



# Restorative Practices

## Changing School Culture

### One Student at a Time

Case Study: Bammel Middle School, Spring ISD  
Spring, Texas  
2017-2018



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# INTRODUCTION

## **Background**

The Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) offers educational services to benefit the school districts in and around Harris County. Restorative practices training is offered by HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS) and focuses on training teachers and school staff in specific practices to enhance relationships with students and ultimately improve school culture. Restorative efforts target school culture, school safety and transformation of the learning environment.

## **Project Origins and Overview**

In 2017, HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools worked with Bammel Middle School in Spring, Texas to implement a school-wide restorative practice program. The pilot program, called the Uplifting Pupils Project (UPP), focused on establishing positive student-teacher relationships, which would lead to a positive learning environment, improved student behavior and a transformation of the school culture. All these intangibles were designed to come together to support improved student achievement.

CSSS' support consisted of three primary components: 1) a series of workshops to introduce the restorative approach and restorative practice techniques to school staff; 2) staff workshop to introduce cultural responsiveness pedagogy on campus; and 3) walk-through support by CSSS specialists for restorative approach implementation in the school.

Two major theories and assumptions were used in the project: 1) improving the school cultural climate will increase school safety and promote student-teacher relationships; 2) reducing suspension rates will support more student class time.

In 2017, Bammel Middle School partnered with HCDE to implement the UPP based on a history of high suspension rates and a large number of office referrals. During the 2016-2017 school year, Bammel had an enrollment of about 1,300 students, with more than 50 percent of students being African-American and another 40 percent being Hispanic. Nearly 75 percent of students were identified as economically disadvantaged and more than two-thirds were considered at risk of dropping out of school.

HCDE's CSSS division provided the training in restorative practices while the Research and Evaluation Institute (REI) evaluated the project, staging outcomes of the UPP at Bammel Middle School as a case study.

This report presents findings of the data analysis based on the first-year implementation of the program.

## **Project Implementation**

In the 2017-2018 school year, teachers and students at Bammel Middle School participated in a circle activity on Mondays and Fridays to engage in conversations involving pre-determined and spontaneous topics. The goal of these conversations was to improve mutual understanding and build relationships. The evaluation plan included campus walk-through observations, surveys, and focus group interviews.

During the school year, CSSS specialists regularly visited Bammel Middle School to observe the implementation of circles and support refinement of the program based on student and staff input.

## INTRODUCTION (continued)

In May 2018, REI designed and distributed a student survey, teacher survey, and parent survey to access participant opinions regarding satisfaction of the circles and any resulting changes to school climate. REI also conducted three student and teacher focus group interviews to determine opinions about restorative practice implementation and outcomes.

### **Research Findings**

During the pilot project there was a decline in both office referrals and suspensions. It was reported that restorative practices positively affected student and teacher relationships. There was increased opportunity for deeper conversations between teachers and students that lead to a better understanding of the root causes of some student behaviors. After one year of implementation, both students and teachers acknowledged that teachers treat students with greater respect, are more polite, are fairer, and are kinder.

Thirty-seven percent of students felt that if a student has a misconduct, he/she is provided a chance to change his/her behavior and make things right. Around 32 percent of students believe that in the case of bullying the person harmed is asked for input on what can be done to make things better. Implementing the pilot program positively changed the learning environment of the campus.

The results of the pilot study highlighted some areas that still need improvement. While the restorative values were introduced, some teachers still believe that those who caused harm should be punished rather than be allowed to make amends. More than 30 percent of students did not feel the school was employing a restorative approach. Continued efforts in the consistency of implementation should ultimately achieve an improved schoolwide restorative culture.

# METHODOLOGY

## Evaluation Questions

1. What are the effects of restorative training provided by HCDE’s CSSS?
2. Were the restorative circles conducted appropriately?
3. What are the students’ and teachers’ experiences with regard to the restorative circles?
4. Did the number of office referrals decrease after one year of implementation of the UPP?
5. What is the culture of the school after one-year of implementation of the UPP?
6. What is the school’s environment and safety?
7. After one-year implementation of UPP, did the school climate become more positive?

## Sample

All students and teachers received surveys regarding the implementation of circles to determine their opinions about school climate and safety. Responding to the survey were 379 students and 43 staff members. The respondents’ demographic information is contained in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic of survey respondents

Variable	Scale	N	%
<b>Student Respondents (N=379)</b>			
Gender (N=363)	Male	193	53.17%
	Female	170	46.83%
Ethnicity (N=364)	African American (non-Hispanic)	204	56.04%
	Asian/Pacific Islanders	4	1.10%
	Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	2	0.55%
	Latino or Hispanic	137	37.64%
	Native American or Aleut	3	0.82%
	Other	14	3.85%
Grade (N=366)	6th Grade	135	36.89%
	7th Grade	146	39.89%
	8th Grade	85	23.22%
Did you receive an office referral in 2016-2017? (N=367)	Yes	119	32.43%
	No	248	67.57%

(Table 1 continued)

Variable	Scale	N	%
<b>Student Respondents (N=379)</b>			
How many times did you receive an office referral in 2016-2017? (N=119)	1-2 times	74	62.18%
	3-4 times	22	18.49%
	5 times or more	23	19.33%
Did you receive an office referral in 2017-2018? (N=367)	Yes	115	31.34%
	No	252	68.66%
How many times did you receive office referral in 2016-2017? (N=113)	1-2 times	80	70.80%
	3-4 times	22	19.47%
	5 times or more	11	9.73%
Did you receive a suspension in 2016-2017? (N=367)	Yes	104	28.34%
	No	263	71.66%
How many times did you receive suspension in 2016-2017? (N=103)	1-2 times	64	62.14%
	3-4 times	24	23.30%
	5 times or more	15	14.56%
Did you receive a suspension in 2017-2018? (N=364)	Yes	120	32.97%
	No	244	67.03%
How many times did you receive a suspension in 2017-2018? (N=120)	1-2 times	84	70.0%
	3-4 times	26	21.7%
	5 times or more	10	8.3%
<b>Teacher and Staff Respondents (N=43)</b>			
Gender (N=30)	Male	11	36.67%
	Female	19	63.33%
Ethnicity (N=30)	African American (non-Hispanic)	18	60.00%
	Asian/Pacific Islanders	0	0.00%
	Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	5	16.67%
	Latino or Hispanic	6	20.00%
	Native American or Aleut	0	0.00%
	Other	1	3.33%
Position (N=30)	Teacher	23	79.31%
	School Counselor/ Nurse/ Social Worker	3	10.34%
	Administrator	2	6.90%
	Staff	1	3.45%
How long have you had this role, including time outside of Bammel Middle School? (N=30)	Less than 1 year	4	14.29%
	1-5 years	11	39.29%
	6-10 years	5	17.86%
	More than 10 years	8	28.57%

## **Sampling of Focus Group Interviews**

Data was drawn from three focus groups conducted with teachers and students who were involved in the restorative circles. Participants for focus group interviews were recruited and sampled based on their involvement in the restorative practice trainings throughout the school year. Involvement was based on attendance, participation, and in the case of teachers, implementation.

The final sample included 17 participants:

- Student focus group: included six, sixth- to eighth-grade students (a male and female from each grade) who were identified as being the most engaged in the program.
- Teacher focus groups: included 11 teachers.
  - First group: five, sixth-grade teachers (three males and three females)
  - Second group: six, seventh- and eighth-grade teachers (three males and three females)

## **Data Collection**

Campus walk-through observations were conducted by the restorative coordinator at Bammel Middle School. CSSS specialists visited the school once during the project (in April 2018) to observe the sixth- through eighth-grade circles, with one classroom from each grade being randomly selected for the observation. Observation summaries from the restorative coordinator and observation checklists from the CSSS specialists were used as data.

REI distributed online surveys through Qualtrics. A student consent form was attached at the beginning of the survey with active consent required for all participants to complete the survey.

Focus groups were conducted at the school. Interview questions were developed by the researchers and were presented with an open-ended question method. Selected participants were contacted two-weeks prior to the interview and received a consent form indicating an introduction to the study along with an explanation of its purpose. The interviews, as well as any verbal or nonverbal interactions, were audio recorded and later transcribed.

Lastly, REI requested student disciplinary data directly from Spring ISD as another dataset for the evaluation of the project.

## **Measurement**

### **Campus Walk-through Observation**

The checklist used by the CSSS specialists to conduct the campus walk-through(s) is attached as Appendix A

### **Survey Questions**

An anonymous survey was designed for teachers and students, respectively. The surveys sought information about participants' opinions regarding school culture, experiences of restorative circles, opinions of school climate and thoughts on culturally responsiveness pedagogy. The surveys also included demographic questions about the role of participants at the school, number of years at the school, race/ethnicity, and gender identification.

## Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus group interviews used different semi-structured interview guides to collect data about participants' demographics, experience, and opinions regarding the implementation of restorative circles, school climate change, and relationships at Bammel Middle School.



## Student Disciplinary Data

Student disciplinary data specifically refers to the frequencies and percentages of office referrals in each disciplinary category.

## Data Analysis

Data from observation checklists and focus group interviews were analyzed for themes with findings grounded in direct quotes from participants.

Data collected from surveys and discipline referrals provided by Spring ISD were also analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages are presented in tables within this report.



# RESULTS

## Implementation of Restorative Circles

### 1. What are the effects of restorative training provided by HCDE’s CSSS?

There was a total of 23 teachers/staff who responded to the survey and provided their opinions regarding the restorative workshops received at the beginning of the school year. The results showed that, after the restorative training, 91.3 percent of respondents knew how to immediately address minor behavior incidents in a way that involves both the person(s) harmed and wrongdoer(s) in solving the problem; 91.3 percent felt confident in their ability to conduct a restorative circle; 91.3 percent knew who to contact when they have questions about using restorative practice; and 73.92 percent agreed they can quickly and accurately assess situations and know whether to respond with a restorative circle. Table 2 below presents the details of the results.

Table 2. Teachers’ experience after the restorative training (N=23)

After the training:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
1. I know how to immediately address minor behavior incidents in a way that includes both persons harmed and wrongdoers in solving the problem	17.39%	73.91%	91.30%	4.35%	4.35%	8.70%
2. I feel confident in my ability to conduct a Restorative circle	34.78%	56.52%	91.30%	8.70%	0.00%	8.70%
3. I know who to contact when I have question about using restorative practice	52.17%	39.13%	91.30%	4.35%	4.35%	8.70%
4. I quickly and accurately assess situations and know whether to respond with a restorative circle	26.09%	47.83%	73.92%	21.74%	4.35%	26.09%

### 2. Were the restorative circles conducted appropriately?

Based on the observations of the CSSS specialists, the circles showed evidence of guidelines. Participants respected the talking piece and gave full attention to the speaker. Students handled the talking piece respectfully. Students and teachers showed the ability to facilitate circles. There was an appropriate space for circles.

The CSSS specialist noted that with the sixth-grade circle: “Students were very aware of the rules and corrected each other. The students created a safe environment for each other. The teacher was well integrated in the circle.”

## RESULTS

The note for the seventh-grade circle stated: "Teacher interjected to redirect; expand the conversation and confirm some answers. No centerpiece."

The note for the eighth-grade circle said: "Environment was set with music and the lighting. The students seemed very comfortable and felt safe to talk."

The synopsis of the restorative coordinator at Bammel Middle School indicated that students were continuing to become interested in participating in the circle process. The coordinator noted that the teachers were more comfortable with the circle process and were putting forth the effort to review the lessons prior to the day of the circle activity.

In responding to teacher concern that the topics given to teachers were not interesting and student participation was minimal, Bammel Middle School implemented "You Call It Fridays." On Fridays, teachers, and students were given an opportunity to create rounds on any topic they felt comfortable with. For the activity, students were given a post-it note and allowed to write down a question (serious or fun) and place it in a cup/hat. The questions were randomly drawn and asked to everyone in the circle. All inappropriate questions were discarded.

According to the conversations during teacher focus group interviews, teachers generally thought the circles created a safe space where students could open up about personal issues and inner thoughts. This gave teachers an opportunity to access students' underlying issues, and further change their relationship(s) with students. For example, one teacher shared how her attitude changed towards one student after circles:

"I learned some things about one particular student...I have a little more insight into her behavior and the underlying things with her...She still has issues in my class and I still have to kind of stay on her about her behavior, but the relationship has changed...If I did not know what was going on with her, I would refer her to the office, but I didn't know."

However, participants felt the frequency and length of circles should be consistent to keep students and teachers engaged. Fidelity amongst teachers who implemented the circles was also identified as an issue. One teacher participant stated: "I think it'd be helpful if it [restorative circle] was used more consistently because I did it all the time and I know others don't." In addition, teacher opinions noted that restorative circles should also be adapted consistently across different contexts. One teacher said: "For you to build relationships you can't keep changing the dynamics."

# RESULTS

### 3. What are the students and teachers' experience in regard to the restorative circles?

There were total 283 students responded the survey and provided their opinions regarding their experience of restorative circles. In general, 84.45% of respondents satisfied with the circles; 74.56% agreed that the circles had a positive impact on them; 77.38% would like to recommend circles to the others. It should be noted that 68.2% of respondents felt safe and comfortable to share their story during the circles, while 31.8% did not.

Table 3. Students' experience of the implementation of restorative circles (N=283)

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
(1). I feel safe and comfortable to share my story during the circle(s).	26.50%	41.70%	68.20%	22.97%	8.83%	31.80%
(2). I feel respected during the circle(s).	20.85%	51.24%	72.09%	20.14%	7.77%	27.91%
(3). In general, I am satisfied with my experience of the circle(s).	25.44%	59.01%	84.45%	10.60%	4.95%	15.55%
(4). In general, I am satisfied with my experience of the circle(s).	23.32%	51.24%	74.56%	18.73%	6.71%	25.44%
(5). I would like to recommend circle(s) to someone else.	27.56%	49.82%	77.38%	14.49%	8.13%	22.62%

A total of 20 teachers facilitated circles with students during the 2017-2018 school year. The results indicated that 80 percent of teachers agreed the relationships between teachers and students in the circles became stronger; 75 percent acknowledged they had a better understanding of why the problem happened and what other people were thinking; and 90 percent thought a restorative circle is a good way to resolve problems at school. Table 4 below presents teachers' opinions as to the implementation of restorative circles.

However, only 60 percent of participants thought all the goals of the circle plans had been achieved; 65 percent thought the staff followed up and monitored the plan as promised; and 60 percent thought students had been doing their part of the plans as promised.



# RESULTS

Table 4. Teacher opinions regarding implementation of restorative circles (N=20)

When you attend circles with students:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
1. The plan made during the circle has worked well	5.00%	75.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%
2. All of the goals of the plan have been achieved	5.00%	55.00%	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	40.00%
3. The relationships between teachers and the students at the circles have become stronger	10.00%	70.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%
4. I have a better understanding of why the problem happened and what other people were thinking	10.00%	65.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%
5. I think the circles and the plan helped the students be more successful at school	10.00%	65.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%
6. The staff followed up and monitored the plan as promised	5.00%	60.00%	65.00%	30.00%	5.00%	35.00%
7. The students have been doing their part of the plan as promised	5.00%	55.00%	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	40.00%
8. Overall, I think the circle is a good way to resolve problems at school	10.00%	80.00%	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%	10.00%

## Improvement of Students' Behavior

### 4. Did the number of office referrals decrease at Bammel Middle School after one-year of implementation of the UP Project?

The results indicate that the office referral numbers at Bammel Middle School generally decreased by 51.65 percent.

The following tables present the frequencies and percent changes by each discipline action code in both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. As mentioned in the methodology section, the action codes which had frequencies lower than 10 in both school years were excluded in the table.

Table 5. Frequencies and percent change by each action code

Action Code	2016-2017	2017-2018	Percent Change*
	N	N	
B6 - B(07)-Placed DAEP	20	13	-35.00%
C1 - C(06)-ISS/EC/TO - 1 day	630	366	-41.90%
C2 - C(26)-ISS/EC/TO - 1/2 day	29	20	-31.03%
C4 - C(06)-ISS/EC/TO - 2-5 days	270	133	-50.74%
C6 - C(05)-Susp 1 day	470	171	-63.62%
C7 - C(25)-Susp 1/2 day	24	5	-79.17%
C8 - C(05)-Susp 2 days	374	195	-47.86%
C9 - C(05)-Susp 3 days	464	179	-61.42%
D1 - D-Bus Susp - 2-5 days	28	0	-100.00%
D3 - D-Concurrent D-Hall	19	18	-5.26%
D6 - D-Concurrent Suspension	11	15	36.36%
D7 - D-DHall After School - (1-3 hrs) 1 day	287	195	-32.06%
D8 - D-DHall After School - (1-3 hrs) 2-5 days	55	33	-40.00%
DD - D-DHall Sat - 1 day	31	0	-100.00%
DL - D-Verbal Reprimand	126	32	-74.60%
Total Infractions	2875	1390	-51.65%

\*Note: Percent change= (N of 2017 – N of 2016)/ N of 2016 \*100%

The data showed that a total of 670 students (51.42 percent) received office referrals in the 2016-2017 school year. This number decreased to 445 (49.44 percent) referrals in the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 6. Student numbers and percentages receiving office referrals

	2016-2017		2017-2018	
	N	% of total students	N	% of total students
Students who received office referrals	670	51.42%	445	49.44%

By checking the number of students and percentage of totals in each action code category, it shows the numbers generally decreased from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year.

Specifically, the one-day, in-school suspension decreased by 1.51 percent; the two- to five-day, in-school suspension decreased by 3.83 percent; the one-day, out-of-school suspension decreased by 8.07 percent; the half-day, out-of-school suspension decreased by 1.13 percent; the two-day, out-of-school suspension decreased by 1.77 percent; and the three-day, out-of-school suspension decreased by 7.1 percent.

Table 7. Student numbers, percentages, and percent change received office referrals

Action Code	2016-2017		2017-2018		Percent Change*
	N of students	% of total students*	N of students	% of total students**	
B6 - B(07)-Placed DAEP	19	1.46%	13	1.44%	-0.02%
C1 - C(06)-ISS/EC/TO - 1 day	344	26.40%	224	24.89%	-1.51%
C2 - C(26)-ISS/EC/TO - 1/2 day	24	1.84%	19	2.11%	0.27%
C4 - C(06)-ISS/EC/TO - 2-5 days	186	14.27%	94	10.44%	-3.83%
C6 - C(05)-Susp 1 day	289	22.18%	127	14.11%	-8.07%
C7 - C(25)-Susp 1/2 day	22	1.69%	5	0.56%	-1.13%
C8 - C(05)-Susp 2 days	233	17.88%	145	16.11%	-1.77%
C9 - C(05)-Susp 3 days	288	22.10%	135	15.00%	-7.10%
D1 - D-Bus Susp - 2-5 days	26	2.00%	0	0.00%	-2.00%
D3 - D-Concurrent D-Hall	16	1.23%	16	1.78%	0.55%
D6 - D-Concurrent Suspension	10	0.77%	12	1.33%	0.57%
D7 - D-DHall After School - (1-3 hrs) 1 day	194	14.89%	141	15.67%	0.78%
D8 - D-DHall After School - (1-3 hrs) 2-5 days	43	3.30%	28	3.11%	-0.19%
DD - D-DHall Sat - 1 day	27	2.07%	0	0.00%	-2.07%
DL - D-Verbal Reprimand	95	7.29%	28	3.11%	-4.18%

Note: \*2016-2017, Bammel had total 1303 students \*\*2017-2018, Bammel had total 900 students  
 \*\*\*Percent Change=% of 2017- % of 2016

## School Culture

### 5. What is the culture the school after one year of implementation of the UPP?

There were about 27 teachers who responded the survey questions regarding the culture at Bammel Middle School. The results indicated that 88.89% of respondents agreed that they were well informed of the influence of culture, language, and ethnicity on school achievement; 85.18% agreed that they were provided opportunities for professional development on issues of cultural, language, and ethnic diversity; 15.39% agreed that there is no place for emotions and feelings during instructional delivery; 92.6% believed that it is important that the person who has caused harm is given support to change their behavior; 96.15% believed that teachers should have high expectations for all students regardless of their background or differences; 77.78% believed that people who cause harm should be punished; 92.59% believed when someone causes harm they should be allowed to make amends; 81.48% thought teachers informed students about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations in Bammel Middle School.

The following table presents the details of the results.

Table 8. Teachers' opinion regarding the culture at Bammel Middle School

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
1. Administrator, staff, and support personnel are well informed of the influence of culture, language, and ethnicity on school achievement. (N=27)	40.74%	48.15%	88.89%	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%
2. The administration provides opportunities for professional development of teachers and staff on issues of cultural, language, and ethnic diversity. (N=27)	40.74%	44.44%	85.18%	14.81%	0.00%	4.81%
3. The administration exemplifies a positive attitude towards the school, teachers, students, and families. (N=26)	26.92%	50.00%	76.92%	19.23%	3.85%	23.08%
4. New reforms are implemented with sensitivity toward the diverse learning needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. (N=26)	26.92%	61.54%	88.46%	11.54%	0.00%	11.54%
5. I believe there is no place for emotions and feelings during instructional delivery. (N=26)	3.85%	11.54%	15.39%	46.15%	38.46%	84.61%
6. I believe that the people involved in a conflict need to agree on a resolution that benefits both parties. (N=27)	44.44%	51.85%	96.29%	3.70%	0.00%	3.70%
7. I believe that it is important that the person who has caused harm is given support to change their behavior. (N=27)	37.04%	55.56%	92.60%	7.41%	0.00%	7.41%
8. I believe that people who cause harm should be punished. (N=27)	29.63%	48.15%	77.78%	18.52%	3.70%	22.22%
9. I believe when someone causes harm they should be allowed to make amends. (N=27)	29.63%	62.96%	92.59%	3.70%	3.70%	7.40%
10. I believe that teachers should have high expectations for all students regardless of their background or differences. (N=26)	65.38%	30.77%	96.15%	3.85%	0.00%	3.85%
11. I believe that teachers should modify their instruction so that students from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, language, and ability groups will have an equal opportunity to learn. (N=27)	48.15%	48.15%	96.30%	3.70%	0.00%	3.70%
12. In my school, teachers inform students about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations. (N=27)	22.22%	59.26%	81.48%	14.81%	3.70%	18.51%

The survey regarding school culture at Bammel Middle School received 363 student responses. Results demonstrate that 87.33 percent of respondents agreed teachers help them to appreciate current and historical events from different point of view; 75.69 percent agreed teachers informed them about prejudices and how these have a negative effect on people from different racial groups; and, 78.34 percent agreed their teachers have high expectations for all students regardless of background. The following table presents the details of the results.

Table 9. Culturally responsive pedagogy

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
(1). My teachers help me to appreciate current and historical events from different point of view. (N=363)	24.24%	63.09%	87.33%	9.64%	3.03%	12.67%
(2). My teachers inform me about prejudices and how these have a negative effect on people from different racial groups. (N=362)	21.82%	53.87%	75.69%	18.51%	5.80%	24.31%
(3). My teachers have high expectations for all students regardless of their background. (N=360)	35.28%	43.06%	78.34%	16.11%	5.56%	21.67%





## School Environment and Safety

### 6. What is school environment and safety at Bammel Middle School?

A total of 358 students responded to questions about behavior expectations at school. Results show that 92.01 percent of respondents were informed of school behavior expectations; 93.94 percent understood the school behavior expectations; 77.14 percent agreed students are rewarded for appropriate behavior at school; 63.09 percent agreed that if a student harms, bullies, or assaults someone, the student gets the opportunity to change his/her behavior and make things right; 67.77 percent agreed the person harmed is asked to say what could be done to make things better; and 55.37 percent agreed the environment of Bammel Middle School is generally positive.

Table 10. Students' opinions regarding behavior expectations in school (N=358)

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
1. I was informed of the school behavior expectations.	41.87%	50.14%	92.01%	5.79%	2.20%	7.99%
2. The expectation for behavior are posted and available to me.	31.13%	50.96%	82.09%	13.50%	4.41%	17.91%
3. I understand the school behavior expectations.	39.67%	54.27%	93.94%	3.31%	2.75%	6.06%
4. I am expected to follow the behavior expectations at my school.	42.70%	49.59%	92.29%	5.51%	2.20%	7.71%
5. Students are rewarded /acknowledged for appropriate behavior at my school.	28.10%	49.04%	77.14%	16.25%	6.61%	22.86%
6. My school has a plan for working with students who do not follow the behavior expectation.	22.31%	51.79%	74.10%	18.46%	7.44%	25.90%
7. If a student harms, bullies, or assaults someone at this school, the student gets a chance to change his/her behavior and make things right.	20.39%	42.70%	63.09%	23.42%	13.50%	36.92%
8. In case of bullying, the person harmed is asked to say what could be done to make things better.	17.36%	50.41%	67.77%	23.42%	8.82%	32.24%
9. In general, the environment at this school is positive.	14.60%	40.77%	55.37%	26.45%	18.18%	44.63%

The following table 11 presents the results of students’ opinions regarding the school safety in Bammel Middle School. There were 358 students who responded the survey questions. The results indicated that the most unsafe areas are playgrounds, parking lots, and hallways. The safest areas are field trips, library, gym, and classrooms.

Table 11. Students’ opinions of school safety (N=358):

Location	At Bammel Middle School, do you feel safe in these areas?			
	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
1. In classrooms	36.87%	34.64%	22.35%	6.15%
2. In hallways	17.88%	24.86%	36.31%	20.95%
3. In school entrances or exits	29.05%	28.49%	27.09%	15.36%
4. In the library	45.53%	25.98%	19.27%	9.22%
5. In the gym	38.55%	29.61%	20.11%	11.73%
6. On school buses	28.21%	24.58%	30.17%	17.04%
7. On playgrounds	26.82%	24.58%	21.51%	27.09%
8. On the way to and from school	34.08%	29.61%	21.79%	14.53%
9. Lunchroom or eating area/ cafe	36.59%	31.01%	21.23%	11.17%
10. Parking lot	21.23%	29.05%	25.42%	24.30%
11. Areas of school property	27.65%	32.68%	23.46%	16.20%
12. School field trips or extracurricular activities	41.90%	29.33%	17.88%	10.89%
13. Electronically (on social media)	32.40%	28.77%	22.91%	15.92%
14. Other	34.36%	29.61%	20.95%	15.08%

**7. After one year of implementation of UPP, did the school climate become more positive?**

A total of 354 students responded to questions about school environment at the end of the year compared to the beginning of the school year. Results indicate most students thought the teachers/staff treated students more politely, more fairly, in a friendlier way, in a more helpful way, with more kindness, and with more respect. However, most students did not believe student behaviors had become more positive. The following table 12 presents the details of the results.

Table 12. Students' opinion regarding school climate change (N=354)

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
1. Students in this school treat each other more politely.	12.43%	29.38%	41.81%	34.75%	23.45%	58.20%
2. Students in this school treat each other more fairly.	11.58%	32.49%	44.07%	35.59%	20.34%	55.93%
3. Students in this school treat each other in a friendlier way.	14.41%	33.33%	47.74%	32.49%	19.77%	52.26%
4. Students in this school treat each other in a more helpful way.	11.58%	35.03%	46.61%	33.90%	19.49%	53.39%
5. Students in this school treat each other with more kindness.	12.43%	28.81%	41.24%	35.31%	23.45%	58.76%
6. Students in this school treat each other with more respect.	12.15%	33.90%	46.05%	32.20%	21.75%	53.95%
7. Students in this school treat each other with more respect.	22.60%	50.00%	72.60%	16.38%	11.02%	27.40%
8. Teachers/Staff in this school treat students more fairly.	23.73%	45.20%	68.93%	19.77%	11.30%	31.07%
9. Teachers/Staff in this school treat students in a friendlier way.	22.88%	49.72%	72.60%	18.08%	9.32%	27.40%
10. Teachers/Staff in this school treat students in a more helpful way.	24.01%	50.85%	74.86%	15.25%	9.89%	25.14%
11. Teachers/Staff in this school treat students with more kindness.	20.62%	49.72%	70.34%	17.23%	12.43%	29.66%
12. Teachers/Staff in this school treat students with more respect.	24.58%	45.48%	70.06%	14.81%	11.30%	29.94%

Focus group participants discussed positive school climate in a variety of ways including calling it a place where all members in the school community felt safe; a place where everyone was treated fairly, included, and accepted; and an environment that actively promotes positive behaviors and interactions.

Administrator relationships with teachers and students also appeared to be an important component for a positive school climate. Teachers expressed concerns about being disconnected with administrators: "One of the things that allows us not to have as much cohesiveness around the campus is the fact that I don't know how much the administrators build relationships with us."

Teachers also expressed concerns regarding the student-administrator relationship. For example, teachers suggested that administrators should build better relationships with students, so they are able to obtain student trust.

Students noted that their attitudes toward teachers and administrators largely relied on their experiences out of circles. One student said: "I think they [administrators] always misunderstood me. I tried to explain things and I got a suspension." Another student said: "That always happened on me. I felt I am the target."

# Summary and Recommendations

## SUMMARY

The pilot Uplifting Pupils Project (UPP) at Bammel Middle School showed that restorative practices can positively affect student and teacher relationships, which influences student and staff behavior and impacts school culture.

The pilot program increased student and teacher conversations, provided a deeper understanding of the root cause of some student behavior, and provided a beneficial way to resolve conflict within the school. Both teachers and students agreed the circles had a positive impact on them individually while promoting a positive culture in the building.

During the pilot project, office referrals and suspensions both declined, supporting the idea that student behavior was positively impacted by the program and the learning environment was changing.

However, the pilot highlighted some areas that still need reinforcement. While most teachers accepted restorative values that the person causing harm should be allowed to make amends, after the first year many still believed that those who cause harm should be punished. There was also a disconnect between teachers' opinions about high expectations and those of students. Approximately 96 percent of teachers believed they have high expectations for all students regardless of their background or differences, but only 78.34 percent of students agreed teachers have high expectations for all students.

The program also showcased a need for more work on the school environment. While most students felt informed about school behavior expectations, only 55 percent said the school environment was positive. More than 30 percent of students did not feel the school was employing a restorative approach with only 37 percent saying they felt that if a student harms, bullies, or assaults someone at this school, he/she gets a chance to change his/her behavior and make things right and only 32 percent believing that in the case of bullying the person harmed is asked for input on what can be done to make things better.

Both students and teachers said they support a culture of respect, agreeing that after the program, teachers treated students with greater respect, more politely, fairer and with more kindness. However, student interactions did not improve, with most students indicating that students did not treat each other politely, fairly and with more respect after the program.

In conclusion, the research indicates that the training in restorative practices was implemented effectively and had a positive impact on the culture and climate of Bammel Middle School. While there remain areas for improvement, the program appears to have had a significant impact on student behavior as evidenced by reduced disciplinary actions and student/teacher sentiment regarding interactions and behaviors.

# Summary and Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue with restorative circle training for staff to provide more information about how to quickly and accurately assess and respond situations.
- Implement consistency of circles across classrooms and within different contexts. Provide teachers with equal opportunities to implement the circles within the school's schedules and plans.
- Further develop circle plans, engage students in circles, and promote consistent follow-up to the agreements/plans reached in the circles.
- Administrators should continually introduce the restorative values and approach.
- Teachers should inform students about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations.
- Policies should be created to guarantee teachers have equal high expectations for all students regardless of background.
- Employ a restorative approach schoolwide while providing opportunities for students to fix their misbehaviors and harmed relationships.
- Make increased efforts to promote the student-to-student relationship in future restorative practices implementation.

Appendix A. Restorative Checklist

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Stated the purposed of the circle	
Centerpiece	
Evidence of Guidelines	
Talking piece respected	
Full attention given to speaker	
Spoke into the center	
Handled the talking piece respectfully	
Evidence of value	
Check in round with the talking piece	
Ability to facilitate circle	
Circle opening	
Responding to challenging circumstance	
Closure question	
Closed the circle	
Talking piece suspended	
Type of circle	
Talking piece passed 2-3 times	
Appropriate space for circles	
Number of students	
Number of students passed	
Notes:	



