

**Integrating Restorative Strategies with Positive Behavior Support:**

**A Sarasota County School District Initiative**

**Evaluation of School Year 2016-2017**

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## Project Overview

The Sarasota County School District initiative, Integrating Restorative Strategies with Positive Behavior Support (PBS), was developed to help teachers and administration create a safe school environment through the techniques of restorative practices. This program was designed to be a component of the larger positive behavior support in use at the district. This program has served 331 teachers in multiple Sarasota county public elementary schools between 2014 and the Spring of 2016. In school year 2016-2017, the training initiative for using restorative strategies as a part of PBS continued. An additional 182 teachers, counselors and other instructional staff were trained at three elementary schools, four middle schools, one KG-8 school and the central office. It is the intention of this initiative that the restorative strategy skills used in combination with other effective instructional and behavioral practices will continue to promote academic success and decrease problematic behavior within the school environment. This report is an evaluation of the second phase of the Restorative Practices Project which occurred during school year 2016-2017 in Sarasota County Public Schools.

## Restorative Strategies

The Restorative Strategies Initiative was implemented in Sarasota County public schools to enhance the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) already in use for several years. PBS is a set of practices which recognizes and reinforces appropriate behavior thereby reducing the number of students exhibiting serious behavior problems. Restorative strategies were developed to help teachers and administrators establish a safe school environment, promote academic engagement, and reduce inappropriate behavior. This is accomplished through the use of specific restorative strategies that can be incorporated into daily work. The project objective is that through the use

of these strategies there will be an increase students' attendance, a reduction in school suspension and referrals and a decrease in problematic behaviors such as bullying. Restorative strategies address problems that could stunt the growth of students but instead allows these problems to be addressed in a safe way, so all children are able to reach their full potential within their school community. The concept of restorative strategies was derived from the practices of restorative justice, a concept developed in the criminal justice field. Restorative justice is the idea that offenders are held accountable for their actions, instead of just being punished. Offenders are held accountable for their crimes by encountering the people or communities they have harmed face-to-face. The research in restorative justice has demonstrated positive results for not only offenders but victims as well. Research also shows a reduction in reoffending, once completing the restorative justice process. Research has shown that the use of restorative practices in schools has resulted in significant improvements in behavior and the school environment. Restorative strategies in schools also helps build community, civic engagement, and relationships. It allows adults to do things with students, rather than to them or for them.

In the Sarasota County Public School system, restorative strategies are being used to: establish a safe learning environment, increase student engagement, address potential proactively, teach empathy, extend academic instruction, solve whole group and small group problems and select appropriate alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Restorative strategies are used through circles in the classroom. There are four circles adopted by the Sarasota County School District-wide initiative: community- building/ proactive RS circles, academic RS circles, responsive (targeted) RS circles and restorative meetings.

Restorative Strategies Training

The training model for school year 2016 – 2017 was similar to the first phase of the project. Trainings consisted of three sessions, a total of nine hours of face-to-face training and seven hours of practicum. Participants could receive up to 16 hours of in-service credit. Trainings were provided by a district program specialist, five guidance counselors and one teacher. A total of 182 participants completed Tier I training and were a combination of elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, elementary and middle school counselors, social workers, security aides, behavioral specialists and two principals. The trainings took place at nine locations, twice as many as the prior series of workshops. The locations were: The District Central Office at the Landings, Emma E. Booker Elementary, Gulf Gate Elementary School, Venice Elementary School, Brookside Middle School, Heron Creek Middle School, Sarasota Middle School, Venice Middle School and Laurel Nokomis, a KG-8 school.

Table 1  
Number of Participants at each Training Site  
School Year 2016-2017

Training Sites	Number of Participants who Received Credit for the Course
The Landings – Guidance Counselors	13
Emma E. Booker Elementary School	5
Gulf Gate Elementary School	25
Venice Elementary School	29
Brookside Middle School	26
Heron Creek Middle School	26
Sarasota Middle School	30
Venice Middle School	13
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	15
Total	182

Throughout the training the participants learned the different restorative strategies circles and how to implement them into the classrooms. The four circles yield different results and teachers learned when they need to use each one. The classroom building and proactive circle is used as the foundation and all other circles follow this model. A restorative strategies circle is a safer than usual space for discussion based on the use of the following key seven elements and roles: the keeper, the talking piece, values, consensus, ceremony, stages and storytelling. Although all four circles are used for different purposes, they all include the same seven elements: keeper, talking piece, values, consensus, ceremony, stages and storytelling. The keeper is to maintain the integrity of the circle expectations and “keeps” the circle process. The role is different from the teacher role and is a participant in the circle. The talking piece encourages respect, practices listening and allows the opportunity to speak with option of pass. Values is based on the principles of respect for all, listening for understanding, speaking from the heart, honor the talking piece and confidentiality of the individuals in the circle. Consensus allows the idea that the circle is a community in which they seek agreement. Ceremony involves the invitation, principles, questions and closing. Stages are the four stages needed to complete the circle, getting acquainted, building relationship, addressing issues and taking action. Storytelling allows each participant to tell a story and feel that they have been heard. Teachers and administrators are taught the importance of each circle and how to implement them into their classrooms. A restorative meeting / conference training was held for 36 district AP’s. Throughout this training participants learned what preparation needs to be completed before calling the conference, the script that has to be followed and the process of this conference.

## Participant Feedback

Participants from four training sites were asked to complete a training feedback survey. A total of 170 participants completed the survey about their experience during the training and reported whether they could implement what they learned. The response rate is shown below in Table 2. The overall response rate for survey completers relative to the number of participants who received credit for the training was 93%. Individual school response rates ranged from 66% to over 100 percent (some respondents did not receive credit but rated the training).

**Table 2**  
**Training Survey Response by Training Location**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Number who Received Credit for Training</b>	<b>Number who Completed Training Survey Response Rate</b>
The Landings	13	69% (n= 9)
E.E. Booker Elementary School	5	100% (n=5)
Gulf Gate Elementary School	25	92% (n=23)
Venice Elementary School	29	110%% (n=32)
Brookside Middle School	26	85% (n=22)
Heron Creek Middle School	26	103% (n=27)
Sarasota Middle School	30	100% (n=30)
Venice Middle School	13	92% (n=12)
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	15	66% (n=10)
All Training Locations	182	93% (n= 170)

Tables 3 through 14 below illustrate the twelve questions from the survey and the percentage of agree and strongly agree for each training site. Overall the ratings were overwhelmingly favorable for all questions at all schools. The majority of participants strongly agreed that the facilitators were well-prepared (93.5%) and the facilitators were helpful (94.7%). They reported that they were informed of the workshop objectives; felt the workshop lived up to expectations;

offered sufficient practice and opportunities for feedback; had appropriate content; and was of appropriate level of difficulty and paced correctly.

**Table 3**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**I was well informed about the objectives of this workshop.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	0.0%	89%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	8.7%	91.3%
Venice Elementary School	15.6%	84.4%
Brookside Middle School	9.1%	86.4%
Heron Creek Middle School	14.8%	85.2%
Sarasota Middle School	16.7%	80.0%
Venice Middle School	16.7%	83.3%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	0.0%	100%
Total	11.8%	86.5%

**Table 4**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**This workshop lived up to my expectations.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	33.3%	66.6%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	8.7%	92.0%
Venice Elementary School	12.5%	87.5%
Brookside Middle School	31.8%	63.6%
Heron Creek Middle School	29.6%	70.4%
Sarasota Middle School	33.3%	66.7%
Venice Middle School	8.3%	91.7%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	10%	90%
Total	21.2%	78.2%



**Table 5**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The content is relevant to my job.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	66.6%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100.0%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	8.7%	87.0%
Venice Elementary School	12.5%	87.5%
Brookside Middle School	31.8%	63.6%
Heron Creek Middle School	29.6%	70.4%
Sarasota Middle School	40.0%	56.7%
Venice Middle School	16.7%	83.3%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	10.0%	90.0%
Total	21.8%	75.3%

**Table 6**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The Training Activities Stimulated My Learning**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	22.2%	66.6%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	21.7%	78.3%
Venice Elementary School	25.0%	75.0%
Brookside Middle School	40.9%	54.5%
Heron Creek Middle School	18.5%	77.8%
Sarasota Middle School	26.7%	70.0%
Venice Middle School	16.7%	83.3%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	30.0%	70.0%
Total	24.7%	72.9%

**Table 7**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The activities in this workshop gave me sufficient practice and feedback.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	77.7%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	13.0%	87.0%
Venice Elementary School	12.5%	87.5%
Brookside Middle School	22.7%	68.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	22.2%	77.8%
Sarasota Middle School	33.3%	66.7%
Venice Middle School	25.0%	75.0%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	30.0%	70.0%
Total	20.6%	77.6%

**Table 8**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The difficulty level of this workshop was appropriate.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	22.2%	77.7%
E. E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	8.7%	91.3%
Venice Elementary School	3.1%	96.9%
Brookside Middle School	18.2%	72.7%
Heron Creek Middle School	11.1%	88.9%
Sarasota Middle School	23.3%	76.7%
Venice Middle School	25.0%	75.0%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	0.0%	100%
Total	12.9%	85.9%

**Table 9**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The pace of this workshop was appropriate.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	88.8%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	26.1%	73.9%
Venice Elementary School	3.1%	93.8%
Brookside Middle School	22.7%	63.6%
Heron Creek Middle School	25.9%	74.1%
Sarasota Middle School	33.3%	63.3%
Venice Middle School	16.7%	83.3%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	20.0%	80.0%
Total	20.0%	77.1%

**Table 10**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The facilitators were well-prepared.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	77.7%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Venice Elementary School	3.1%	96.9%
Brookside Middle School	4.8%	95.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	11.1%	88.9%
Sarasota Middle School	6.7%	93.3%
Venice Middle School	%	100%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	20.0%	80.0%
Total	5.9%	93.5%

**Table 11**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The facilitators were helpful.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	0.0%	88.8%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100.0%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	4.3%	95.7%
Venice Elementary School	0.0%	100.0%
Brookside Middle School	4.8%	95.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	11.1%	88.9%
Sarasota Middle School	10.0%	90.0%
Venice Middle School	0.0%	100.0%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	0.0%	100.0%
Total	4.7%	94.7%

**Table 12**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**I accomplished the objectives of this workshop.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	66.6%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100.0%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	26.1%	69.6%
Venice Elementary School	6.3%	87.5%
Brookside Middle School	22.7%	68.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	29.6%	70.4%
Sarasota Middle School	30.0%	70.0%
Venice Middle School	8.3%	91.7%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	10.0%	90.0%
Total	19.4%	76.5%

**Table 13**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	33.3%	55.5%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	17.4%	78.3%
Venice Elementary School	6.3%	93.8%
Brookside Middle School	27.3%	68.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	25.9%	74.1%
Sarasota Middle School	33.3%	66.7%
Venice Middle School	8.3%	91.7%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	10.0%	90.0%
Total	20.0%	78.2%

**Table 14**

**Percent Rating Agree/Strongly Agree by Training Location**

**The workshop was a good way for me to learn this content.**

Site	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Landings	1.1%	77.7%
E.E. Booker Elementary School	0.0%	100.0%
Gulf Gate Elementary School	8.7%	91.3%
Venice Elementary School	6.3%	93.8%
Brookside Middle School	27.3%	68.2%
Heron Creek Middle School	22.2%	77.8%
Sarasota Middle School	16.7%	83.3%
Venice Middle School	0.0%	100%
Laurel Nokomis KG-8 School	20.0%	80.0%
Total	14.1%	84.7%

Practicum

Each training participant was also required to complete a seven-hour practicum where they implemented circles in their own or another teacher’s classroom for hands-on experience. Afterwards, they completed a Restorative Strategies Log which was collected.

Overall most staff who conducted circles were teachers. One hundred and fifty-one (88.3%) teachers, one principal (0.6%), three (1.8%) behavior specialists, nine guidance counselors (5.3%) and four (2.3%) other support staff reported conducting circles at 15 elementary schools, five middle schools, two elementary/middle combination schools, a gifted school, an ESE center and one high school. Circles were conducted at all elementary and middle school grades and one respondent indicated they worked with grades 10-12.

**Table 15**  
**Number and Percent of Circle Facilitators by School**

Participating Schools	Frequency	Percent
Alta Vista Elementary	1	.6%
Ashton Elementary	5	2.9%
Atwater Elementary	3	1.8%
Cranberry Elementary	2	1.2%
E.E. Booker Elementary	4	2.3%
Garden Elementary	2	1.2%
Glenallen Elementary	1	.6%
Gocio Elementary	2	1.2%
Gulf Gate Elementary	8	4.7%
Lamarque Elementary	3	1.8%
Philippi Shores Elementary	1	.6%
SSIS Elementary	1	.6%
Tatum Ridge Elementary	3	1.8%
Tuttle Elementary	2	1.2%
Venice Elementary	7	4.1%
Heron Creek Middle	24	14.0%
McIntosh Middle	13	7.6%
Sarasota Middle	19	11.1%
Venice Middle	12	7.0%
Woodland Middle	8	4.7%
Laurel Nokomis Combination	18	10.5%
Pine View	2	1.2%
Oak Park	2	1.2%
Imagine PR Combination	3	1.8%
Venice High School	1	.6%
District or Non - Identified	9	5.3%

The average number of circles conducted was 6.22 and ranged from 1 to 20. Most facilitators reported conducting six circles. The average length of circles was 21.53 and ranged between 7 and 60 minutes. Table 16 reports the average number of circles and the average length of circles by school. Nine facilitators did not indicate their school.

**Table 16**  
**Average Number and Length of Circles by School**

Participating Schools	Average Number	Average Length Minutes
Alta Vista Elementary	7	20
Ashton Elementary	7	19
Atwater Elementary	5	25
Cranberry Elementary	6	25
E.E. Booker Elementary	6	17
Garden Elementary	5	15
Glenallen Elementary	7	17
Gocio Elementary	7	17
Gulf Gate Elementary	6	21
Lamarque Elementary	7	27
Philippi Shores Elementary	6	25
SSIS Elementary	6	40
Tatum Ridge Elementary	6	20
Tuttle Elementary	7	27
Venice Elementary	6	23
Heron Creek Middle	7	22
McIntosh Middle	5	21
Sarasota Middle	6	20
Venice Middle	7	24
Woodland Middle	7	25
Laurel Nokomis Combination	6	17
Pine View	6	36
Oak Park	6	23
Imagine PR Combination	6	19
Venice High School	10	23
District or Non - Identified	5	23

During Tier 1 Training, the participants were trained in the use of various types of circles. When they completed the Restorative Strategies Log training log, they were asked to report which type of circles they implemented. The types of circles listed most often included: community building/proactive, academic, followed by whole group and small group responsive. Table 17 lists these types of circles with a brief definition.

**Table 17**

**Types of Circles Implemented**

Type of Circle	Definition
Community Building / Proactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and student engagement</li> <li>• Avoid problem behaviors</li> <li>• Builds community</li> <li>• Safe place for students discussion</li> <li>• Helps students develop empathy</li> <li>• Develops understanding of how challenging behaviors impact everyone</li> </ul>
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase academic performance</li> <li>• Formative assessment – prior knowledge, comprehension checks</li> <li>• Depth of knowledge opportunities</li> <li>• Predications, expressing opinions, pre-planning for projects and writing</li> <li>• Everyone has an opportunity to participate</li> </ul>
Responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair the harm (Punishment vs. Natural Consequences)</li> <li>• Address problem behavior (whole class or small group)</li> <li>• Use specific high- quality questions to explore challenging circumstances</li> <li>• Issues to use responsive circle for: bullying, stealing, behavior problems and poor social skills</li> </ul>
Restorative Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly agree to appropriate alternative to or reduction of out-of-school suspension.</li> </ul>

Post-Practicum Survey

After participating in the practicum and facilitating circles, training participants were asked to complete a digital survey which included several questions about their experiences conducting



community building/proactive, academic and whole and small group restorative circles in the months after the training. This additional survey was administered to determine how the participants had been implementing circles with their students as a regular component of classroom practice. One hundred and three trainees responded to this additional survey. This included 89 teachers, 6 counselors, 2 administrators and 6 other educational staff. Fifty- nine respondents indicated that they worked at a middle school and 33 indicated that they worked at elementary schools. Two individuals worked at a high school and nine respondents did not indicate school level. The respondents to this survey represented trainees from all training sites. The summarized results to these survey questions appear below.

Respondents indicated which type of circle they utilized in their classrooms. Table 18 depicts that they used the community – building / pro-active restorative circles most frequently. Almost 78% percent used this type of circle and 63% used academic circles.

**Table 18**  
**Type and Frequency of Circle Used in the Classroom**

Type of Circle	Percent Indicating did use Circle	Percent of Respondents Indicating Frequency of Circle Use			
		Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Other or No Answer
Community – Building / Pro-Active Restorative Circles	77.7% (80)	23.3% (24)	39.8% (41)	8.7 (9)	28.1% (29)
Academic Restorative Circles	63.1% (65)	13.6% (14)	35.9% (37)	5.8%(6)	44.7% (46)

Respondents were also asked how frequently they used Community Building/ Pro-Active and Academic Restorative Circles. Almost 40% use them monthly; 23% reported using them weekly and 8.7% indicated they rarely used this circle. When asked why they did not use this type of circle, a few respondents indicated that they did not have a classroom; the students were not cooperative, they did not have enough time, or that they did not have administrative support. Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that they use academic restorative circles. Almost 36% reported using them once a month, 13.6% reported using them once a week and 5.8% rarely used this circle. A few respondents indicated that they were using academic circles as appropriate when needed. Several individuals indicated that students were not cooperative, there was not enough time, they were not in a classroom and that the administration was not supportive as reasons for not using academic circles.

Training participants were asked if they agreed/disagreed with several statements about Community Building-Proactive Circles. Their responses are summarized in Table 19. Between 69% and 75.7% of survey respondents agreed that their students were eager to participate in circles, had improved engagement, were more empathetic and had increased respect towards each other, had improved peer relationships and that there was a more positive classroom climate. Almost 76% of the respondents agreed that they gained insights about their students that effectively informed instruction. There was less agreement about disruptive behaviors and student's ability to resolve their own issues. 42.8% of the respondents agreed that the use of community building/ proactive circles resulted in improved attendance. Sixty percent agreed that their students exhibited fewer disruptive behaviors.

**Table 19**

**As a Result of Community Building -Proactive Circles:**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	No Answer
My students seemed eager to participate in the circle.	49.5% (51)	26.2% (27)	1.9% (2)	0% (0)	22.3% (23)
Student attendance has improved.	7.8% (8)	35.0% (36)	17.5% (18)	12.6% (13)	27.2% (28)
Student learning engagement has improved.	19.4% (20)	49.5% (51)	3.9% (4)	2.9% (3)	24.3% (25)
I gain insight about my students that effectively informs my teaching.	48.5% (50)	27.2% (28)	1.0% (1)	0% (0)	23.3% (24)
My students exhibit fewer disruptive behaviors.	14.6% (15)	45.6% (47)	12.6% (13)	2.9% (3)	24.3% (25)
My students are able to resolve their own issues.	11.7% (12)	47.6% (49)	13.6% (14)	3.9% (4)	23.3% (24)
My students are more empathetic towards one another.	27.2% (28)	43.7% (45)	4.9% (5)	1.0% (1)	23.3% (24)
My students show an increased respect toward one another.	21.4% (22)	47.6% (49)	5.8% (6)	1.9% (2)	23.3% (24)
My students demonstrate improved peer relationships.	20.4% (21)	49.5% (51)	4.9% (5)	1.9% (2)	23.3% (24)
The climate of my classroom has changed for the better.	33.0% (34)	39.8% (41)	2.9% (3)	1.0% (1)	23.3% (24)

Training participants were asked if they agreed/disagreed with several statements about Academic Circles. Their responses are summarized in Table 20. Over 55% of the respondents did not answer these questions. Over 41% of survey respondents agreed that their students seemed more comfortable responding to questions about academic content, and were more engaged during instruction. Almost 39% of respondents wrote that they easily incorporated academic circles into their instruction.

**Table 20**

**As a Result of Implementing Academic Circles:**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	No Answer
My students seemed to me more comfortable responding to questions about academic content	21.4% (22)	22.3% (23)	1.0% (1)	0% (0)	55.3% (57)
My students seem more engaged during academic instruction	18.4% (19)	23.3% (24)	2.9% (3)	0% (0)	55.3% (57)
I am easily able to incorporate academic circles into my instruction.	22.3% (23)	16.5% (17)	5.8% (6)	0% (0)	55.3% (57)

Training participants were also asked if they used responsive circles and their frequency of use to respond to behavior problems. These results are depicted in Table 21. Thirty-five and 31 percent of respondents indicated that they used whole-group and small-group circles respectively. Most respondents did not provide an answer to their frequency of using whole-group (66%) or small group circles, (69.9%) Six percent of respondents indicated that they use the whole-group responsive circle for most issues, 13.6% used it for some issues and 14.6% used it for few issues. Four percent of respondents indicated that they use the small-group responsive circles for most issues, 16.5% used it for some issues and 9.7% used it for a few issues.

**Table 21**  
**Frequency of Responsive Circles Used in the Classroom**

Type of Circle	Percent Indicating did use Circle	Percent of Respondents Indicating the Frequency of using Whole and Small Group Responsive Circles			
		Most Issues	Some Issues	A Few Issues	No Answer
Whole – Group Responsive Circles	35.0% (36)	5.8% (6)	13.6% (14)	14.6 (15)	66% (68)
Small – Group Responsive Circles	31.1% (32)	3.9% (4)	16.5% (17)	9.7% (10)	69.9% (72)

Training participants were asked if they agreed/disagreed with several statements about Responsive Circles. Their responses are summarized in Table 22. Over 57% of students did not answer this question. Over 42% of survey respondents agreed that they gained insight about their students to inform instruction, understood the causes of their behavior and were able to actively include students in addressing problematic behaviors. Almost 38% of teachers believed they spent less time disciplining students. Almost 39% indicated that they made fewer disciplinary referrals and 39.8% reported that their students made more positive behavioral choices.

**Table 22**

**As a Result of Implementing Responsive Circles:**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
I gain insight about my students that effectively inform my teaching.	32% (33)	10.7% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)	57.3% (59)
I better understand the causes of my students' behavior choices.	27.2% (28)	15.5% (16)	0% (0)	0% (0)	57.3% (59)
I am better able to actively include students in addressing problematic behaviors.	26.2 (27)	16.5% (17)	0% (0)	0% (0)	57.3% (59)
I spend less time disciplining students.	16.5 (17)	21.4% (22)	2.9% (3)	1% (1)	58.3% (60)
I make fewer disciplinary referrals.	18.4% (19)	20.4% (21)	2.9% (3)	1% (1)	57.3% (59)
My students make positive behavior choices.	20.4% (21)	19.4% (20)	2.9% (3)	0% (0)	57.3% (59)

Student Outcome Data

Research has supported that using restorative circles in schools could influence a decrease in negative student behavior. Educators are hopeful that the use of restorative circles as part of a larger positive behavioral support plan will ultimately have a positive effect on the school culture as demonstrated by a reduction in suspension and student absenteeism over time. Although a direct causal relationship is not implied, it would be interesting to determine if schools whose teachers experienced training and reported circle use during school year 2016-2017 have demonstrated an overall decrease in suspension and absenteeism rates from school year 2016-2017 to school year 2017-2018. Table 23 illustrates the suspension and absenteeism rates across two years at schools where teachers reported using circles as part of classroom practice.

**Table 23****Suspension Count an Absentee Rate by School****SY 2016-2017 and SY 2017-2018****Based on data for the first 145 days of school**

Participating Schools	Suspension Count	Suspension Count	Absentee Rate	Absentee Rate
	SY 2016-2017	SY 2017-2018	SY 2016-2017	SY 2017-2018
Alta Vista Elementary	75	40	2.50%	3.08%
Ashton Elementary	3	0	2.72%	2.85%
Atwater Elementary	9	12	3.32%	3.09%
Cranberry Elementary	18	16	2.9%	2.87%
E.E. Booker Elementary	62	56	3.17%	4.07%
Garden Elementary	37	11	2.43%	2.71%
Glenallen Elementary	19	8	2.88%	3.21%
Gocio Elementary	37	40	2.69%	2.87%
Gulf Gate Elementary	9	5	2.99%	3.13%
Lamarque Elementary	13	4	2.77%	3.50%
Philippi Shores Elementary	44	39	2.94%	2.89%
SSIS Elementary	50	31	5.08%	4.82%
Tatum Ridge Elementary	9	20	2.88%	2.84%
Tuttle Elementary	26	22	2.11%	2.52%
Venice Elementary	7	10	2.41%	2.96%
Heron Creek Middle	130	136	3.23%	4.13%
McIntosh Middle	76	96	3.42%	3.75%
Sarasota Middle	45	29	3.10%	3.29%
Venice Middle	53	45	3.56%	3.49%
Woodland Middle	38	81	3.75%	3.81%
Laurel Nokomis Combination	39	34	2.92%	3.11%
Pine View	23	11	2.84%	3.14%
Oak Park	75	46	5.25%	5.44%
Imagine PR Combination	48	0	3.45%	4.03%
Venice High School	102	59	4.0%	4.48%
All Schools Above	1047	851	3.13%	3.42%
District	1974	1937	3.49%	3.76%

For the entire district, the number of suspensions during this time period decreased from 1974 to 1937, or by 37 incidents. The number of suspension incidents at the schools where facilitators practiced circles decreased by 196. Eighteen of the 25 schools where the facilitators practiced circles reduced the number of suspension incidents from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018. Although promising, the number of students within the school and the number of prior faculty trained was not considered overall. The absentee rate trend across the two years for all the schools who conducted circles and for the district overall increased slightly. In all but two cases this increase was less than half of a percentage point. This increase is most likely due to the hurricane early in school year 2017-2018. Therefore, it appears across the two years, that the absent rate has remained consistently low.

### Conclusion

Restorative practices as part of PBIS helps students choose appropriate behaviors and to resolve issues before they lead into larger behavioral problems. This can be accomplished in a non-punitive manner. The current evaluation investigated the school year 2016-2017 implementation of restorative strategies. One hundred and eight-two participants attended a three-session training conducted at nine locations. Questionnaires completed by participants rated all aspects of the training highly, particularly the preparedness and helpfulness of the presenters.

Participants were tasked with conducting four types of circles at their schools as part of a practicum. One hundred and seventy-six educators, mostly teachers, conducted: community-building proactive circles, academic circles and whole and/or small group responsive circles at 25 elementary, middle and combinations schools throughout the county. Facilitators reported that they used the community – building / pro-active restorative circles most frequently. Almost 78% percent used this type of circle and 63% used academic circles. Thirty-five and 31 percent of



respondents indicated that they used whole-group and small-group circles respectively. When using community-building circles, between 69% and 75.7% of survey respondents agreed that their students were eager to participate in circles, had improved engagement, were more empathetic and had increased respect towards each other, had improved peer relationships and that there was a more positive classroom climate. Almost 76% of the respondents agreed that they gained insights about their students that effectively informed instruction. When asked why respondents did not use circles, several indicated that they are working up to it but needed more practice. Others indicated that they have not had time or that they were not classroom teachers and did not have ready access to implement circles. Including a measure of student behavior in the evaluation proved difficult. Since restorative strategies is part of other PBIS activities, a direct causal link between this training and practice to improved behavior and improved attendance is not statistical. However, many of the schools where facilitators have used circles have experienced a decline in incidents of suspension from school year 2016-2017 to school year 2017-2018 and hold low absentee rates across both years which is very promising.