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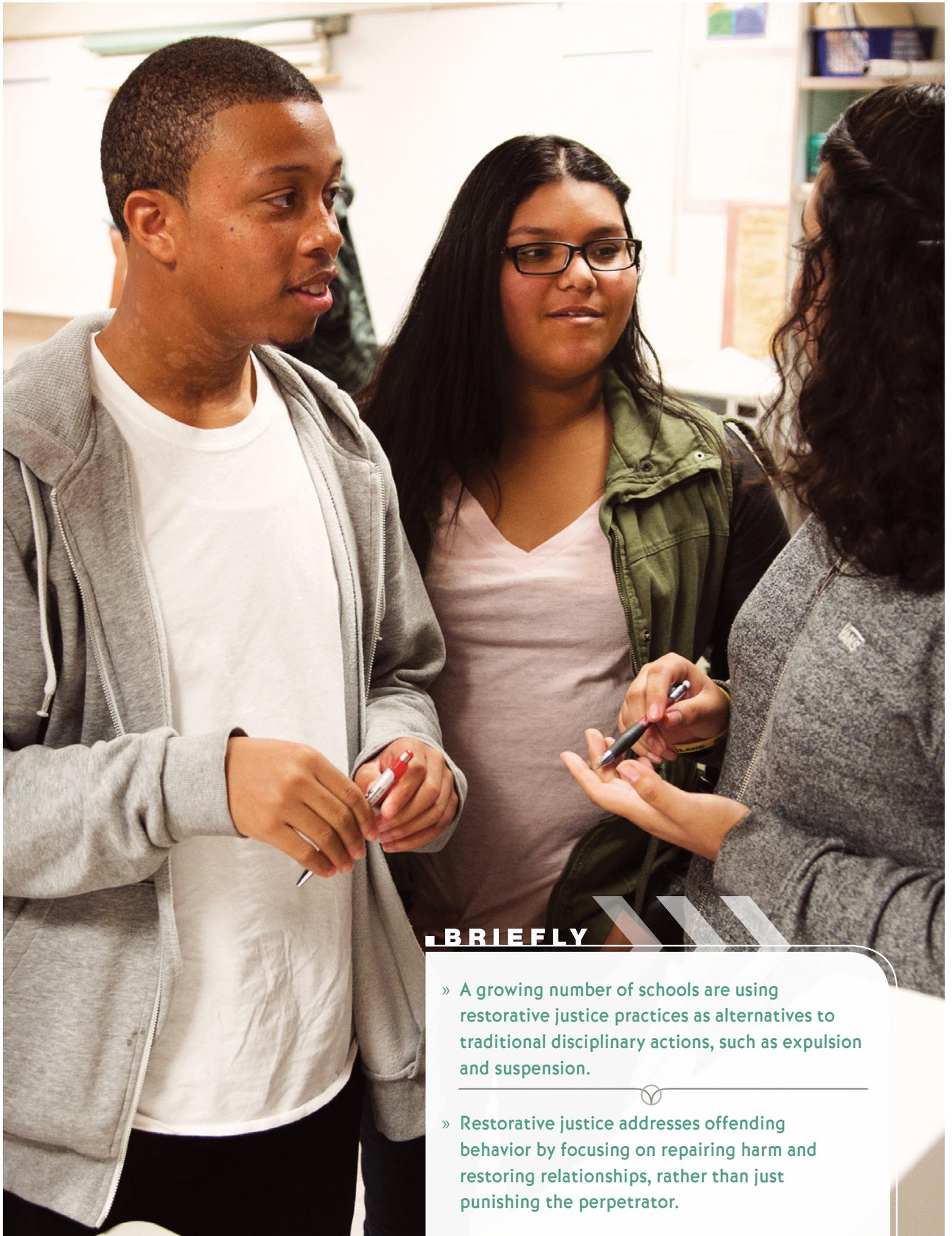
» A growing number of schools are using restorative justice practices as alternatives to traditional disciplinary actions, such as expulsion and suspension.

» Restorative justice addresses offending behavior by focusing on repairing harm and restoring relationships, rather than just punishing the perpetrator.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
An alternative to traditional punishment

When Scott Meyers became principal of St. Louis Park High School in Minneapolis three years ago, a high priority was to reduce the school's suspension rates, especially for students of color. But doing so required a major shift in the school's disciplinary practices. "Rather than sending students home for insubordination or disruptive behavior," says Meyers, "we built relationships with them — starting with conversations about why we have certain policies and the consequences of their actions."

In these conversations, referred to at the school as "mediated discussions," students who have been involved in altercations meet with school officials and a student advocate to "talk about what happened and what they need to do to move forward." As Meyers explains, "Adolescents in conflict are seldom given the time, space, or encouragement to talk to each other and work toward a resolution. As a result, problem behavior can become repetitive."

A mediated discussion is one of the practices endorsed by proponents of restorative justice, an approach used in a growing number of schools to address offending behavior by focusing on repairing harm and restoring relationships, rather than just punishing the perpetrator. Restorative justice is also the focus of a series of reports authored by the WestEd Justice and Prevention Research Center, through funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

According to Sarah Guckenburg, a senior research associate at WestEd, the reports grew out of increasing interest among educators to reduce reliance on exclusionary disciplinary actions such as expulsion and suspension, which studies have shown increase students' likelihood of dropping out of school and becoming involved in the criminal justice system. Research has also indicated that a disproportionate number of minority students are suspended from school, contributing to what many call the "school-to-prison pipeline."

In light of these pressing education and social justice issues, explains Guckenburg, the project was a timely way to "examine why more and more schools were exploring restorative justice, what the research behind it had to say, and how, exactly, it is being practiced in school settings."

WestEd's project included a review of the research and literature on restorative justice. Additional reports summarized findings from interviews with experts in the field, as well as findings from surveys and interviews of practitioners working in or with schools on restorative justice practices. "The experts we interviewed widely agree that current methods of handling student offenses are often not effective, and may even be backfiring," notes WestEd's *Interviews with Experts* report. "Several
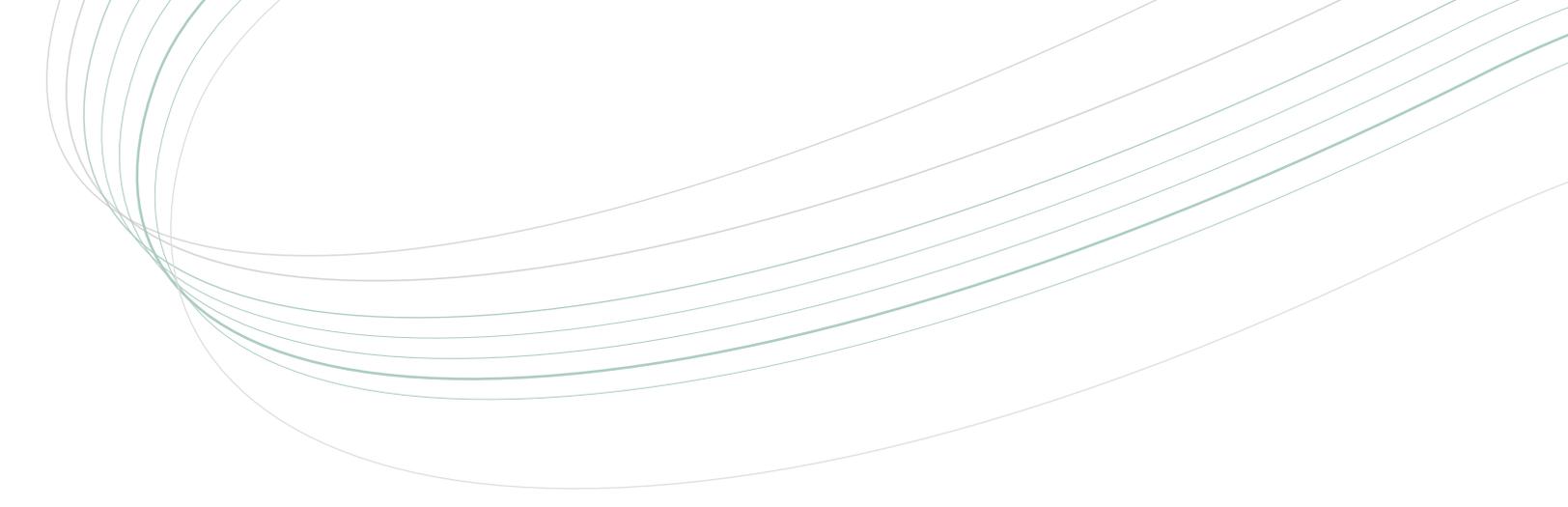
experts noted the history and success of [the restorative justice] approach in community and justice settings, and expressed hope for a similar impact on student disciplinary methods in U.S. schools."

REPLACING SUSPENSIONS WITH CONVERSATIONS

At St. Louis Park High School, just one year after putting a restorative justice approach in place, suspension rates decreased by about 50 percent; the following year, the suspension rate was cut in half again. Though Meyers says he's looking for even more improvement, he notes that the restorative justice philosophy is making a difference, particularly when it comes to "understanding what we need to do to ensure that students are out of class as little as possible." In part, those changes included redefining "insubordination" and "disruptive behavior" — particularly in the classroom — in the wake of a series of staff–student conversations. One outcome: it is no longer against the rules for students to wear hats during the school day. "We looked at where that rule was coming from and asked ourselves, 'Is this truly crucial to the instruction process?'" says Meyers.

Within school settings, restorative justice can take a variety of forms — key features include an emphasis on repairing harm rather than punishing offenders; listening to the student point of view; and employing strategies that build students' communication, social, and emotional skills. WestEd's research review notes that proponents of restorative justice "argue that the traditional approach manages student behavior rather than developing students' capacity and facilitating their growth."

Some of the most common strategies being used in schools implementing restorative justice practices include:

» *Restorative circles.* Facilitated meetings in which a group of students and a teacher come together to solve problems and resolve disciplinary issues.

» *Victim–offender mediation conferences.* Meetings in which an offender and victim(s) discuss an altercation and identify ways to repair the harm.

» *Restorative questioning.* A technique used to diffuse problematic situations before they can escalate into full-blown crises.

Both the experts and practitioners indicated that these sorts of practices have often led to improved teacher–student relations and a subsequent decrease in teacher-issued disciplinary referrals. Said one practitioner, "Students report feeling more connected to their school and their classes." While some educators perceive the restorative justice approach as being "too soft" on student offenders, restorative justice experts point out that accountability plays an integral role in the process. Rather than excluding the offending student from the school setting, restorative justice strategies aim to help the involved parties determine reasonable "restorative sanctions" for the offender, such as community service, restitution, apologies, or specific behavioral change agreements.

Guckenburg notes that WestEd's work also revealed the use of restorative justice practices in ways that were not directly related to discipline. For instance, at some schools, faculty meetings were being conducted in circles. "Using that setup with faculty makes sense for schools that believe in the model," says Guckenburg. "It's a good example of

> Rather than sending students home for insubordination or disruptive behavior, we built relationships with them.

practicing what you preach." Another finding: classroom teachers were using elements of restorative justice to teach subject-matter lessons. Guckenburg speculates that in such cases teachers likely were using practices to change the dynamics of large-group classroom discussions, resulting in wider student participation and heightened respect for each other's contributions.

FOCUSING ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Restorative justice practices are also seen as a promising way to reduce the disproportionate rate at which minority students are suspended and expelled. A 2011 study identified in the WestEd research summary, for instance, found that African American students were 26 percent more likely to receive out-of-school suspension for their first offense than White students. What's more, although minority students may not be committing more serious offenses, they are more likely to be suspended for 'vaguely defined offenses such as 'disrespect,' 'willful defiance,' and 'disruption.'"

Oscar Reed, a former Minnesota Vikings running back and popular motivational speaker, is St. Louis Park High's student advocate and multicultural liaison. Much of Reed's early work at the school focused on helping students and staff work through racial issues related to school desegregation. Meyers notes that, for the last several years, Reed has been convening circles for students of Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and Eastern African heritage. "Oscar's work has helped us learn to pause, listen, and give students an opportunity to speak," says Meyers.

Reed says that after taking part in a circle ceremony on a Lakota Indian reservation many years ago, he started using the practice regularly with students. "Circles are all about forming relationships," says Reed. "You're all facing each other, and everyone is equal. They're an effective way to collectively solve problems and defuse controversy."

IMPLEMENTING A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

While restorative justice offers a promising alternative to traditional school disciplinary systems, there are considerable implementation challenges. Barriers reported by the experts and practitioners include finding the time and financial resources needed to train teachers and, over time, securing the support of a large number of school staff in order to sustain implementation. Some researchers suggest that a shift in attitude [about] punishment can take one to three years, and the deep shift to a restorative-oriented school climate may take up to three to five years.

According to Guckenburg, because the use of restorative justice in schools is "fairly new," more research is needed to determine what kind of staffing and structural changes are needed to implement school-based restorative justice programs. While the research is still evolving, says Guckenburg, there are several randomized controlled studies under way that should provide useful data about the effectiveness of restorative justice in schools.

Meanwhile, how best can school or district leaders interested in using restorative justice practices proceed? For a start, Guckenburg recommends reading WestEd's reports

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BRIEFLY

» In response to federal policies, many states and districts have implemented teacher evaluation systems that use multiple measures.

» WestEd is helping administrators learn to use teacher performance data to support and improve their teacher workforce.

» These data can inform a variety of decisions, such as professional development offerings, classroom assignments, and identification of teacher leaders.

USING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS DATA IN MEANINGFUL WAYS

In the past, teacher evaluations at many schools were cursory exercises, consisting of little more than simple checklists that did not reflect the complexity of teachers' instruction. And, just like the children of *A Prairie Home Companion*'s fictional Lake Wobegon, all teacher performance was generally viewed as above average — or at least satisfactory.

Then, beginning around 2009, new federal policies called for more rigorous approaches to teacher accountability and evaluation that integrated multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. As states and districts began overhauling their teacher evaluation models accordingly, they grappled with critical questions: How do you accurately assess teacher performance? Are student test scores a valid way to measure the impact of a teacher's instruction? How reliable are classroom observations in distinguishing between effective and ineffective teachers?

"States were hungry for research and guidance on the new teacher performance measures they were developing or adopting," says Reino Makkonen, a senior policy associate at the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) West at WestEd. To help states address key issues as they were laying the groundwork for their new teacher evaluation systems, REL West conducted a series of studies examining various performance measures. As the work progressed, staff collaborated with education officials in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah to help them use the research findings to inform and refine their teacher evaluation systems.

"No measure of teacher performance is perfect," says Makkonen, who leads the REL West team dedicated to educator effectiveness issues. "But when administrators and teachers sit down to review and discuss the different types of data together, they can often reach a good understanding of where the teacher is and what appropriate next steps for improvement might be."

MEASURING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

To help administrators consider the various benefits and challenges of different measures of teacher performance, REL West staff synthesized findings from both their own research and literature from the field to develop a two-page logic model and an animated video, both titled *Making Meaningful Use of Teacher Effectiveness Data*. Below are a few highlights.

Observation-based measures. Although time- and labor-intensive, classroom observation is a direct, credible form of assessment. For example, the observer can note the structure and pacing of the lesson and the kinds of discussion techniques the teacher uses to engage students. This measure is more reliable with multiple observations and multiple observers, especially since principals' scoring has tended to indicate little variation among teachers.

> It's not about trying to get a perfect measurement in order to rank teachers — it's about improving the workforce.

Measures of teacher contribution to student learning. Using *standardized test scores* to measure teachers' influence on student learning does not require extra work from principals or teachers. However, those scores do not reliably reflect the reasons for student test results — for instance, teacher instruction, peer influence, school factors, or other sources in children's school, home, and community life. As a result, they have proven to be of limited value for assessing teacher performance.

End-of-year scores from *student learning objectives* (SLOs) — which are set by teachers and their principal to measure classroom-specific student achievement growth — were found to differentiate between high- and low-performing teachers in a REL West study. However, SLOs are not standardized or comparable across contexts.

Student perceptions of teacher effectiveness (surveys). Students have daily contact with teachers, and students' ratings of teachers have been shown to be consistent from year to year and across different classrooms. Surveys may also be helpful given a rising interest in social and emotional indicators of accountability, says Makkonen: "Teachers are trying to create engaging, supportive classroom environments, so we should consider trusting students to provide useful feedback." At the same time, since students are not trained to assess curriculum, classroom management, or content knowledge, their observations about these may have limited value.

BUILDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DATA REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

While REL West initially concentrated on helping states and districts better understand the various measures of teacher performance in order to develop and refine their evaluation systems, the landscape has shifted, says Makkonen.

Now that many of these systems are up and running and schools have begun collecting multiple types of teacher performance data, the overriding question has become: What exactly should administrators do with all these data? Accordingly, REL West's recent work has moved toward a more explicit focus on the practical uses of teacher evaluation data at the district and school-site levels.

"Are we building a data museum?" Makkonen remembers an overwhelmed principal asking in relation to the multiple streams of teacher evaluation data that his school was collecting. The principal worried that huge swaths of data would end up sitting unused in various databases, gathering virtual dust. To get a better understanding of how districts are tackling practical issues — like the principal's concern about data accessibility — REL West studied five districts in Arizona to examine how they use their teacher evaluation data. One of the main takeaways from the study, notes Makkonen, is that schools and districts are wise to first focus on building an infrastructure for data review and feedback. "To be useful to educators and administrators, the right data must be available at the right time and in the right format."

For example, some districts have built data dashboards, which essentially are teacher "report cards" that display results from classroom observations, student assessments, and any surveys that students filled out. Such dashboards organize the different types of data and prevent them from being scattered across different databases or delivered in hard-to-interpret formats.

"Administrators seem to find dashboards useful to organize disparate streams of data," says Makkonen. "Having the data in one place can also facilitate rich

feedback conversations between coaches, principals, and teachers."

LEARNING TO USE DATA TO IMPROVE TEACHER PRACTICE

Another key finding from the Arizona study: Evaluation data influence the professional development opportunities subsequently offered to teachers. Officials from all five districts in the study reported that they used their standards-based instructional frameworks and observation rubrics to identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses across multiple domains, and plan professional learning accordingly. The study also found that classroom observation data were seen as more useful than student test scores for informing professional development decisions because results from multiple observations are collected and accessible throughout the school year, while statewide student test scores are often not released until the summer.

Using teacher performance data for targeted decision-making — such as what type of professional development to offer teachers — has been the focus of a series of workshops conducted in 2016 by REL West, in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. The workshops have been specifically designed for principals, says Makkonen, because principals are increasingly asked to play a key role in supporting teachers.

"There are more demands on school administrators now," says Makkonen. "It's no longer enough to just manage the logistics of the site. More and more, administrators are being positioned as instructional leaders or coaches. Even if they are not experts in pedagogy or specific academic content areas, they can create the conditions for teachers to receive constructive, data-informed feedback about their instruction."

In addition to helping principals learn to use teacher performance data positively to facilitate these kinds of professional conversations, the workshops give principals hands-on experience in cataloging and analyzing the data they have available. Participants learn to use these data to make a variety of decisions, including assigning teachers to appropriate grades and classes and identifying potential teacher leaders and mentors.

Making meaningful use of teacher effectiveness data is more important than ever, says Makkonen, because many regions are facing teacher shortages — which means that districts' focus is shifting from using evaluation measures primarily for teacher accountability toward using the measures to inform decisions that will help support, retain, and improve current teachers. To achieve these goals, says Makkonen, administrators need to ask, "Are we using the information we've gathered to inform conversations and actions that create a more supportive environment for teachers, so they don't feel lost and frustrated?"

Ultimately, says Makkonen, teacher evaluation is a process of continuous improvement. "It's not about trying to get a perfect measurement in order to rank teachers. It's about improving the workforce."

For more information about REL West's research and work on teacher effectiveness, contact Reino Makkonen at 415.615.3356 or rmakkon@WestEd.org.

BRIEFLY

» Relationship-based practices are central to what child care centers can do to provide high-quality care for infants and toddlers.

» Primary caregiving" and "continuity of care" are practices that enable caregivers to develop close, positive relationships with infants and toddlers.

» Providing such care can be challenging, though state- and program-level policies can support these practices.
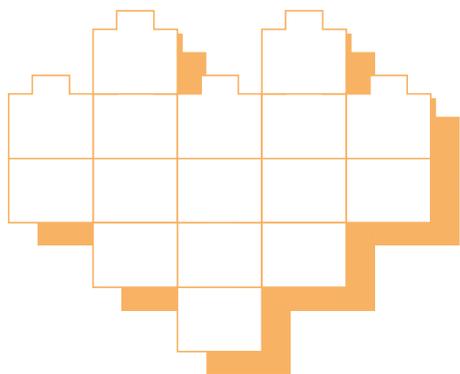
Early Caregiver-Child Relationships
Build the Foundation for Lifelong Learning

The human brain develops faster during the first few years of life than at any subsequent time, reaching 85 percent of its adult size by age three. This early development establishes the foundation for later learning. As research increasingly reveals the scale and importance of early brain development, early care providers and state policymakers are focusing more urgently on finding the best ways to support healthy development in a child's earliest years.

A recent policy brief authored by a network of researchers specializing in the unique needs of infants and toddlers provides research-based guidance on how to raise the level of quality for out-of-home early child care. It opens with a stark set of observations: About half of all children in the United States who are in this pivotal period of rapid growth (birth through age three) regularly receive child care outside their families, yet the quality of that care is "low in general."

A central message of the brief, titled *Including Relationship-Based Care Practices in Infant-Toddler Care*, is the importance of supportive policies that focus on the relationship between caregiver and child as the key to strengthening healthy early development.

"The federal government asked for guidance on what it means to provide high-quality care for infants and toddlers — both for child care providers and for states that are reviewing or revising how they license, evaluate, and support those providers," says Kerry Kriener-Althen, one of the brief's coauthors, and the Evaluation Team Director at WestEd's Center for Child & Family Studies (CCFS). "If programs and states want to promote high-quality caregiving for infants and toddlers,

they need to focus on policies that promote *relationship-based* practices," she says.

IMPORTANCE OF CAREGIVER-CHILD CONNECTION

The brief highlights the work of several organizations and programs that support relationship-based practices for early childhood education, including WestEd's *Program for Infant/Toddler Care* (PITC). Launched in 1986 to provide materials and training for improving the quality of out-of-home care, PITC builds on even earlier work that illuminated the importance of relationship-based practices. "A relationship-based approach has been an underpinning of our agency's many early childhood initiatives throughout five decades," says J. Ronald Lally, who helped create PITC and is Co-Director of WestEd's CCFS. Relationship-based approaches are important because young children "are programmed to learn from their caregivers," explains Lally. To best support healthy brain development, the child's connection to the caregiver needs to be strong and positive. "Through the child's relationships and the context of those relationships, the rapidly developing brain starts to structure itself, creating the foundation for future learning," says Lally.

> Through the child's relationships and the context of those relationships, the rapidly developing brain starts to structure itself, creating the foundation for future learning.

The policy brief puts relationship-based care practices at the center of a variety of factors — including low child-to-staff ratios, small group sizes, and specialized training for the staff — that contribute to a child care center's ability to provide high-quality care. These factors provide the conditions for sensitive and responsive caregiving that enhances strong attachments and creates a secure foundation for a child's exploration, leading to cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional development.

"The highest-quality child care programs create an intimate setting in which cues from infants and toddlers are noticed and understood quickly and accurately by a caregiver who has some history with them and who understands each child's temperament and specific workings," Lally says.

PRIMARY CAREGIVING AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

The brief specifies "primary caregiving" and "continuity of care" as two main constituents of relationship-based practices that enable caregivers to develop close, positive relationships with infants and toddlers.

The practice of primary caregiving involves ensuring that each infant or toddler interacts primarily, but not exclusively, with one or two adults in a child care setting, rather than going from adult to adult for different activities through the day. This practice gives primary caregivers a chance to build close personal relationships with the children in their care — handling most of the feeding, diapering, and sleeping needs.

"Primary caregiving supports healthy development because predictability and familiarity make the child feel safe," says Kriener-Althen. The approach also enhances the caregiver's ability to work in partnership with the family, communicating with parents during drop-off and pick-up, learning about the family's cultural values and child-rearing practices, and sharing insights and information about the child's development.

The practice known as continuity of care can also contribute to a child's feelings of safety and security, says Kriener-Althen. Continuity of care involves having children stay with the same caregivers over an extended period, ideally through age three, rather than moving them to a new caregiver based on age or developmental milestones, as often happens in child care settings. Continuity allows children to build relationships over time that they can emotionally depend on and from which they are more likely to receive experiences that match their needs, interests, and learning styles.

There are two ways of providing continuity of care: by same-age groupings or by mixed-age groupings. With the same-age approach, children stay together with the same caregivers from when the children first enter the child care setting until age three, but move from one age-appropriate environment to another as they achieve more developmental sophistication. Mixed-age continuity more closely resembles a family child care setting — infants and toddlers of different ages stay with the same teachers and children over time but receive care together in an environment that meets the needs of children of multiple ages.

OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Providing such relationship-based care can be challenging. To ease a child care center's transition toward

providing primary caregiving and continuity of care, the policy brief suggests phasing in elements one at a time, if needed. Primary caregiving may be a good place to start, says Lally, ideally making staffing assignments based on attunement between caregiver and child, and with sensitivity to the unique characteristics of the family.

"Primary caregiving requires intentionality on the program's part," says Kriener-Althen. Given that a caregiver can't work for 10 hours straight in a day, primary caregiving demands careful scheduling and strategies for complying with employment laws. It also may require secondary providers to be available to fill in, to avoid creating an emotional void and sense of abandonment during a primary caregiver's absences. Likewise, continuity of care can present challenges in logistics, resources, space, and caregiver-to-child ratios.

But the biggest challenges to providing high-quality, relationship-based practices, according to Kriener-Althen, are the high costs of infant/toddler care and the low salaries of child care workers. "In the past few years, some infant centers have closed because it is not financially feasible to provide the three- or four-to-one infant-to-teacher ratio necessary to ensure the ongoing implementation of relationship-based practices, while also paying teachers a livable wage." Child care providers in the United States make only $20,000 per year, on average — about three times less than the average annual pay for kindergarten teachers. Not surprisingly, the turnover rate for child care providers nationally is 36 percent per year, which can contribute to lack of continuity.

Although these challenges must be addressed, Lally doesn't accept them as an argument for failing to even try relationship-based caregiving. He gives the example of the University of New Mexico Children's Campus for Early Care and Education, where a continuity of care program has been in existence for years. "There, many care providers have stayed in their jobs longer because they've observed how much children are getting from these relationships," he says, "which also contributes to the care providers' deriving greater satisfaction from their work."

And PITC, which has become a highly respected national model and the most widely used approach for training infant/toddler practitioners, is working to increase the number of caregivers and programs that implement relationship-based practices. "People from every state in the nation — as well as from other countries — have received our training," says Lally. "We've moved the notion of preparing caregivers from one that focuses on baby-sitting and basic caretaking to instead providing infant care teachers with the knowledge they need to use their relationships with babies to enhance brain development during those most crucial early years of life."

» To improve outcomes for children with disabilities, the federal government shifted toward a results-driven approach to special education accountability.

» The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) has been helping states implement plans to improve special education and early intervention outcomes.

» NCSI's cross-state learning collaboratives have brought states together to problem-solve and share resources as they develop these plans.

Cross-state efforts

MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Concerned with the persistently low academic outcomes and graduation rates of students with disabilities, the federal government a few years back decided to transform the way it worked with states on special education accountability. The new approach, termed "Results-Driven Accountability," shifted beyond a focus on procedural requirements toward an emphasis on *performance*. States were charged with not only ensuring that children with disabilities had equitable access to services but also with improving their learning and development outcomes.

"Results-Driven Accountability has required a massive change in how states approach special education and early intervention services," says Rorie Fitzpatrick, co-director of the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) at WestEd,[1] which helps states transform their systems to improve outcomes for children with disabilities.

A major requirement of Results-Driven Accountability was for each state education agency and "lead agency" (a state agency that serves infants and toddlers with disabilities) to conduct a comprehensive review of services and develop a systemic improvement plan to reduce gaps in performance for children with disabilities.

Developing these plans has been a major undertaking that has included analyzing troves of qualitative and quantitative data, taking stock of existing state infrastructure, communicating with a range of stakeholders, and, ultimately, determining meaningful and measurable outcomes.

"While we were excited by the potential of the new results-driven approach, a lot of states were struggling with how to meet the new requirements," said Barb

Schinderle, who coordinates Michigan's outreach to agencies serving infants and toddlers with disabilities.

To help staff like Schinderle through the rigorous process of developing the systemic improvement plans and executing the new results-driven approach, NCSI has provided a range of supports and technical assistance to states. The center's work has included coaching agency leaders; conducting professional learning; and offering expert-informed problem solving and peer support through online forums and national and in-state meetings.

For Schinderle and other state leaders, NCSI has been a lifeline, linking them to specialists in areas in which they have little experience and enabling them to share their own expertise with other states. "I wouldn't have known where to start without NCSI," Schinderle says. "They build on our strengths and make us feel less isolated as we work through this new results-driven approach."

"While most states had efficient systems for monitoring which services were provided to children with disabilities," says Fitzpatrick, "they didn't have systems in place to measure the effectiveness of those services. We've

NCSI's learning collaboratives help states "go deeper" into their chosen areas of focus for improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

been helping states learn to analyze their data, and then create and implement detailed strategic plans for boosting those children's outcomes."

To date, NCSI has offered technical assistance to 116 agencies, helping them develop and submit the first two phases of their systemic improvement plans.

A MODEL FOR CROSS-STATE SHARING

One of NCSI's most fruitful, and popular, forms of support has been its cross-state learning collaboratives — professional learning communities through which state education and lead agency staff and their stakeholders can engage with and learn from NCSI experts and peers across the country. One hundred state teams belong to one or more of NCSI's nine learning collaboratives, each of which align with priority areas that states identified in their systemic improvement plans, such as language and literacy, family outcomes, or social and emotional outcomes.

Schinderle says the collaboratives' meetings offer a useful way to check in regularly with peers: "I find it particularly valuable to hear what other states are doing. We don't really have another mechanism to reach and learn what other states are up to otherwise."

"Each learning collaborative is intentionally designed to be a community," Fitzpatrick says of NCSI's model for support. "In the same way that kids need trust and bonding with caregivers in order to thrive, we know that when you are engaged in deep systems-change work, you've got to have trust in the community to open up and access support. It's been rewarding to watch as states have

become increasingly comfortable sharing resources and strategies, and helping each other problem-solve."

To build states' capacity and investment, says Fitzpatrick, NCSI often taps members' knowledge and experience. For example, during a meeting of the Social and Emotional Outcomes (SEO) Learning Collaborative about improving stakeholder involvement in the systemic planning process, Schinderle shared Michigan's long-standing practice of asking parents to serve as board members of its Interagency Coordinating Council. NCSI invited Schinderle to present in an upcoming webinar so other states could learn from Michigan's experience.

"One reason the learning collaboratives work so well is that the NCSI staff leaders 'get' implementation science and group development," says Pam Thomas, a Part C Coordinator for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Early Intervention Services who is part of the SEO Learning Collaborative.

TARGETING AREAS OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

When mandating states to shift to a results-driven approach, says Fitzpatrick, the federal government knew it couldn't expect states to immediately improve children's outcomes across the board. So states were told to "focus on one area of support and go deeper" by identifying a specific measurable result for children with disabilities that the state wanted to target for improvement.

Accordingly, the new requirements caused coordinators in Missouri to "push the pause button" and start targeting their efforts, recalls Thomas. "We did an extensive broad analysis of our programs and services and eliminated

elements that weren't helping us achieve our goals. We're still learning the lesson of focus."

NCSI's learning collaboratives were designed to help states like Missouri "go deeper" into their chosen areas of focus for improving outcomes for children with disabilities. With teams from 15 states participating, one of the most popular and productive collaboratives has been the Social and Emotional Outcomes Learning Collaborative.

The group helps states integrate a relationship-based approach to early intervention services that promotes the well-being and healthy social and emotional development of infants and toddlers. Once dismissed as "touchy-feely," healthy social and emotional development is now seen as a vital part of early development.

"States are realizing that young children's healthy development is dependent on strong, nurturing relationships — parent to child, caregiver to child, provider to parent," says WestEd's Monica Mathur-Kalluri, co-leader of NCSI's SEO Learning Collaborative.

Mathur-Kalluri points to research, such as the landmark CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, which has shown that poor social and emotional development related to early childhood stressors puts children at increased risk for health problems, behavioral issues, and poor performance in school and work. She also describes the importance of a longitudinal study conducted in Kauai that found that having one close bond with a supportive adult could help a child overcome early childhood risks and change their life trajectory.

In addition to helping states decide which evidence-based practices to embed in their systemic plans, the SEO Collaborative helps states work through the complicated logistics of developing effective systems for training large numbers of providers. For instance, members have shared approaches to large-scale professional learning proven effective in their states, such as partnering with a major university to enhance and scale the state's capacity to train early caregivers. Another state representative shared details about how her state's multi-agency professional learning infrastructure draws on a network of early intervention and education organizations to train early caregivers of young children with disabilities.

Sharing that sort of practical, nuts-and-bolts information about states' existing early intervention programs and strategies can go a long way, says Thomas: "It's helpful not to have to reinvent the wheel."

Moving forward, Fitzpatrick says NCSI will continue to provide multiple avenues of support to build states' capacity to implement and evaluate their plans. "While these new requirements involve significant shifts in how states do their work," she says, "in the end, this results-driven approach to special education and early intervention services has the potential to greatly benefit children with disabilities for years to come."

For more information about NCSI, please contact Rorie Fitzpatrick at 415.615.3466 or rfitzpa@WestEd.org, or visit ncsi.WestEd.org.

[1] NCSI is led by WestEd, in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Council of Chief State School Officers, SRI International, and National Parent Technical Assistance Centers Network.

NEW RELEASES from WestEd

Leading Professional Learning: Building Capacity for Sustained Practice, A Simulation Game for Educators

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ISBN: 978-1-938287-38-1 | $550 | Game | WestEd | 2016

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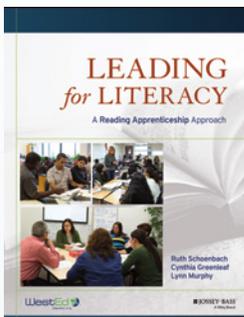
Leading for Literacy: A Reading Apprenticeship Approach

This book gives schools and districts clear and concrete guidance and tools to improve the reading and academic literacy of students in middle school through college. It guides teacher leaders, coaches, and administrators through the nuts and bolts of implementing the Reading Apprenticeship Framework, including generating buy-in from teachers and administrators and using formative assessment to promote teacher and student growth.

ISBN: 978-1-118-43726-1 | $32.95 | Trade Paper, 288 pages
Jossey-Bass in partnership with WestEd | 2017

WestEd.org/resources/leading-for-literacy-reading-apprenticeship-approach/

Recent Research Studies from the Regional Educational Laboratory West at WestEd

Scaling Academic Planning in Community College: A Randomized Controlled Trial

WestEd.org/resources/scaling-academic-planning-in-community-college/

Examines the effectiveness of various interventions on increasing the completion of academic plans by community college students.

Characteristics and Education Outcomes of Utah High School Dropouts Who Re-Enrolled

WestEd.org/resources/utah-high-school-dropouts-who-re-enrolled/

Looks at the prevalence, characteristics, and academic outcomes of students who have dropped out and subsequently re-enrolled in high school.

High School Graduation Rates Across English Learner Student Subgroups in Arizona

WestEd.org/resources/graduation-rates-across-english-learner-subgroups-in-arizona/

Analyzes four-year high school graduation rates for different subgroups of English learners, based on their English proficiency and length of time as an English learner student.

English Learner Students Readiness for Academic Success: The Predictive Potential of English Language Proficiency Assessment Scores in Arizona and Nevada

WestEd.org/resources/english-learner-students-readiness-for-academic-success/

Examines the relationship between English language proficiency levels and success in mainstream English-only classes by student grade level.

Projections of California Teacher Retirements: A County and Regional Perspective

WestEd.org/resources/california-teacher-retirements/

Projects California teacher retirements over the coming decade, finding that 25 percent of teachers who were teaching in California in 2013/14 will retire by 2023/24.

Learning and Teaching Geometry: Video Cases for Mathematics Professional Development, Grades 6–12

This robust set of multimedia resources provides facilitators with everything they need to lead a professional development series on teaching mathematical similarity based on geometric transformations. Teachers will explore mathematics content; analyze classroom video clips; and make connections to their own practice. The Foundation Module includes a Facilitator's Guide (print and eBook), video clips, agendas with detailed notes, PowerPoint presentations, embedded assessments, handouts, GeoGebra applets, and more.

ISBN: 978-1-938287-11-4 | $89.95 | Trade paper book, Digital Resources Library, & access to online videos | WestEd | 2017
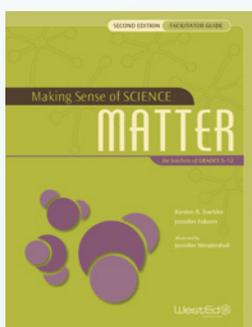
## Making Sense of SCIENCE: Matter for Teachers of Grades 5–12, Second Edition

This course helps teachers strengthen their pedagogical skills through gaining a solid grasp of challenging science concepts, analyzing effective teaching practices, and exploring how literacy supports learning. The activities and approach in this second edition support existing standards-based curricula, are based on a decade of research, and have been nationally field-tested with teachers and vetted by scientists.

The full bundle of materials — Facilitator Guide, Teacher Book, *Making Sense of Student Work* book, and access to a Digital Resources Library — includes everything needed to effectively lead this course.

ISBN: 978-1-938287-40-4 | $249.95
Three books, Digital Resources Library | WestEd | 2017

For copies of just the Teacher Book, which includes a copy of the Making Sense of Student Work *book to support professional learning communities, use the following ordering information:*

ISBN: 978-1-938287-43-5 | $59.95
Trade paper, Digital Resource Library | WestEd | 2017
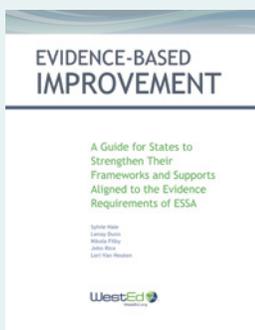
Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages evidence-based decision-making as standard practice. This guide provides tools to help states and districts plan for implementing evidence-based improvement strategies.

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— available for free on the WestEd Justice and Prevention Research Center website — to learn about practical and strategic issues to consider when implementing such a program. For instance, the research review shares ways in which schools and districts have allocated funds to support restorative justice implementation, including leveraging Title I funds to hire a full-time coordinator and pooling resources with community partners to fund staff training. In addition, the interviews with experts suggest that a restorative justice approach is most likely to be effective and sustainable if it is integrated across the entire school and district rather than positioned as an "add-on" program.

While implementing restorative justice practices takes time and investment, educators such as Oscar Reed are finding them fruitful. "Strategies like restorative circles are very powerful," says Reed. "They create a safe environment in which students and teachers can share and connect with each other on pressing issues. Eventually, that kind of connection can change the culture of the whole school."

For more information about the work of the WestEd Justice and Prevention Research Center, contact Sarah Guckenburg at 781.481.1116 or sgucken@WestEd.org.
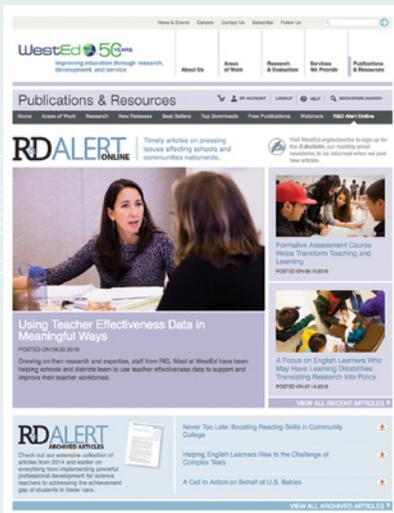
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