1   **Restorative practice in physical education: Shifting the norm from punitive to reparative**

2

3   **Abstract:**

4   Traditionally schools have been spaces that are punitive and have strict behavior guidelines that

5   include zero-tolerance policies. Thus, behavior management practices blame students and

6   position them as rule-breakers. Consequently, all students but particularly those that come from

7   complex backgrounds, minority groups, and vulnerable home situations are forced into harsh

8   disciplinary regimes. However, restorative practice was introduced to re-envision practices in

9   schools to become more holistic, harmonious, emotionally-intelligent spaces and take into

10   consideration the real lives of young people. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview

11   of what restorative practice is and the research carried out in physical education around this

12   important topic. Further, we will present how restorative practice can be used in physical

13   education settings in order to break away from traditional behavior management techniques and

14   challenge the status quo for a more equitable, social, and emotional norm in schools today.

15

Traditional schooling

Traditional schooling is a place of conformity for both students and staff alike. Students are expected to learn the same content, sit the same examinations and more importantly behave in the same way (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). These are just a few examples that are presented as normative within the school environment and the 'expected' behavior will often be outlined within the school behavior guidelines. Failure to conform is often responded to by way of punitive measures such as detentions or expulsion/ suspension from school. Practices such as these cannot be inclusive or equitable as they do not recognize the individual needs of each student and prevent in-class social interaction and learning from occurring.

The introduction of zero-tolerance policies within schools called for mandatory expulsions for any pupils found in possession of a firearm. Initially, all schools adopted this approach after the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act was passed, simply put, if you committed an offence, you would receive the outlined punishment of a one-year exclusion regardless (Losinski, Katsiyannis, Ryan & Baughan, 2014). However, use of this policy seemed to evolve to a point where minor infringements were punished using this draconian method, which has been linked to what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). This regime has been found to disproportionately have an impact on students from complex backgrounds, minority groups, students with special educational needs and students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (Mallett, 2016).

The unequal distribution of power within schools has enabled the traditional methods of schooling to be maintained and reproduced, resulting in an unjust environment. Schools are not neutral environments (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) and educators who have recognized this, are attempting to challenge this imbalance by engaging in social justice research and methods of

39   repair implementation with schools. In an attempt to move away from the hierarchical and

40   regimented structure that can be found within schools which puts the power solely in the hands

41   of the teacher, a minority group of educators have been implementing democratic and

42   transformative teaching practices, which reimagine traditional behavioral approaches (Author,

43   2019a,b). This method encourages input from students, encourages inclusivity and provides a

44   way to share power within the classroom. A proven, effective example of this can be seen by the

45   incorporation of student voice to engage disengaged students (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010;

46   Mitchell, Gray & Inchley, 2013).

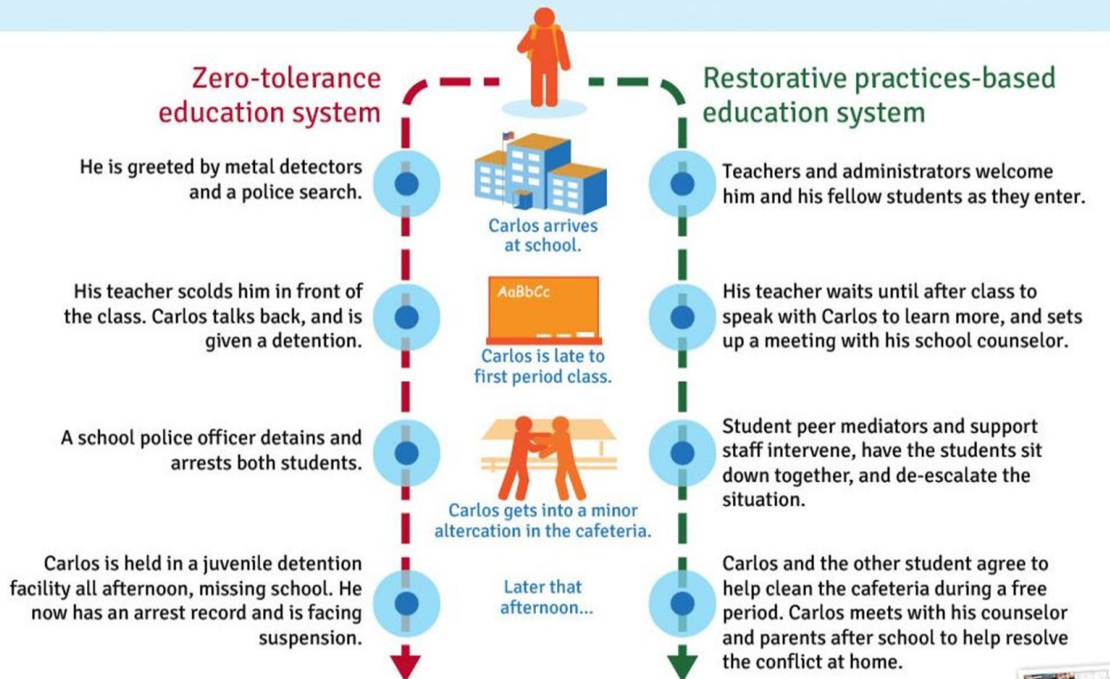47   **Restorative practice**

48   Restorative practice is built around various processes that act as preventative measures for

49   conflict/ harm by building healthy relationships and act as responsive measures after conflict/

50   harm in order to repair relationships. Restorative justice is a term that is often referred to in the

51   context of restorative practice. This method differs from restorative practice as it serves as a

52   responsive approach by repairing harm after the wrongdoing (Wachtel, 2016). It is important to

53   identify this difference as restorative justice and restorative practice can sometimes be used

54   interchangeably.

55   Restorative practice is an alternative method of managing behavior. It aims to change the

56   school climate and beyond by encouraging social responsibility and allowing students to learn

57   from their behavior (Macready, 2009). An example of how restorative practice used within a

58   school setting can provide an alternative outcome for students as demonstrated in figure one.

59   Figure one signifies the multifaceted approach involved in restorative practice including school

60   members, students, and community workers. Thus, encouraging a holistic community culture

61   focused on supporting young people.

62   At present, there is limited research on restorative practices used within physical

63   education and sporting environments. Although, due to the nature of the subject being largely

64   practical, it is an environment where conflict is likely to occur in an array of movement

65   approaches including activities and games. A recent approach to the application of restorative

66   practice in sport was the development of the Restorative Youth Sports (RYS) model (Hemphill,

67   Janke, Gordon & Farrar, 2018). The model involved three processes; restorative sport practices,

68   awareness circles, and team meetings. Restorative sport practices sought to build a relationship

69   between adult leaders and the youth with the hope that the young people exhibit the following

70   behaviors; respect, effort, self-direction, leadership and transfer. The use of awareness circles

71   created a space to serve multiple functions; to provide an opportunity to solve problems, to repair

72   harm and to act as a preventative measure of further harm. Team meetings provided coaches/

73   teachers with an opportunity to address conflict or harm that may occur with the aim of restoring

74   the team. These processes combined restorative practice with the Teaching Personal and Social

75   Responsibility through sports (TPSR) framework (Hellison, 2011), as building positive

76   relationships are the core of both practices. Ultimately, the model aimed to promote the holistic

77   development of young people, human decency and importantly put young people first, rather

78   than their sporting prowess.

A Tale of Two Schools

Carlos had a heated argument with his parents before leaving for school, so he's running late. Let's see the difference that restorative policies and practices can make.

Zero-tolerance education system

Carlos arrives at school.
He is greeted by metal detectors and a police search.

Carlos is late to first period class.
His teacher scolds him in front of the class. Carlos talks back, and is given a detention.

Carlos gets into a minor altercation in the cafeteria.
A school police officer detains and arrests both students.

Later that afternoon...
Carlos is held in a juvenile detention facility all afternoon, missing school. He now has an arrest record and is facing suspension.

Restorative practices-based education system

Teachers and administrators welcome him and his fellow students as they enter.

His teacher waits until after class to speak with Carlos to learn more, and sets up a meeting with his school counselor.

Student peer mediators and support staff intervene, have the students sit down together, and de-escalate the situation.

Carlos and the other student agree to help clean the cafeteria during a free period. Carlos meets with his counselor and parents after school to help resolve the conflict at home.

79

80 Figure 1 – A Tale of Two Schools, an infographic of restorative practice used within school.

81 Taken from Schott Foundation. (2014). *A Tale of Two Schools* [infographic]. Retrieved from

82 http://schottfoundation.org/sites/default/files/rp-carlos.jpg

83

84 More specifically within physical education, Author (2019b) highlighted the use of share circles

85 within physical education lessons and a teacher employing restorative practice as part of

86 everyday pedagogy. Each lesson students shared their thoughts about a topic or personal

87 experience and had open discussions before and after each class time. This was shown to be an

88 effective method for building student rapport and for developing an understanding of others.

89 Another restorative practice shared were alternate discipline approaches for student behavior.

90 The following three steps were adopted by the teacher: (1) recognize the harm, (2) repair the

91 harm, and (3) prevent the harm from reoccurring. Thus, the teacher would not shout or punish

92 the student, instead, any conflict was dealt with open discussion and walking around the outside

93 of the gym, a space where students knew they could go to whenever they felt like conflict was

94 going to occur. Consequently, Author (2019a) suggested that students tended to be positively

95 involved in lessons and rarely typical misbehavior or student disruption occurred.

96   Despite these studies, there is still much work to do to inform and integrate restorative

97 practices into physical education, because as social justice advocates, we believe our aim should

98 involve strengthening our relationships within the broader school and community, as well as the

99 adult and student relationships within the confines of our teaching areas. Restorative practices

100 are an effective tool in strengthening those interpersonal relationships. The remainder of this

101 article aims to explore in greater depth how physical educators could contribute to shifting the

102 normative from punitive to reparative.

103 **Culture and climate**

104 Schools are complex places and as critical educators engaged in praxis we must always be

105 reflecting on and refining our teaching practices for our students. When we engage in praxis it is

106 important to look at both the school's culture and its climate. Implementing restorative practices

107 in our own pedagogy can be difficult but implementing it as a school-wide initiative would be

108 more beneficial. Thus, we must ascertain whether we can implement it at a whole-school level or

109 consider is the school focused on zero-tolerance policies, banning recess, and silent corridor

110 policies? Further, are staff at the school willing to learn new concepts and paradigms of sharing

111 the classroom and attempting democratic teaching styles? If your school won't adopt a new

112 initiative, then there are several things you can do as an educator. First, we must consider our

113 pedagogy.

114   As educators, we think the easiest part of restorative practice we can adopt is to change

115   our practice. That is how and what we teach. We say this is the easiest part because we have an

116   element of control over how we deliver the curriculum and how it is presented to our students.

117   This is not to state that the content is not dictated to us, usually through state or national

118   standards, it is to say that most of us do not have scripted lessons that must be taught word for

119   word. This gives us the scope to create meaningful lessons that will strengthen the relationships

120   between us and the students, the students and their peers, and all participants (including the

121   teacher) with the content.

122   *Power with*

123   In changing our practice, we must consider the power dynamic of our class space and when it

124   comes to how we teach we must consider the idea of shared power or power with. Erwin (2004)

125   states that 'power with' is to be in cooperation with others rather than attempting to control

126   others. As an example, students could create classroom rules, expectations, and assessments

127   rather than doing whatever the teacher has requested as part of an authoritative routine. Weimer

128   (2002, p23-24) has articulated seven ways that we can check our power balance:

129   1. Who decides what (content) students learn in the course?

130   2. Who controls the pace (calendar) at which content is covered?

131   3. Who determines the structures (assignments, tests) through which the material will be

132   mastered?

133   4. Who sets the conditions for learning (things like attendance policies and assignment

134   deadlines)?

135   5. Who evaluates (grades) the quantity and quality of the learning that has occurred?

6. In the classroom itself, who controls and regulates the flow of communication, deciding who gets the opportunity to speak, when, and for how long?

7. Overall, who makes all (or even most) of the important decisions about learning for students?

As health and physical educators, typically our states have a curriculum that has been approved by the Board of Education making our content a prescribed exchange between teacher and student. The problem with this pre-approved curriculum is the lack of individual student input within our diverse schooling contexts - teaching in the same state can vary from school to school and no child is the same. It is our responsibility to create *with* our student's ways in which they can connect with material even though they may initially dislike the content. Moving from a one size fits all gatekeeping approach to getting to know our students and asking for their input.

Curriculum creation and adaptability

Part of a restorative approach could include covering curriculums with many activities; together the teacher and the students could create units of study that the students will find meaningful and want to engage in and are relevant for their local community. Unlike tested areas, we do not have the pressure of forcing our students to consume a certain amount of information before the summative state or federal test. This breadth will allow teachers to work with students to create curriculum and units that fit for that class, demonstrating Erwin's (2004) power with students.

Initially, there could be resistance to students creating curricula with teachers. After all, what if students only want to play soccer or basketball every day of the year? Where would the students learn new material and be exposed to new activities and ideas? This is where the skill of the teacher as facilitator and negotiator comes in. Teachers should articulate to students in an open, honest manner that activities should have a specific time allotted. In our experience

159   students thrive from the responsibility of curriculum creation and understand the teacher's

160   suggestions more willingly. Consequently, they have diverse experiences and become willing to

161   try new things or overcome their hesitations about a unit or activity when they know that you are

162   willing to provide opportunities that they have a positive association with.

163   A teacher who opens the class up to this negotiated curriculum creation must be

164   adaptable. For example, if a class of students wanted to create a unit on ballroom dancing (none

165   of our specialisms) we would be woefully unprepared to teach the class. However, we would

166   have to spend time creating the unit from scratch and draw on student knowledge and

167   experiences. One underutilized resource is the students in our class. If the students want to

168   participate in an activity or unit the chances are that they may be doing this outside of our class

169   already. If this is the case, we can draw on their knowledge base and those that are connected to

170   them. Furthermore, we can reach out to our professional network of teachers and resources

171   online. There are vast resources on the internet and the connections that exist within the physical

172   education community allows teachers to find units that have already been created. In addition to

173   these resources, the internet allows us to find tutorials and resources that will supplement our

174   knowledge.

175   Adaptability to create new units that we as the teacher may be unfamiliar with leads to

176   another outcome that is rarely discussed. We as teachers will learn and grow with the students. If

177   we take the earlier example of ballroom dancing, we would learn as much or more than the

178   students. They would see us in the role of the learner as well as a collaborator in the

179   dissemination of information. Ultimately, creating much deeper levels with the student-teacher

180   relationship.

181   *Assessment as shared practice*

182   Weimer (2002) suggested, we should consider who evaluates the learning. Teachers are in

183   legitimate positions of power and typically are required to produce assessment results for

184   monitoring and accountability purposes. However, too often we have seen assessment used for

185   kit, behavior, and effort. Whereas, assessment is a social process (Hay & Penney, 2013) and

186   should be openly discussed with students and be both formative and summative in nature. If we

187   as teachers are the only ones doing the assessments, then we reduce the social element of

188   assessment to hierarchical nature; teacher power increases and student power decreases

189   significantly. Consequently, positive restorative relationships that have been built on sharing

190   power could be in jeopardy. In line with a restorative approach, we could create assessments that

191   involve students and people in our local community. For example, portfolios assessed by

192   community groups or the use of peer assessment, where students have designed how they are

193   assessed at the beginning of units. In addition, as Author (2019a) described, teachers can use

194   plagnets, seesaw, and individual whiteboards to increase the dialogical aspect of assessments.

195   **Feedback**

196   Feedback is vital to a restorative program. We believe that it is essential that students feel valued

197   in the process. When we punitively punish our students by delivering feedback in a manner that

198   makes them feel unaccepted by either the person giving the feedback or those who witness the

199   punitive interaction students can feel rejected. Feedback should be delivered in a manner that is

200   understood by the students as one way they could grow.

201   All feedback to students should be viewed by all parties as reflections of growth because

202   feedback is reciprocal. In a restorative program it is important for both the students and teachers

203   to engage in feedback. Feedback allows both students and teachers to communicate with each

204   other in order to address conflicts as they arise. An example of this could be regular surveys or

205   anonymous questionnaires for students. This gives the students a chance to communicate clearly

206   with the teacher about how they are viewing the class, but also provides the teacher and

207   opportunity to review and improve the class based on the feedback.

208   Furthermore peer-feedback is an important component to consider. The way in which

209   peers interact with one another can affect the climate of the class and in some cases make

210   students reface trauma and harm. Thus, feedback that could provoke conflict or that is unfriendly

211   towards fellow students and can be addressed by the teacher by asking 'what happened', 'why

212   did it happen', and 'what can you do to make it right'? Also, providing space for students to

213   'cool off' and on occasions not re-face the bully and come to personal understandings

214   independently. Thus, feedback is encouraged in a safe and supported environment where the

215   negative consequences of conflict within peer interactions such as writeups, detentions, or

216   suspensions are not needed. Furthermore, in all cases students' backgrounds, experiences, and

217   preferences should be taken into consideration when feedback surrounding conflict occurs.

218   *Reparative behavior*

219   There are ways we can minimize conflict through various teaching practices. For example,

220   social-emotional learning activities and equipping students with conflict resolution skills.

221   Conflict will happen when people interact because we are not all the same, and restorative

222   practices main goals are to identify the conflict and repair the harm that was caused by the

223   conflict. This is what sets it apart from the punitive. Punitive actions punish the parties who the

224   person in power believes caused the harm. They do not attempt to heal the harm. When we don't

225   heal the pain that was caused it continues to fester and negative feelings will still be attached to

226   the conflict by all parties involved. Put simply, we must repair the harm of the individual rather

227   than punish the behavioral choice.

228   In a physical education class, we can heal the harm caused by making sure the students

229   understand that they are loved and accepted. Here we are understanding love as a doing word,

230   something that encompasses care, trust, knowledge, commitment, respect, and responsibility as

231   defined by hooks (2001). In action, when conflict arises, we can identify who was hurt and how

232   that interfered with being loved and accepted. This principle applies to everyone in the class.

233   Students can harm the teacher as well as harming their classmates. Teachers can harm their

234   students as well. The key is to identify who was harmed. Once the parties have been identified

235   steps can be taken toward repairing the harm that was caused.

236   One example of two students harming each other is a conflict during a tag activity. The

237   students would go to a designated area and use reparative language shared with them. Initially,

238   students would communicate about how they were harmed and how that made them feel. The

239   person who caused the harm is then given the opportunity to explain their side and state how

240   they were harmed in the conflict if applicable. Most of the time this is where an apology is given,

241   and the students can move forward. If it this does not occur the teacher may be asked to mediate

242   the situation. The teacher may use consequences if they need to as well. Those consequences are

243   used in conjunction with the understanding that it is only part of the solution. The harm still must

244   be addressed and repaired.

245   There are times when multiple students are causing harm and a large part of the class is

246   being negatively impacted. When this happens, the entire class can be circled up and a

247   restorative circle can be created. The circle can include administrators, counsellors, or other

248   adults in the school but usually it is the teacher sitting with the class. A talking piece/ prop is

249   used and only that person in control of it can speak. This allows the people creating the harm to

250   see and hear how it is impacting the class including the teacher. It will also give those creating

251   the harm the opportunity to state how they are being harmed as well. The teacher can then make

252   any appropriate changes in order to keep the class moving toward the agreed direction.

253   The final reparative behavior comes from the teacher. If the teacher harms a student or

254   students, they need to address the situation as well. The opportunity to apologize and show

255   remorse for creating the harm allows the students to see reparative behaviors modeled as well as

256   continue to feel loved and accepted by the teacher. Every person in the shared space is

257   responsible for addressing and repairing the harm they cause, even the teacher. This places a

258   great amount of responsibility on students in which they can thrive as productive members of the

259   learning community and it reinforces democratic concepts.

260   **Conclusion**

261   This article sought to provide an overview of restorative approaches that can be used in physical

262   education. Whilst we are personally aware of schooling contexts in which the approach has been

263   used successfully there is still a dearth of research surrounding this topic within the discipline.

264   We also recognize that it is one approach and are interested in hearing from practitioners that are

265   using alternate/ non-punitive approaches in their classroom. In conclusion, while we

266   acknowledge that restorative practice would be most beneficial from a whole-school approach,

267   the practices in class, school, and context applied by the teacher will look different. This is the

268   beauty of restorative practice; each students harm and repair will be unique, and it is up to us as

269   educators to attempt a variety of approaches that seek to support students considering their

270   holistic wellbeing and adopting a socially just democratic approach.

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