Pursuing Equitable Restorative Communities (PERC) in Pittsburgh: Partner Relationships and Aligning Restorative Practices with District Priorities

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Goals

- Understand PERC, its history and objectives
- Review communication structures between Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) and grant partners
- Discuss alignment between restorative practices and other PPS programs
Laying the Foundation for Restorative Practices in Pittsburgh

- Strong administrative level buy-in and support of restorative practices
- Community stakeholders excited about and supportive of restorative practices
- District policies becoming more restorative (e.g. eliminating disruptions as a suspendable offense, evaluation rubric focus on building culture and student ownership in the classroom)
What is PERC?

- Pursuing Equitable Restorative Communities
- Competitive Grant from Department of Justice through Comprehensive Safe Schools Initiative
  - Awarded October 2014
  - $3M over 3 years
  - 22 Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS)
- Implementation Partner: International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)
- Research Partner: RAND
PERC Objectives

1. Improve student and staff perceptions of school safety
2. Reduce the incidents of juvenile justice involvement, violence and out-of-school suspensions
3. Reduce racial disparities in suspensions
4. Reduce gender-specific disparities in suspensions
5. Improve peer-to-peer respect and rule adherence
6. Improve student attendance
Looking in on Year 1 Implementation

- The #WeArePPS campaign creates videos and finds media opportunities to highlight the people, places, and things that make the Public Schools the premier place for our city’s youth.

- In January 2016, the Office of Communications aired a segment on restorative practices and its implementation.

  #WeArePPS Restorative Practices Segment
Year 1 Highlights

– District staff were trained in *Introduction to Restorative Practices* and *Using Circles Effectively and Leadership: Authority with Grace* Training

– Schools creating their own materials

– Decrease in usage through the school year
Year 2 and Beyond

- Developing structures for sustainability
- Providing responsive support to schools implementing restorative practices
- Increasing communications around restorative practices
- Preparing for sustaining restorative practices through identifying and training licensed trainers
IIRP, PPS, and RAND

– Communication Structure
  
  Weekly Core Team Meetings
  Quarterly PERC Advisory Board Meetings
  Quarterly Data Review Meetings
  Coach’s Retreat
  Budget Meetings

– Consistency

– Support
Aligning PERC to District Programs

- Initiative fatigue and reluctance to implement anything new
- Aligning PERC and Equity
- Connecting PERC and evaluation rubrics (Research-Based Inclusive System of Evaluation)
- Connecting restorative practices with the District’s Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)
PERC and Equity

– In 2015, the District entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Pennsylvania Human Rights Coalition.

– Having IIRP coaches attend Pacific Education Group’s *Beyond Diversity* training

– During training, participants saw the connection between restorative practices and the District’s equity work