RP-Observe Manual

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Description of Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices (RP) aim to a) promote support and connection, b) uphold structure and accountability, and c) integrate fair process and student voice. RP has its roots in the restorative justice movement. In restorative justice, those affected by an infraction or crime come together to identify how people were affected by the incident. Together, they decide how to repair the harm. Similar to efforts outside of the US (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; McCluskey et al., 2008), Ted Wachtel and colleagues (2009) have adapted restorative justice to the school setting and emphasized a preventative approach, as opposed to the more traditional reactive approach (e.g., reliance on suspension and security measures). From a prevention standpoint, teachers and administrators aim to strengthen relationships, increase students' investment in the community and the rules (build support and social capital) and hold students accountable to one another (implement fair process and structure). The practices themselves also emphasize adolescents' developmental need for autonomy and decision-making.

Purpose of RP-Observe

RP-Observe and teacher support: Running effective RP circles can be challenging. Teachers need to be supported as they learn to implement high quality RP circles. Support can come in the form of detailed feedback based on observations of how teachers are actually running circles in their classrooms. Observation should be systematic, which means what an observer notes while watching a circle should be guided by theory and research. The *RP-Observe* manual is the first tool that provides a systematic way to detect the varying area of strengths and challenges teachers experience when they implement RP circles in their classrooms. Teachers and observers use *RP-Observe* to guide discussion about ways to improve the circle process.

RP-Observe and program evaluation: Given the emphasis on empirically-based practices in schools, practitioners and researchers need research-supported tools to measure implementation. Without such tools, there is no way to verify that interventions were well implemented or poorly implemented. *RP-Observe* helps trainers and evaluators develop the skills to observe and reliably rate the quality of RP circles. The purpose is to open up the "black box" of RP circles through observation, and shed light on why the RP program may or may not be working.

Two Essential Elements of RP

RP-Observe is designed for observers to record the quality of the following two RP "Essential Elements" (See http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/WSC-Overview.pdf for other essential elements):

> **Proactive Circle:** On a daily or weekly basis, students sit in a circle and discuss a topic that helps build community.
> **Responsive Circle:** After a moderately serious incident, students sit in a circle and address who has been harmed and what needs to be done to make things right.

In proactive circles, teachers use structured group discussion and meaningful exchanges while sitting in a circle (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). Facing each other, they have frank and open discussions about academic topics (e.g., their academic goals for the day or the semester), emotional topics (e.g., their experiences being the target of teasing), and classroom-specific topics (e.g., what norms of respect they would like to establish in the classroom). The types of

topics and specific content are limitless, yet the goal is similar: provide an opportunity for students and teachers to learn about one another (and thus respond more appropriately to one another).

In response to a breach of trust, teachers implement "Responsive Circles" in which the classroom as a whole discusses an incident with the hopes of restoring community. Responsive circles engage students in the management of conflict that has affected many students or adults in the classroom. Students discuss feelings, identify who has been affected, and develop a plan to repair the harm and prevent future conflict. All people involved in the wrongdoing are expected to participate. This process aims to hold students accountable for breaching trust in the community.

Theoretical framework guiding RP-Observe

The fundamental tenets of RP are based on theory about an authoritative and developmentally sensitive approach to child development (Wachtel, 2012). In the 1960s, Diana Baumrind presented a typology of parenting styles and found that an authoritative style was associated with a range of positive outcomes (Baumrind, 1968, 1991). Baumrind (1991) conceptualized authoritative parenting as highly demanding and highly responsive. Respect for and cooperation with authority, according to Baumrind (1996), should be nurtured along with autonomous reasoning and independent thinking. This is particularly important for adolescents as they seek greater control in decision making (Smetana & Gaines, 1999) and expect fair and legitimate adult authority (Turiel, 2005). Adolescents are especially sensitive to issues of fairness and autonomy, so that efforts to manage and control their behavior must be tempered with efforts to demonstrate that they are regarded with respect. Baumrind's research spawned decades of research on authoritative parenting.

In a school setting, Authoritative Discipline Theory suggests than an authoritative approach to discipline combines both firm and fair enforcement of school rules (*structure*) and a concerted effort to communicate warmth and concern for the well-being of each student as an individual (*support*; Gregory & Cornell, 2009). According to this theory, neither structure nor support alone is sufficient to maintain a safe and orderly school climate. Students are most responsive to authority and more likely to invest in the community, when they experience a climate of support, high expectations/accountability, and fair process in which their ideas and opinions are taken seriously. In such a climate, student voice is honored and adults express care while remaining firm in shared expectations for behavior. This has implications for creating safer and more equitable schools in which students of all racial/ethnic groups, sexual identity, and gender expression/identity experience the school as fair and become invested in the school community. The authoritative approach to socializing adolescents infuses proactive and responsive RP circles. As such, RP-Observe is comprised of dimensions that measure the structure, support, and student voice displayed in circles.

Using *RP-Observe*, observers rate the *Structure*, *Support*, and *Student Voice* in proactive and restorative circles. Structure is measured through a single dimension, "Circle rules." Support is measured through four dimensions: "Positive teacher-student interactions," "Positive student-student interactions," "Student responsiveness" and "Teacher responsiveness." Student voice is measured through four dimensions: "Autonomy" "Relevancy," "Risk-taking," and "Problem-Solving."

The theoretical constructs guiding *RP-Observe* are as follows:

Structure → Circle rules

Support → Positive teacher-student and student-student interactions / Teacher and student responsiveness

Student Voice → Relevancy / Autonomy / Risk-taking / Problem-Solving
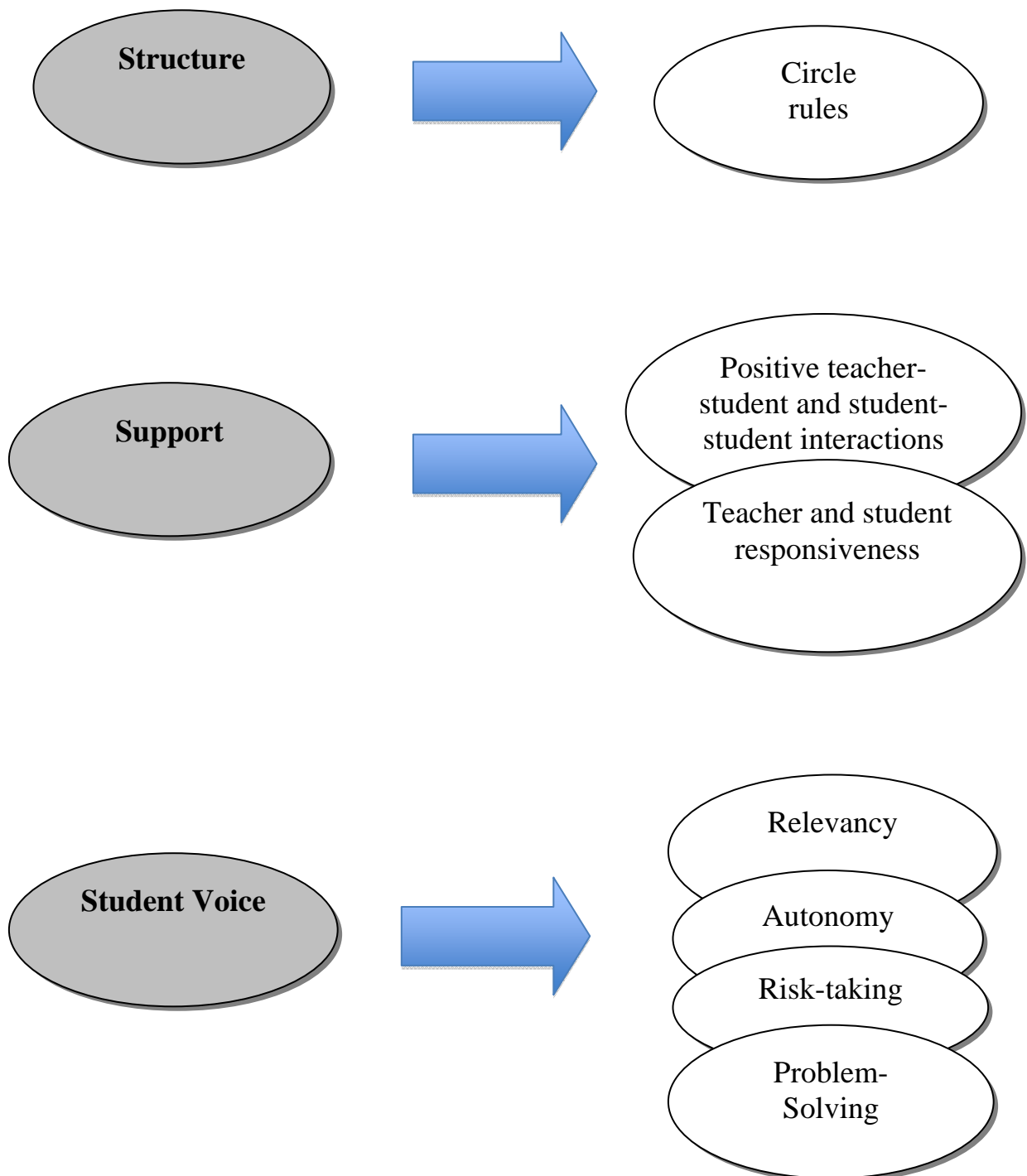
Why is RP-Observe needed? There are a handful of well-established observational tools that have been used to support teachers in improving their instruction. For instance, Pianta and colleagues (2008) have created the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Grossman and colleagues (Grossman et al., 2010) have developed the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation. Both are validated observational instruments used to examine the quality of classroom instruction and support. The tools have a broad function to examine a diverse range of processes in the classroom. Unlike these other tools, *RP-Observe* is *exclusively* designed for observations of RP circles. It cannot be used to observe all types of classroom activities and subject matter, which contrasts with the wider application of some observational systems (e.g., CLASS, Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Given the targeted purpose of *RP-Observe*, the description of each observed dimension is focused on the teacher and student behaviors an observer would see during RP circles.

RP-Observe aims to capture processes specific to proactive and responsive circles. Namely, students in circles take risks by disclosing meaningful and personal information and, in turn, students and teachers respond with empathy and acceptance. In theory, through this exchange, students and teachers can get to know each other, build trust with one another, and, ultimately develop a shared sense of community and accountability. *RP-Observe* aims to capture this process of risk-taking, disclosure, and acceptance. *RP-Observe* coding has also been shown to be distinct from CLASS when circles were double coded using each observational system. In a small sample of circles, the *RP-Observe* codes were not correlated with the CLASS codes.

Addition readings and resources on restorative practices

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Sample Coding Sheet

| Teacher ID:_____ | Coder name: _____ | Start Time: 00:00 | Coding Date:___/___/___ |
| Grade Level:_____ | Subject:_____ | End Time: 20:00 | |

Domain	Dimensions:	Description:	Rating (1-7)
Structure	**Circle Rules** Clear Circle Rules Fairness and Consistency Response to Rule Breaking		
Support	**Positive Teacher-Student Interactions** Positive Rapport Genuine Interest		
	Positive Student-Student Interactions Positive Rapport		
	Student Responsiveness Empathic Responses Acceptance		
	Teacher Responsiveness Encouraging Appropriate Disclosure Empathic Responses Acceptance		
Student Voice	**Autonomy** Student Ownership Teacher use of power Authentic Choice		
	Relevancy Meaningful Circle Content Personal Opinions		
	Risk taking Appropriate Personal disclosure		
	Problem Solving Problem Solving Steps Collaborative Effort		
Student Commitment	**Student Commitment** Student Focus Enthusiasm Comfort asking questions		

Descriptive		Yes	No
	Is this a proactive circle? Is there an instructional focus? Are most students and teachers in the shape of a circle?		
	Describe content of the circle (three sentences):		

| Sample Completed Coding Sheet | |

Teacher ID: ___133_____	Coder name: Master	Start Time: 00:00	Coding Date: 3/26/13
Grade Level: ___HS_____	Subject:_____	End Time: 20:00	

Domain	Dimensions:	Description:	Rating (1-7)
Structure	**Behavioral Management** Clear expectations/Proactive Fairness and Consistency Response to Rule Breaking	No behavior problems observed, students are quiet and listen to one another, shushes students to get attention and quiet with no rule-breaking thereafter	7
	Productivity Transitions Flow of circle process	Circle goes smoothly.	7
Support	**Positive Teacher-Student Interactions** Positive Affect Respect Genuine Interest	The teacher is calm and looks at students while the students speak, respectful towards students opinions. Seems interested but does not go as far as to make follow-up remarks on some student responses, there is one instance of shared laughter between the teacher and a student	5
	Positive Student-Student Interactions Positive Affect Respect	Students listen to one another and appear respectful by listening to one another, no positive affect shared amongst students in the circle	4
	Student Responsiveness Empathic Responses Acceptance	Students appear accepting by listening to one another but do not go further in acceptance, some students make eye contact with the person speaing or look at the speaker to show some lower levels of nonverbal empathy	3
	Teacher Responsiveness Encouraging Disclosure Empathic Responses Acceptance	Teacher encourages all students to share using the globe, one empathic response observed from teacher in relation to a student comment about his nephew having cancer. Teacher seems accepting of all responses at the end states they were nice responses, but she could have gone a step further to make students feel accepted	4
Student Voice	**Autonomy** Student Leadership Teacher use of power Authentic Choice Flexibility	Teacher controls how students stand in circle. She does state she and the class decided the globe was helpful. Teacher driven circle. Minimal flexibility observed when students say which circle they felt most interesting rather than most helpful.	2
	Relevancy Meaningful Connections Personal Opinions	Topic was reminiscing on past circles that were helpful for students, so students are able to share personal opinions. Connected to student's past experiences but teacher doesn't go as far to relate content to the present by asking follow-up questions. Circles and topics discussed were relevant to student life and world events.	5
	Risk taking Appropriate Personal disclosure	Some disclosure on discussing circles that were helpful in the past. Students disclosed information about themselves, even beyond what was asked of them (e.g. "my nephew has cancer"). Some students disclosed more personal items than others.	5
	Problem Solving Was problem solving observed in this circle? (yes/no) Problem Solving Steps Collaboration	None observed.	1
Student Outcome	**Student Engagement** Active Engagement Enthusiasm Comfort asking questions	Students seem interested in topic and engaged at times. Some students seem more enthusiastic than others, however all responses seem thoughtful. The students seemed comfortable asking questions.	4

		Yes	No
Descriptive	Is this a proactive circle?	X	
	Is there an instructional focus?		X
	Are most students and teachers in the shape of a circle?	X	
	Describe content of the circle (three sentences): Circle topic involves a review of past circles and which one was the most helpful.		