses. No other correlations were significant.

Summary of Results

Demographic information related to years of teaching collected from the experimental group indicated no significant correlations.

Post survey quantitative results indicated the experimental group began the study with greater orientations towards autonomy supports than the comparison group and became less oriented toward controlling practices after their PD. The follow-up survey indicated these changes remained six months after the PD sessions for the experimental group.

The qualitative data gleaned from the SES described how participants made changes to support student empowerment in their classrooms. The predominate adult behaviors described in the data were having more class meetings, listening more to students, providing choices, and acting as a facilitator to help children with academics and resolve conflicts. The trends in the data showed student voice and choice were mostly supported through classroom meetings and decision making. Student voice and choice was practiced in terms of academics and student conflict.

Data used to determine the results for the research questions showed student empowerment was being supported through voice and choice opportunities in all participants' classrooms. Teachers described listening more to students to help in times of

conflict, plan for lessons and gather ideas for classroom activities. Teachers shared additional ways to increase student involvement with school-wide Monday Morning Meetings and opportunities for children to mix across grade levels for academic, social, and school climate purposes.

The following chapter will discuss the research findings in light of their significance for educators. Implications for future research and practices will also be discussed.

Researcher/Educator Perspective

When charged with choosing a topic for the Dissertation in Practice (DIP), I was drawn to student empowerment. As previously shared, the experimental school has worked with character education principles for ten years. However, as the principal of the school, I observed that students were not being empowered through most aspects of curriculum or classroom structures. Consequently, I wanted the professional development design to increase teachers' understanding of student empowerment and why it is essential to students' healthy overall development. The design of the professional development allowed for sharing, collaborating, and reflecting on restorative practices and student voice and choice. It was my intent that teachers would learn from each other, and through their mutual experience in professional development, to strengthen current practices and to stimulate conversations that would lead to increased student empowerment practices.

There were benefits to being both researcher and principal, and there were also disadvantages. One benefit was that I had already developed relationships with all of the participants. Through the school year, and previous years for some staff, we had been

working in weekly grade level meetings, committee meetings and staff meetings on different school topics. We have had mutual experiences with tragedies and sadness that have occurred at our school as well as joyful celebrations. We use the term, family, to describe how we work, play and function together on a daily basis. Consequently, I feel the professional development discussions were open and honest, revealing challenges participants were having or questions they felt comfortable pursuing.

My ability to have the professional development occur during the school day was an advantage. Other researchers may not have been able to conduct the sessions during the school day, requiring participants to come in before school, or stay after school, in order to participate. Since our professional learning community (PLC) meetings are scheduled every week, it was easy to fit the timeline for this study into our existing schedule.

As the researcher and principal, a disadvantage was my inability to conduct interviews for qualitative data collection. Since I am responsible for the participants' evaluations, there could be an unspoken influence on the teachers to provide me with the 'right answers.' This could provide inaccurate data, i.e. participants telling me what they think they want me to hear and would also be unethical for me, as their immediate supervisor, to conduct interviews. This prohibited me from getting a deeper understanding of what participants wrote about through additional questioning. There was no avenue for seeking clarification or elaboration for participants' responses, which could have led to more, richer data for the study.

Another disadvantage was being the principal and leading the professional development. Although I encouraged all viewpoints for conversations, and felt there were

honest contributions to the discussions, there may have been some participants who were not comfortable sharing their thoughts since I was their supervisor. Prior to this study, most professional development I have conducted with the staff had been to share district initiatives or mandates. Therefore, I attempted to frame our work together in a different light, encouraging teachers to grapple with the ideas and concepts presented, question their practices and seek a deep understanding of empowerment, but there still may have been hesitation to openly discuss the topics presented.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Future Directions

In this chapter, I will share my perspective as research and educator on this study and implications for future research and practices.

Discussion

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DIP) was to create, implement and assess professional development (PD) designed to positively influence teachers' orientations toward supporting student autonomy. The study employed a mixed-method approach incorporating quantitative research methods using the Problems in Schools (PIS) questionnaire as a pre, post, and follow-up quantitative survey. Qualitative data were collected through the Student Empowerment Survey (SES) administered with the post and follow-up surveys.

Statistical analyses of pre- and post-survey results for experimental and comparison schools were conducted. Pre-survey results indicated the experimental group began the study with greater orientations toward providing autonomy supports than the comparison group. Post survey results indicated that teachers who participated in the professional development at the experimental school became comparatively less oriented toward controlling practices. Follow-up survey results indicated these changes persisted for at least six months suggesting that the professional development had provided teachers with alternatives to controlling language and behaviors, and that they continued to utilize these alternatives six months after the professional development.

These results are consistent with Deci and Ryan's (2002) claim that "...one's motivating style is malleable, and that teachers can learn how to be more autonomy supportive with students" (p. 199). Therefore, even though the pre-survey results

indicated highly autonomous responses, teachers still needed to learn how to eliminate controlling language and behaviors. It appears the professional development allowed for this learning to occur. Since the controlling responses were still depressed six months after the PD ended it may be indicative that the PD structure and format provided sustained learning for the participants.

These results differ from the hypothesis that participation in a series of four professional development sessions on student empowerment will positively influence teachers' orientation towards autonomy supports. However, the results align with Reeve's (2009) analysis of how teachers can become more autonomy supportive, by becoming less controlling,

Reeve (2009) specifies three tasks teachers must accomplish in order to become more autonomy supportive. "The first task in trying to become more autonomy supportive is to become less controlling – to avoid controlling sentiment, controlling language, and controlling behaviors" (Reeve, 2009, p.167). The additional two tasks he identifies are the teacher's desire to support autonomy and learning the 'how-to' of autonomy support (Reeve, 2009). Due to the prior and current work at the experimental school, the teachers are enmeshed in all three tasks. The high results on the pre-survey for autonomy supports did not afford an increase in the post survey results. It could be argued that the teachers were already functioning in Reeve's task of the desire to be autonomy supportive, thus supporting the pre-survey results, while simultaneously still using some controlling orientations as indicated in the pre-survey data. Therefore the professional development provided the teachers with the knowledge or 'how to' for

autonomy supports, thus decreasing their use of controlling behaviors or language as evidenced in the post survey.

Qualitative analyses revealed that the professional development strengthened experimental school teachers' understanding of student empowerment and, more specifically, their self-described ability to provide autonomy supports.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the themes of adult behaviors and student voice and choice set as a priori. Empowering students requires teachers to have structures and practices in place that provide opportunities for students to share their voice, ideas and concerns (Cummins, 1986), and the experimental teachers described themselves as making significant changes. Some of the most common changes involved the structure and practice of class meetings, questioning techniques, listening more, and providing students with decision making power. These responses indicated that teachers are understanding the importance of considering students' needs and responding appropriately (Newberry & Davis, 2008). While these responses were coded for adult behaviors, they also inherently support student voice and choice, the second theme used for analyzing the data.

Through the analyses sub-themes emerged. The sub-themes for adult behaviors were identified as reflection, facilitation, and classroom management. The majority of the participants indicated that they use class meetings to support positive student behaviors through conflict resolution, problem solving, and restorative practices. These are common uses of class meetings which help develop the classroom community (Gray & Drewery, 2011; Leachman & Victor, 2005). The sub-theme of facilitation was conveyed in many participants' responses. Teachers described themselves as listening to students

more often and more deeply, enabling them to make decisions and helping students support one another. Again, these behaviors inherently support student voice and choice, as the themes are not mutually exclusive.

Reflection, as a sub-theme was mentioned several times and teachers' responses indicated they had been thinking about their past behaviors and actions, and aligning them with the concepts of empowerment or disempowerment. Teachers who practice reflection are able to identify problematic areas and to evaluate new efforts and strategies (Noormohammadi, 2014). Reflection is key for teachers who seek to provide empowering environments in their classrooms.

The sub-themes that emerged from the voice and choice theme were student behaviors and academics. As previously mentioned, teachers identified class meetings as an integral part of classroom management designed to promote positive student behaviors. When students gather and discuss problematic behaviors with one another, they are empowered to share their voice and ideas for improvement (Angell, 2004). Teachers described their students as making better behavior choices and becoming more involved in classroom activities since the pre professional development survey. These peer interactions help students, enhancing their sense of belonging and acceptance, resulting in higher student motivation, engagement and commitment to school (Osterman, 2000). The voice and choice theme was also expressed in terms of academic work. Teachers observed and increase in the number of students deciding how they would show mastery of a topic, choosing how they would be assessed, and determining topics they would like to study. This suggests that the teachers improved in their ability to share

control and power in the classroom, an important goal of student empowerment (McQuillan, 2005).

All three tasks Reeves (2009) identifies as required if teachers are to become more autonomy supportive (become less controlling, learn autonomy supportive strategies, and desire to become more autonomy supportive) were evident in the qualitative data responses. Teachers indicated the desire to provide autonomy supports as they described implementation of classroom procedures and opportunities for student empowerment. They expressed less controlling language through questioning techniques that provided better opportunities for students to share their thoughts or insights into what happened. They described a process of asking questions that are free from judgement or accusations. Some teachers observed classroom meetings where student talk became much more frequent indicating that teachers had seeded more control to the students.

Together these findings provided strong support for professional development effectiveness and rich examples of student empowerment through teachers' use of autonomy supports to the research questions that guided this study. Teachers shared ways they are providing for student empowerment through voice and choice, student decision making and class meetings. Teachers described using their knowledge of autonomy supports by providing choices to students and listening more to students.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Overall, the results from the quantitative and qualitative data suggest participants developed an understanding of student empowerment and indicated implementation of classroom practices to support it. Through examples participants provided in their written responses and group discussions during professional development, indications are that

teachers are using the information they learned from the professional development and applying it to their personal behaviors and classroom structures, procedures and environment.

This study supports Deci and Ryan's (2002) claim that teachers can learn to be more autonomy supportive. The professional development design of this study supports the work of Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001) who assert that professional development needs to occur during the regular school day, extend over a period of time, and provide on-going support in order to have a lasting impact.

Implications for Future Research. Self-determination theory (SDT) maintains that all human beings have inherent psychological needs for autonomy, belonging and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci 2000). This being said, research that looks at providing autonomy supports for students should also look at how teachers' needs for autonomy, belonging and competence are being met. Are school systems, districts and administration providing for teachers' psychological needs? Teachers who experience autonomy are more likely to provide autonomy supports for their students (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Therefore, future research should include looking at how principals and school district administrators can provide autonomy supports for teachers.

Future research needs to utilize more reliable instruments for measuring teacher's orientations toward providing autonomy supports. Since the moderately autonomous subscale for the Problems in Schools (PIS) questionnaire (Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1999) did not function properly, the results did not have strong reliability. In addition, the Student Empowerment Survey (SES) was the only means for collecting qualitative data and it was completed anonymously. Although it consisted of open-ended questions, there was

no ability to do follow-up questions with participants for clarification or extension of their responses.

The ability to conduct follow up with participants in their classrooms should be a component of future research. This would be for the purpose of providing support as teachers implement strategies and changes, but also to observe if their intent to provide autonomy supports is evident in their classroom practices. In the study conducted by Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) teachers' score on the Problems in Schools questionnaire correlated with their classroom teaching styles. Classrooms and teaching demands have changed since the 1999 study and I believe it would be advantageous to observe and study teachers who are scored as highly autonomous on the PIS. Observations would provide insight into strategies and practices teachers are currently doing in classrooms, with challenges students currently present, to provide for autonomy support.

This study acknowledged the importance of student voice in education, but failed to include it in the process. Future research should include ways to hear student voice. Although this study involved students three to eight years old, there could have been a way to incorporate their opinions and perspectives on how they are supported in their classrooms. Given the ages of the students, there is a probability that they would be extremely truthful and lots of data gleaned from their perceptions on how their autonomy, belonging and competence is, or isn't encouraged in their current classrooms.

This study would have been strengthened by adding a component of peer feedback. Future research should include teachers visiting each other during lessons and giving each other direct feedback on their empowerment strategies and practices. Making changes in teacher practices can be difficult. However, with peer support and continued

PD focusing on student empowerment, teachers would have the knowledge and the practice they need to be successful.

Future research would include a professional development structure that best supports adult learning. Principals and school districts plan and execute PD every year, sometimes dedicating up to ten days per school year for trainings, workshops and sessions. Usually professional development days are scheduled when students have the day off and teachers spend their day in sessions, sometimes covering several topics in the day. Instead, professional development should be structured to occur during the regular school day, providing on-going support for implementation, and extend over a period of time (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001). This structure provides opportunities for the teacher to implement new strategies, practices or learning and evaluate the success within their classroom. This study has data to indicate the professional development structure may have contributed to the teachers' changes in controlling responses that were maintained from post survey to follow-up survey.

Implications for Future Practice. When educators provide for student empowerment and support students' needs for autonomy, belonging and competence, they are educating the whole child, and not just focusing on academic abilities. The Whole Child approach is defined by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) as "an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children". ASCD is an organization dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading do that every child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2012). Educators should be looking to ensure they are focusing on the healthy

development of the whole child and not being narrowly focused on test scores and assessment results. Helping teachers learn and implement student empowerment practices will meet students' psychological needs and support education for the whole child.

An extension of this study would be to form teacher groups within the school, instead of working in grade level groups, determined by teacher interest in an empowerment topic. These groups could be organized to follow the PD structure presented, include peer feedback, and extend over the period of a school quarter or semester. This would provide for the teachers' voice and choice and align with effective PD practices.

Future practice should include teachers and administrators learning about SDT and the positive effects providing autonomy supports has for students. Making SDT part of preservice teacher learning would help ensure teachers are equipped to design their orientation towards autonomy supports and not controlling, as they may have experienced in their own education. Likewise, there should be instruction for perspective administrators on autonomy-supportive practices for teachers and leaders.

Having a school leader who understands SDT, empowerment practices, democracy in schools, and ensures the staff is helping develop the whole child creates a climate that is conducive to autonomy supports. School leaders must also work to develop positive relationships with teachers and staff that support their personal needs for autonomy, belonging and competence.

Hiring staff members who understand the importance of student empowerment is a necessity for future practice. Currently the experimental school has interview questions that involve character education and social emotional learning. Asking candidates

questions on how to empower students would provide insights to their understanding and ability to support student empowerment.

All persons working in schools need to have their psychological needs met. Perhaps helping teachers empower students can result in administrators and school boards empowering teachers. Such a system would have everyone working and succeeding to their maximum potential with healthy benefits for all.

Researcher/Educator Perspective

This study was part of the journey my teachers and I will continue to travel as we work together to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students we serve. Through character education and student empowerment, we will ensure our focus is on the development of the whole child, affording our students with the best educational experience we can provide.

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Appendix A1: Informed Consent – Experimental School



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Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Student Empowerment PD – Experimental School

Participant _____

HSC Approval Number **835665-1**

Principal Investigator **Diane Dymond**

PI's Phone Number **314-267-7443**

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Dymond and Brenda Bredemeier. The purpose of this research is to look at changes in teachers' orientations after participation in specific professional development sessions.
2. A) Your participation will involve completion of two surveys. One survey (it will take about 10 minutes to complete) will be sent to you, via Survey Monkey, in February, 2016. The second survey (about 10 minutes in length) will be sent to you, via Survey Monkey, in April, 2016. Approximately 55 teachers may be involved in this research.

B) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 20 minutes to complete the 2 surveys.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about student autonomy and empowerment.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can contact me at: Diane.dymond@slps.org. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for

Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Diane Dymond, 314-267-7443 or the Faculty Advisor, Brenda Bredemeier 314-516-6820. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

Appendix A2: Informed Consent – Comparison School

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Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Student Empowerment PD – Comparison School

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number **835665-1**

Principal Investigator **Diane Dymond** PI's Phone Number **314-267-7443**

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Dymond and Brenda Bredemeier. The purpose of this research is to look at changes in teachers' orientations after participation in specific professional development sessions.
2. a) Your participation will involve
 - Completion of two surveys. One survey (it will take about 10 minutes to complete) will be sent to you, via Survey Monkey, in October, 2016. The second survey (about 10 minutes in length) will be sent to you, via Survey Monkey, in December, 2016. Approximately 55 teachers may be involved in this research.
 - b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 20 minutes to complete the 2 surveys.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about student autonomy and empowerment.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can contact me at: Diane.dymond@slps.org. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. All responses will be referenced by an assigned number, not your name. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or

program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Diane Dymond, 314-267-7443 or the Faculty Advisor, Brenda Bredemeier 314-516-6820. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I can request a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking the link to begin the survey, I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

Appendix B: The Problems in Schools Questionnaire

On the following pages you will find a series of vignettes. Each one describes an incident and then lists four ways of responding to the situation. Please read each vignette and then consider each responses in turn. Think about each response option in terms of how appropriate you consider it to be as a means of dealing with the problem described in the vignette. You may think an option is 'perfect', in other words, very appropriate, in which case you would respond with a number 7. You may think an option is highly inappropriate so you would mark it as a 1. If you find an option reasonable, you would select a number between 1 and 7. So think about each option and rate it on the scale shown below. Please rate each of the four options for each vignette. There are eight vignettes with four options for each.

Very inappropriate				Moderately appropriate			Very appropriate
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

There are no right or wrong ratings on these items. People's styles differ, and we are simply interested in what you consider appropriate given your own style.

Some of the vignettes ask what you would do as a teacher. Others ask you to respond as if you were giving advice to another teacher or parent. Some ask you to respond as if you were the parent. If you are not a parent, simply imagine what it would be like for you in that situation.

A. Jim is an average student who has been working at grade level. During the past two weeks, he has appeared listless and has not been participating during reading group. The work he does is accurate but he has not been completing assignments. A phone conversation with his mother revealed no useful information. The most appropriate thing for Jim's teacher to do is:

1. She should impress upon him the importance of finishing his assignments since he needs to learn this material for his own good.
2. Let him know that he doesn't have to finish all of his work now and see if she can help him work out the cause of the listlessness.
3. Make him stay after school until that day's assignments are done.
4. Let him see how he compares with other children in terms of his assignments and encourage him to catch up with the other.

B. At a parent conference last night, Mr. and Mrs. Green were told that their daughter Sarah has made more progress than expected since the time of the last conference. All agree that they hope she continues to improve so that she does not have to repeat the grade (which the Greene's have been kind of expecting since the last report card). As a result of the conference, the Greenes decide to:

5. Increase her allowance and promise her a ten-speed bike if she continues to improve.
6. Tell her that she is now doing as well as many of the other children in her class.
7. Tell her about the report, letting her know that they are aware of her increased independence in school and at home.
8. Continue to emphasize that she has to work hard to get better grades.

C. Donny loses his temper a lot and has a way of agitating other children. He does not respond well to what you tell him to do and you are concerned that he will not learn the social skills he needs. The best thing for you to do with him is:

9. Emphasize how important it is for him to control himself in order to succeed in school and in other situations.
10. Put him in a special class, which has the structure and reward contingencies, which he needs.
11. Help him see how other children behave in these various situations and praise him for doing the same.
12. Realize that Donny is probably not getting the attention he needs and start being more responsive to him.

D. Your son is one of the better players on his junior soccer team which has been winning most of its games. However, you are concerned because he just told you he failed his unit spelling test and will have to retake it the day after tomorrow. You decide that the best thing to do is:

13. Ask him to talk about how he plans to handle the situation.
14. Tell him he probably ought to decide to forego tomorrow's game so he can catch up in spelling.
15. See if others are in the same predicament and suggest he do as much preparation as the others.
16. Make him miss tomorrow's game to study; soccer has been interfering too much with his schoolwork.

E. The Rangers spelling group has been having trouble all year. How could Ms. Wilson best help the Rangers?

17. Have regular spelling bees so that Rangers will be motivated to do as well as the other groups.

18. Make them drill more and give them special privileges for improvements.

19. Have each child keep a spelling chart and emphasize how important it is to have a good chart.

20. Help the group devise ways of learning the words together (skills, games, and so on).

F. In your class is a girl name Margy who has been the butt of jokes for years. She is quiet and usually alone. In spite of the efforts of previous teachers, Margy has not been accepted by the other children. Your wisdom would guide you to:

21. Put her into interactions and provide her with much praise for any social initiative.

22. Talk to her and emphasize that she should make friends so she will be happier.

23. Invite her to talk about her relations with the other kids, and encourage her to take small steps when she is ready.

24. Encourage her to observe how other children relate and to join in with them.

G. For the past few weeks things have been disappearing from the teacher's desk and lunch money has been taken from some of the children's desks. Today, Marvin was seen by the teacher taking a silver dollar paperweight from her desk. The teacher phoned Marvin's mother and told her about this incident. Although the teacher suspects that Marvin has been responsible for the other thefts, she mentioned only the one and assured the mother that she will keep a close eye on Marvin. The best thing for the mother to do it:

25. Talk to him about the consequences of stealing and what it would mean in relation to the other kids.

26. Talk to him about it, expressing her confidence in him and attempting to understand why he did it.

27. Give him a good scolding; stealing is something which cannot be tolerated and he has to learn that.

28. Emphasize that it was wrong and have him apologize to the teacher and promise not to do it again.

H. Your child has been getting average grades, and you'd like to see her improve. A useful approach might be to:

29. Encourage her to talk about her report card and what it means for her.
30. Go over the report card with her; point out where she stands in the class.
31. Stress that she should do better; she will never get into college with grades like these.
32. Offer her a dollar for every A and 50 cents for every B on future report card.

Appendix C: Student Empowerment Survey (SES)

- 1) When we provide for student empowerment, what does that look like?
- 2) What does the phrase, ‘supporting student autonomy’ mean to you?
- 3) In what ways have you changed in your classroom teaching, strategies, or behaviors since participating in the sessions on student voice or restorative practices?
- 4) In what ways have you supported student autonomy or restorative practices so far this school year?
- 5) What does student autonomy look like at your school?
- 6) Do you see an increase of student empowerment in your classroom or within the school community and if yes, how do you contribute to it? If no, what do you think we could do to increase student empowerment?

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Please tell me how long you have been a certified teacher.
2. Please indicate how many years you have worked at (our school).

Appendix E1: Professional Development Day 1

Agenda

Grade Levels:	Prekindergarten through Second Grade
Objectives	Review topics: adultism, student voice, and intrinsic motivation. New topic to introduce: restorative practices. At the end of the session, participants will be able to identify adultism when presented with phrases or practices that utilize adultist beliefs. Participants will also be able to identify student empowerment practices of providing for student voice, supporting intrinsic motivation and incorporating restorative practices.
Materials to prepare	Computer and projector
	Prepared chart paper for SWOT Activity
	Prepared chart paper for Restorative Practices
	Blank chart paper and markers
	Handout for note taking and pencils
	Small items for dividing group into smaller groups of seven participants (pattern blocks were used)
	Small Post-it Notes
Topics:	Resources Utilized:
Student Voice and Choice	Article – “Adultism: It’s Hurting Our Children and Schools” one copy per participant Problem Solving Class Meeting – Exclusion (2011) Length: 8:48 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoR_zb5A65E
Restorative Practices	Restorative Justice – It’s Elementary (2009) Length: 5:22 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUA1AVf1SqI
Restorative Practices	Using unconditional attention to teach social/emotional skills (2015) Length: 2:53 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHCkAFrkL6k
Motivation	Intrinsic Motivation (2012) Length: 2:45 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5WY2RWWVka
Motivation	And Then There Was a Muddy Cliff: A Plucky Forest Adventure (2015) Length: 11:46 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXDLZAEjjYs

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.: Review adultism. The article, “Adultism: It’s Hurting Our Children and Schools” is distributed with markings dividing the reading into

seven parts. Group is divided according to the pattern block they chose at the sign-in table creating seven smaller groups for the activity. I then reviewed with the staff how we jigsaw an article. This is a modified method of jigsaw that allows the participants to read only a small section of an article, talk with their homogenous (by pattern block) group about the section, and then share out with the whole group. This allows for staff members to become briefly engaged with a reading but learn about the entire reading through the process of each group sharing out. Each group was instructed to come to a consensus on at least three important points to their section, write those points on the large chart paper provided, and use that to present to the whole group about their section of the article. The main points derived from the group are listed in Appendix E1a.

9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.: Review student voice and choice. Participants watched the video, Problem Solving Class Meeting – Exclusion. Participants were instructed to write on their PD handout sheet their thoughts about student voice, teacher talk and teacher feedback they observed in this video. After viewing the video, the group was divided into smaller groups again using the pattern blocks. For this activity the groups were heterogeneous, as they were instructed to form groups of seven where no one could have the same pattern block as another group member. The groups of seven were to move about the room to the prepared chart paper for the SWOT Activity. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Each prepared chart paper had one of the following questions written: Where are our strengths around student voice? Where are our weaknesses around student voice? Where are our opportunities for more student

voice? What are out threats to student voice? Each group was assigned a chart on which to start and were instructed to complete the chart, writing down their group responses to the question. After approximately seven minutes at each chart, the group was instructed to move to another chart. Once at their second, and all consecutive charts, they were instructed to read what the prior group had written, place a check mark next to the statement if they agreed and if they disagreed with the statement they were to place an 'x' next to it. Then the groups were to add to the remaining charts their group's ideas and thoughts for each of the questions. After each group had been to each chart, we reviewed the charts as a whole group, discussing the 'x' marks and the check marks as well as the comments on each chart. Due to the large number of participants at this session, I had to prepare two charts for each statement. Therefore, as a large group, we had to compare each chart with its partner chart and determine if the expressed ideas were repeated or new. See results listed in Appendix E1b. We took a 15-minute break prior to this final activity with the charts.

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.: Introduce restorative practices. To begin this session, I allowed participants to brainstorm what they have heard, read, or know about restorative practices or restorative justice. I had a participant record the brainstorm for us on a power point slide so all members could see the ideas as they were generated. We then watched the videos, “Restorative Justice – It’s Elementary!” and “Using unconditional attention to teach social/emotional skills.” Participants were encouraged to use their PD Handout Form to record any key terms, ideas or phrases, questions or comments they had from the video. When

both videos ended, participants were asked to reflect on what they heard and learned on the videos and to then provide an example and a non-example of restorative practices. Their examples were to be written on a small Post-it note and placed on one of the appropriate chart papers labeled, “What Restorative Practices Are” and “What Restorative Practices Are Not”. Results are found in Appendix E1c.

12:00 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.: Review intrinsic motivation. To begin this session we watched the videos, “Intrinsic Motivation” and “And Then There was a Muddy Cliff: A Plucky Forest Adventure.” Participants were encouraged to use their PD Handout for making notes about intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Upon completion of both videos, the participants were asked to respond to a series of statements that were on taped to large pieces of paper and laid on tables around the room. The statements were taken from all videos or readings from the day. The participants were asked to read each statement and respond to the ones that resonated with them. They could make a comment, write a question, draw a response, or extend the thought. The only restriction was that the activity was to be done in silence and would only last for ten minutes.

12:45 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.: Ending activity, share with a partner and choose follow up PD topic. Participants were asked to find a partner that looked the most like them and to share for five minutes with their partner something new they learned today, something that struck them, or something they plan to do differently because of what they heard today. After each partner had five minutes to share the non-certified staff were released and the certified classroom teachers were

grouped by grade level. In their grade level, groups they discussed the topic that they, as a team, wanted to learn more about. The choices in topics were; Student voice, Motivation, Adultism, or Restorative Practices. The Kindergarten Teachers and Second Grade Teachers both chose to learn and work more with Student Voice. First Grade Teachers chose Restorative Practices.

Educational Outcomes: Summary from PD Reading

What we understand adultism to be:

- When respect is solely given based on age
- Children are told what to do without any input
- A focus on adult needs rather than the child's needs
- A negative result for both adults and children
- Detrimental to healthy individual development
- Widely acceptable or considered the norm in our society
- When adults put boundaries on children that may inhibit their personal growth and well-being
- Justified by myth of the spoiled child
- When social norms are different for kids and adults, i.e. interrupting conversations

How we can 'counter-act' adultism:

- Children's self-esteem (should) run ahead of their accomplishments
- Be conscience of how we speak with and to children
- Be conscience of our expectations for children and adults – are they different?
Respect, for example, do we show it to children when we expect it from them?

Where our questions still lie:

- Adultism and adult guidance lines can be unclear sometimes

Educational Outcomes: SWOT Chart

STRENGTHS we have towards student voice and choice:

Opportunities: garden, kitchen, computer lab, Lego club, basketball**

Class meeting***

Project Construct*

Monday Morning Meetings**

Buddy Day**

Teacher Mediation***

Free choice***

Student led conflict-resolution

Student surveys

Learning Centers**

Classroom input**

Lunch choices**

School-wide activities

Positive affirmations

Extra Recess

Talk it Out, Work it Out, Walk it Out***

Center Choices**

Classroom rules**

(Disagree with Project Construct) – There was a comment on one poster

*= each additional group agreed (put a check mark) by the statement.

WEAKNESSES:

No benefit of doubt for repeat offenders

Teachers' way or the highway

Students don't have a say in center activities

Cafeteria (no talking)

Voice levels

Scream/Quiet Room

(Punching bags)

(Expression Room)

Never really listen to both sides of a story when it comes to our students

Overly structured curriculum **

Minimal recess time**

Monday Morning Meetings (content)

Can't interact during lunch time

Lack of social opportunities due to push for curriculum / standards expectations

Teachers may not know how to give appropriate choice opportunities to children

Lack of time to hear voices

OPPORTUNITIES:

Morning (Class) Meetings***

Monday Morning Meetings*

Classroom expectations***

Journals*

Show and Tell*

Content Conferences

Center Choice Time* (Free play)*

Peer Reflections

Topics of Study

Conflict resolution**

Student Lead Conferences

Discussion Charts

What do you want to learn?***

Counseling*

Character Education *

Assemblies

Incredible Garden & Student Kitchen

Playground equipment

Project-based Learning rather than a scripted curriculum that teaches subjects in isolation

THREATS

Some rules and guideline

Disruptive students & staff

Absences

Parent-Caregiver involvement

Curriculum expectations / Adult centered

Pre-determined lesson plans

Voice levels at lunch /building wide

Too much adultism

Educational Outcomes: Examples and Non-examples of Restorative Practices

Restorative practices ARE:

- Communication: Kids strategize for peaceful solutions, not adultism
- A type of conflict resolution
- Changing negative behavior into positive solutions
- Teaching skills that will have a life-long effect when resolving conflicts
- Intervention not just punishment
- Healing
- Peer Communication
- Levels the playing field
- Finding out what harm an action caused and how it can be healed
- Not to blame, but to give appropriate consequences
- A resolution for dealing with who was harmed and how to heal the person
- Children having a voice
- Help/guide children to resolve conflicts peacefully

Restorative practices ARE NOT:

- Punishment for breaking rules or making a mistake
- Punitive

Appendix E2: Professional Development Day 2

Agenda

Grade Levels:	Kindergarten and Second Grade
Objective:	At the end of this session, participants will be able to generate ideas to address our areas of weaknesses around student voice.
Materials Needed:	Typed copies of SWOT Chart results
	Colored file folder for each participant in which they can keep all handouts and articles for our study.
	Handout from National Student Voice Data (2013-2014)
Topics:	Kindergarten looks at strengths and weaknesses Second grade looks at obstacles and threats
Follow up / homework	Article for participants to read, “We Spoke the Right Things” Author: Monita Bell, published in Teaching Tolerance, Number 48, Fall 2014

First 30 minutes: Participants read over the SWOT results from our February PD.

Discussion was based on the following questions: How can we ensure our strengths continue? How can we address our weaknesses?

Remaining 20 minutes: Read statistics on student voice and the impact on academic motivation. Discussion focused on the percentages on which the grade level teams felt we could positively influence, thus altering those statistics for our children. See Appendix E2a for results.

Grade Levels:	Prekindergarten and First Grade
Objective:	By the end of this session, participants will be able to transform a traditional approach or practice of student discipline into a practice that reflects restorative justice.
Materials Needed:	Lap top
	What They’re Saying – Discipline that Restores: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0Orvuj9KwI Length - 2:34
	Handout: From Traditional Practices to Restorative Practices
	Handout: Scenario #2
Topic:	Restorative practices compared to punitive practices
Follow up / homework	Articles for participants to read: Restorative practices: Building a connected community of learners, reprinted from Restorative Works learning network, Author: Joshua Wachtel, 2014

	Article: Elementary school employs restorative practices to engage students in academics and respond to harm, reprinted from Restorative Works learning network, Author: Joshua Wachtel, 2014
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First 30 minutes: Participants view the video and do the handout activity.

Participants were asked to complete the right side of the box that would describe the restorative approach. This was a group discussion with participants asked to individually complete their handouts to use as their notes for the day.

Final 20 minutes: Participants read the Scenario #2. Participants were then asked to quickly summarize what would traditionally happen with the new student.

Next, participants were asked to outline what the next steps would be if the school chose to follow restorative practices.

In preparation for next week's meeting, participants were given copies of the two articles and asked to mark text that had meaning for them or that stirs questions for them as they implement.

Educational Outcomes: Reflection on School Voice Research

What are we doing to help the statistics look different for our school?

Statistic: 53% of students feel like they do not have a voice decision making at school.

Teacher responses:

- We vote on what we centers we will open.
- I think that because we use Project Construct, our children would have a much lower percentage on this since they direct their own learning.
- We, as a class, decide if we will have snack before or after an activity.
- The children sometimes ask for a break and we take a break!
- The children decide what we will present in our Monday Morning Meetings.
- My students decide what topics we talk about in our class meetings.
- Depending on the day's activities, sometimes the children get to decide when we will do math or when we will do reading.

Statistic: 48% of students believe their teachers do not care if they are absent from school.

Teacher responses:

- Our percentage would be much lower, because all of us make it a point to either call the parents, or question the child when he or she returns to school.
- We make it a big deal when they return, especially if they have been gone for a lot of days.

- We do our “We Miss You” ritual every morning for children who are absent and wish them well.
- We have our ‘card station’ where children make a note to leave in the child’s cubby for when they return.
- I make sure during my threshold greeting that I tell a child, “I missed you yesterday.” Or “I’m so glad you are back with us today.”

Statistic: 43% of students think school is boring.

Teacher responses:

- I think some of our children would say ‘hard’ and not boring.
- Some of the skills we are having to cover with them are not developmentally appropriate and therefore some are experiencing the tasks as too hard.
- I have never heard a child tell me that they were bored, or that an assignment was boring.
- When I have heard our children say this it is usually because they are frustrated with the assignment (do not understand, cannot remember the steps to solving the problem, etc.) they have been given.
- I think a lower percentage would say that, but I still think some would say it because we do not have a lot of technology here for them to interact with.

Statistic: 34% of students believe that teachers know their hopes and dreams.

Teacher responses:

- We talk a lot about what they want to learn, what they want to do when they are adults, I think our kids would have a much higher percentage.

- I am not sure hopes and dreams are relevant to our age group – I mean some of them hope to be Spider Man! But if you say, I know their favorite character, movie, team, etc. I know that about my kids.
- I agree... I know a lot about my kids, for example; Kandance hopes he's going to Chicago this weekend to see his brother, Joey hopes his grandma is coming to live with him, Sharnice hopes she's going to Disney World in the summer, stuff like that...
- We often talk about our dreams at morning circle – both in short term; I dream that today we will have no conflicts on the playground to long term; when children share their dreams about the kind of house they'll live in when they are adults, to the cars they'll drive, the jobs they'll have, etc.

Statistic: 76% of students feel that their teachers believe in them and expect them to be successful.

Teacher responses:

- I would expect our children to say 100% because we talk about being successful every day. Whether it is making good choices, choosing appropriate behaviors, saying nice things to our friends, etc. that is a form of being successful.
- I know I use the term “I believe you can do it” a lot, whether I am talking about walking in the halls, or learning a skill, or showing concern to a friend so I hope that is translating into their understanding that I believe in them.
- I think we, as a school, are good at expressing our expectations for each child to be successful and that we believe each and every one of them is capable of success.

Statistic: 35% of students feel that students respect each other in their school.

Teacher responses:

- Since we talk so much about respect, share examples of it frequently, and role-play how to show respect, I do not think this percentage would be an accurate reflection of our children's feelings.
- We are working so hard on the social, emotional skills in my class so I think theirs would be a much higher percentage.
- Whenever a conflict arises, the first question is usually, 'Was that a respectful way to respond?' So I believe our children know that respect is expected from everyone, towards everyone.
- Our class meetings reinforce how we can and should be respectful towards each other.
- I think our Monday Morning Meetings help reinforce respect among students – across grade levels.

Appendix E3: Professional Development Day

Agenda

Grade Levels:	Kindergarten and Second Grade
Objective:	By the end of the session, participants will reflect on practices they could change in their classrooms that would allow for additional opportunities for student voice and choice.
Materials Needed:	Typed copies of SWOT Chart results
	Laptop
	Video: Student Voice (2012) Length: 1:10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDfbYXSOBEA
Topic:	Kindergarten looks at obstacles and threats Second grade looks at strengths and weaknesses
Follow up / homework	Participants are to read: Student-Led Class Meetings, reprinted from Educational Leadership, 2003, Volume 60, Number 6. Authors: Gayanne Leachman and Deanna Victor

First 20 minutes: Participants watched the video to help focus our discussion.

Participants were asked to discuss their personal reactions to the article, “We Spoke the Right Things” and the implications it could have for us in our school.

Final 30 minutes: Participants were given the handouts of the SWOT chart results listing the threats and opportunities from our February PD. I asked participants to brainstorm solutions to our threats and to discuss if there are opportunities listed in which they are not taking advantage.

Grade Levels:	Prekindergarten and First Grade
Purpose:	By the end of the session, participants will be able to implement (partially or completely) steps in their classroom that reflect restorative approaches as seen in the video.
Materials Needed:	Lap top
	Video: Childs Hill School and Restorative Approaches (2011) Length 13:13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJWgayvuWXw
Topic:	Steps/process for handling children’s conflicts with a restorative focus
Follow up / homework	Participants are to read the Raisin City School’s Discipline Handbook retrieved from: http://ce.fresno.edu/sharedmedia/cpd/RasinCityElementarySchoolHandbook.pdf

First 20 minutes: Participants discussed articles from last week's follow up using the 'Spirit Read'. Spirit Read is a process that allows participants to read a portion of the text that they feel connected with, had a reaction to, or in some way spoke to them. After the spirit read was completed, discussions followed that centered on the challenges teachers face when implementing restorative practices and how we can support one another to overcome those challenges.

Final 30 minutes: Participants watched the video and were asked to write down the steps in the process that the Childs Hill School incorporates as their school wide practices. Steps are:

1. Child finds adult – it is one-on-one time with an adult
2. Adult asks scripted questions – tell me what happened?
3. Adult has child reflect on actions/feelings what were you thinking? How were you feeling? Had anything happened before? Tell me more.
4. Adult asks how child is feeling now
5. Adult asks who has been harmed and what are your needs now?
6. Allow child time to calm down in a quiet/reflective area and follow process with each child involved.
7. Bring children involved or harmed together to determine next steps.

Upon completion of the video, the steps were discussed and the challenges they would encounter as they begin implementing the steps.

In preparation for next week's meeting participants were given a copy of the Raisin City Elementary School Handbook on Discipline and asked to read it prior to next week's meeting.

Appendix E4: Professional Development Day 4

Agenda

Grade Levels:	Kindergarten and Second Grade
Objective:	By the end of the session, participants will reflect on teacher voice vs student voice during instruction, circle times, meeting times, etc.
Materials Needed:	Article from last week: Student-Led Class Meetings
Topic:	Teacher Talk Time reduces Student Talk Time
Follow up / homework	Participants are to read: Student-Led Class Meetings, reprinted from Educational Leadership, 2003, Volume 60, Number 6. Authors: Gayanne Leachman and Deanna Victor

First 20 minutes: Discussion on the article and if participants reflected on their voice vs student voice in their classrooms this past week. Share strategies to help reduce teacher talk.

Final 30 minutes: Determine the most important points to share out with all staff at our next staff meeting for the purpose of helping everyone's growth on providing student voice and choice. Handouts given for web resources to access for continuing their learning. See Appendix E4a for ideas and strategies to share with all staff and Appendix E4b for resources provided to teachers.

Grade Levels:	Prekindergarten and First Grade
Objective:	Participants will identify their discipline practices and how they do, or can, align with those from the article on Raisin City.
Materials Needed:	None
Guiding Question:	How can our discipline strategies mirror those of Raisin City?
Follow up / homework	Participants were sent an email with the link for the post-survey to be completed within a week. Handout of resources given to participants

First 20 minutes: Discussion on the article and what participants thought would be the easiest to implement immediately.

Final 30 minutes: Determine the most important points to share out with all staff at our next staff meeting for the purpose of helping everyone's growth around restorative practices and receive handout for web resources to access for continuing their learning around restorative practices. See Appendix E4a for ideas and strategies to share with all staff and Appendix E4b for resources provided to teachers.

Educational Outcomes: Ideas and Strategies to Share with Staff

Student Voice and Choice

Weaknesses that were identified in our February PD Session:

- 1. Students don't have a say in center activities**
 - a. Allow students to vote or choose activities that will be available for the day, or week.
 - b. Always incorporate a center activity that allows them to make choices on how they will complete the given task.
- 2. Cafeteria (no talking)**
 - a. Talking is allowed at tables at a level 1 or 2.
 - b. Students are to react appropriately when asked to go to a '0'.
- 3. Voice levels**
 - a. Review with your classroom the hallway voice levels, levels to enter the building, and why we have them at a '0'. (Respect for those who are in classrooms and offices working.)
 - b. Allow children to decide the voice levels they should maintain during classroom activities.
- 4. Monday Morning Meetings (content)**
 - a. Have your children decide what they want to present to Monday Morning Meetings.
 - b. Give them opportunities to 'sell' their idea to their classmates.

Opportunities we have that we could use to strengthen student voice that were identified in our February PD Session:

Morning (Class) Meetings and Monday Morning Meetings

- As stated before, allow your children to discuss the issues they think we should be talking about at Monday Morning Meetings and your classroom meetings.
- You can ask them to write them down; you collect, and discuss when opportunities allow.

Classroom expectations

- Review them weekly – maybe some need to change or be updated?
- Ask the children what they think is working well and what needs to change.

Restorative Practices

Processes to begin immediately that would support restorative practices:

1. Listen to all children involved in the incident.
2. Make sure you ask what, not why.
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Then what did you do?

- c. Did anything else happen?
 - d. How are you feeling about the incident?
 - e. What ideas do you have to help fix this?
3. Have classroom meetings that focus on a social issue before it is a real issue for your classroom.
 - a. Have children share how it feels to be left out of a group or game.
 - b. Ask children how they would handle a situation on the playground that involved someone being called an ugly name.
 - c. Ask children how they could handle a bus situation where someone is acting in an unsafe way (switching seats while the bus is moving, standing in the aisle, etc.)

Educational Outcomes: Resources Provided on Final PD Day

Student Voice and Choice:

Check out this website that was created in 2012 for the purpose of creating a space where students could share their ideas:

<https://www.stuvoice.org/>

Student Voice Counts:

<http://www.panoramaed.com/student-voice>

This resource has discussion guides and videos to help you in your journey to incorporate more student voice in your classroom and our school.

SoundOut – Promoting Meaningful Student Involvement, Student Voice and Student Engagement

<https://soundout.org/>

Website has links to articles and free resources to help you in your journey.

Restorative Practices:

Teaching Tolerance’s Toolkit for Restoring Justice:

<http://www.tolerance.org/toolkit/toolkit-restoring-justice>

This toolkit is meant to be used with older students, but I suggest you look at the resources, watch some of the videos, and learn more about how some schools are incorporating restorative practices.

International Institute for Restorative Practices:

<http://www.iirp.edu/>

This web site offers links to articles, videos and other resources to help you in your journey with restorative practices.

Restorative Practices: A Guide for Educators:

<http://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices>

Visit this website and you can download their free toolkit designed to help you begin fostering a positive school climate and culture.