

DPS Restorative Justice Project

Executive Summary

2007-2008

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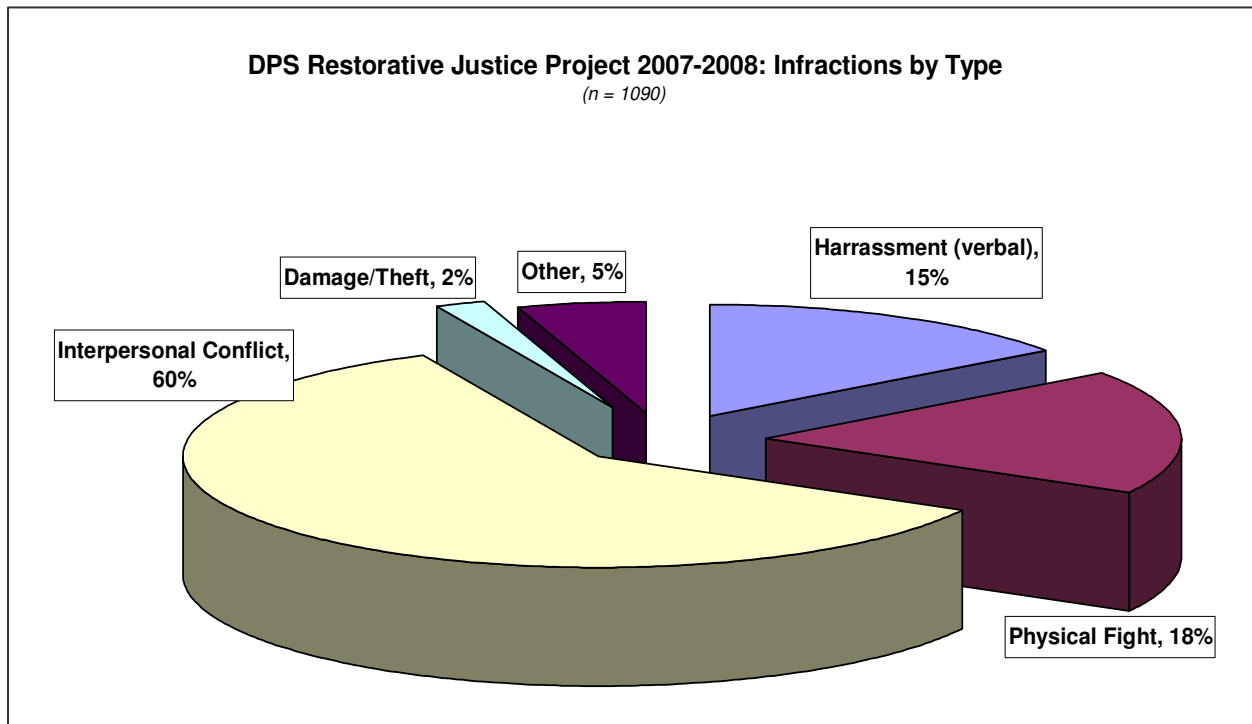
Demographics

- The DPS Restorative Justice (RJ) Project served 812 students in the 2007-2008 school year. Students came from Horace Mann Middle School (56), North High School (170), Lake Middle School (180), Skinner Middle School (52), Abraham Lincoln High School (105), Rishel Middle School (111), and Kunsmiller Middle School (138). Lincoln, Rishel, and Kunsmiller began serving students in January of 2008.
- Eighty-seven percent of the students were Hispanic/Latino, 6% were Caucasian, 4% were Black, and the remainder were of other or mixed ethnic heritage.
- There were 43% boys and 57% girls served.

Program Processes

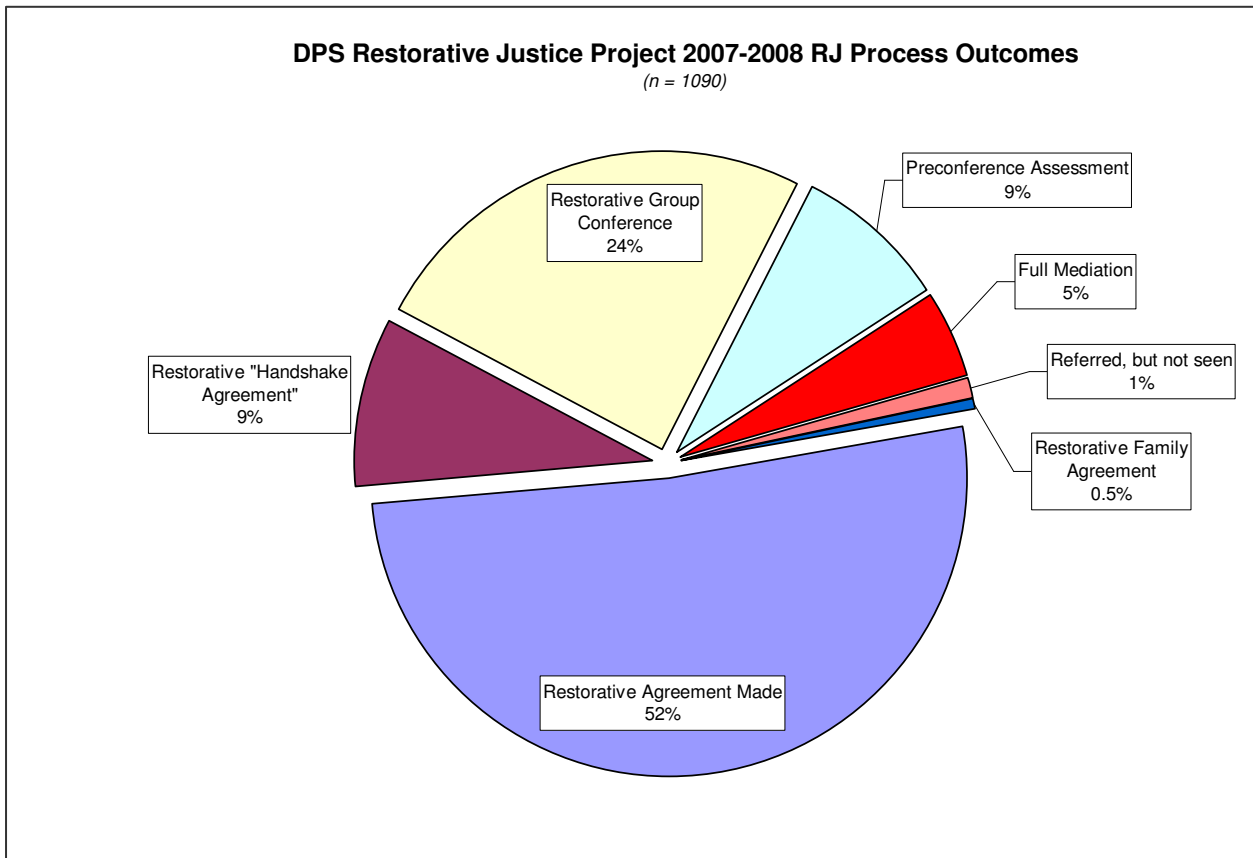
Infractions Leading to RJ Referrals

One thousand ninety infractions involving 812 students were processed through RJ interventions at the seven schools. One hundred thirty-nine of the cases referred were known to be in lieu of out-of-school suspension, and an additional 39 cases had reduced length of suspension due to participation in the RJ process. Most of the infractions (60%) were described as “interpersonal conflict,” which included nonphysical, verbal conflict, most typically arguments and rumors. Eighteen percent were “physical” altercations, that including pushing, shoving, and fights. Fifteen percent of the infractions were described as “verbal harassment” which were more intense than verbal conflicts and included such offenses as racial slurs and insults. The remaining seven percent of the infractions were classified as “damage to property or theft” (2%), and “other” (5%).



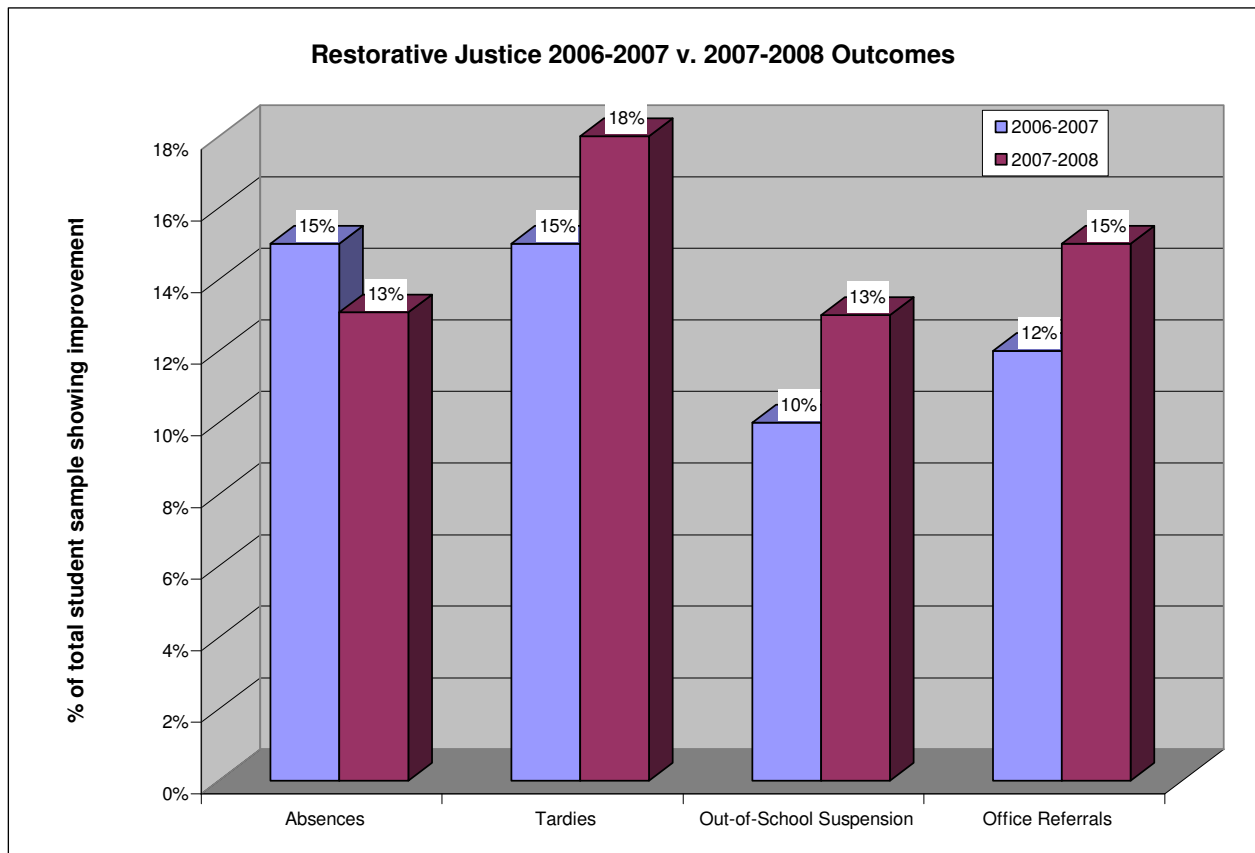
Results of Restorative Referrals

The majority (52%) of the results of the RJ process included the creation of a “*restorative agreement*,” followed by “*restorative group conferencing*” (24%). In some of the cases, a *preconference assessment*, or individual meeting with a student, was the final outcome, in which students worked out the situation without the formal restorative agreement. The cases that ended up in *preconference assessment* did not continue the process beyond the first meeting with the RJ coordinator. A small percentage of students were referred for the RJ process but were not seen for some reason. A “*handshake agreement*” was also a common outcome for the RJ program, with 9% of cases resulting in this outcome.



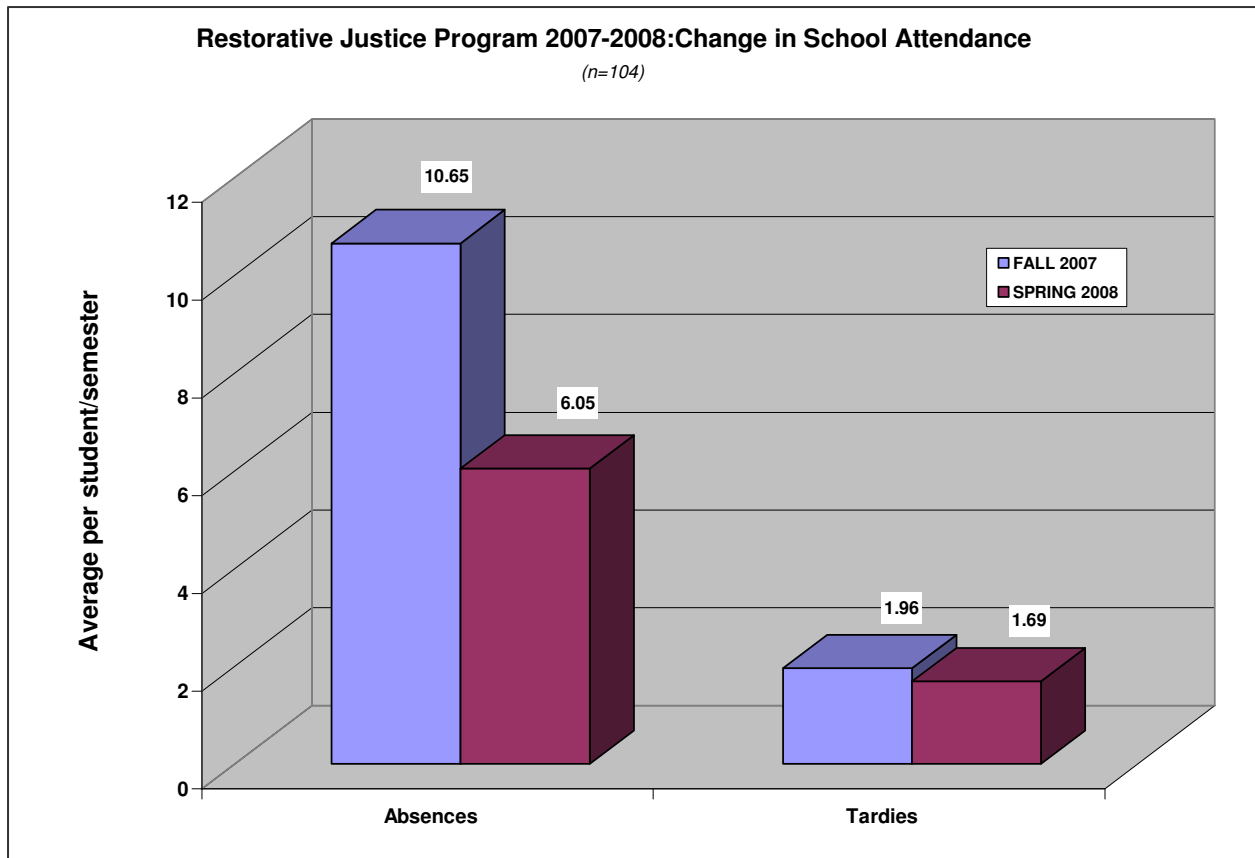
School Based Outcomes

- Thirteen percent of all students served showed improvement in their attendance and 18% of the students improved their tardiness.
- Thirteen percent of the students reduced the average number of out of school suspensions and 10% reduced office referrals they received.
- The chart below illustrates the percentages of students served by the project that made improvements in the 2006-2007 school year compared with 2007-2008. In all measures except for absences from school, more students showed improvements, even with the addition of three new schools midway through the school year.
- The students showing improvements in these areas were more likely to have participated in multiple RJ interventions. There was a significant and positive relationship between the number of RJ interventions and student improvement in attendance and discipline measures.



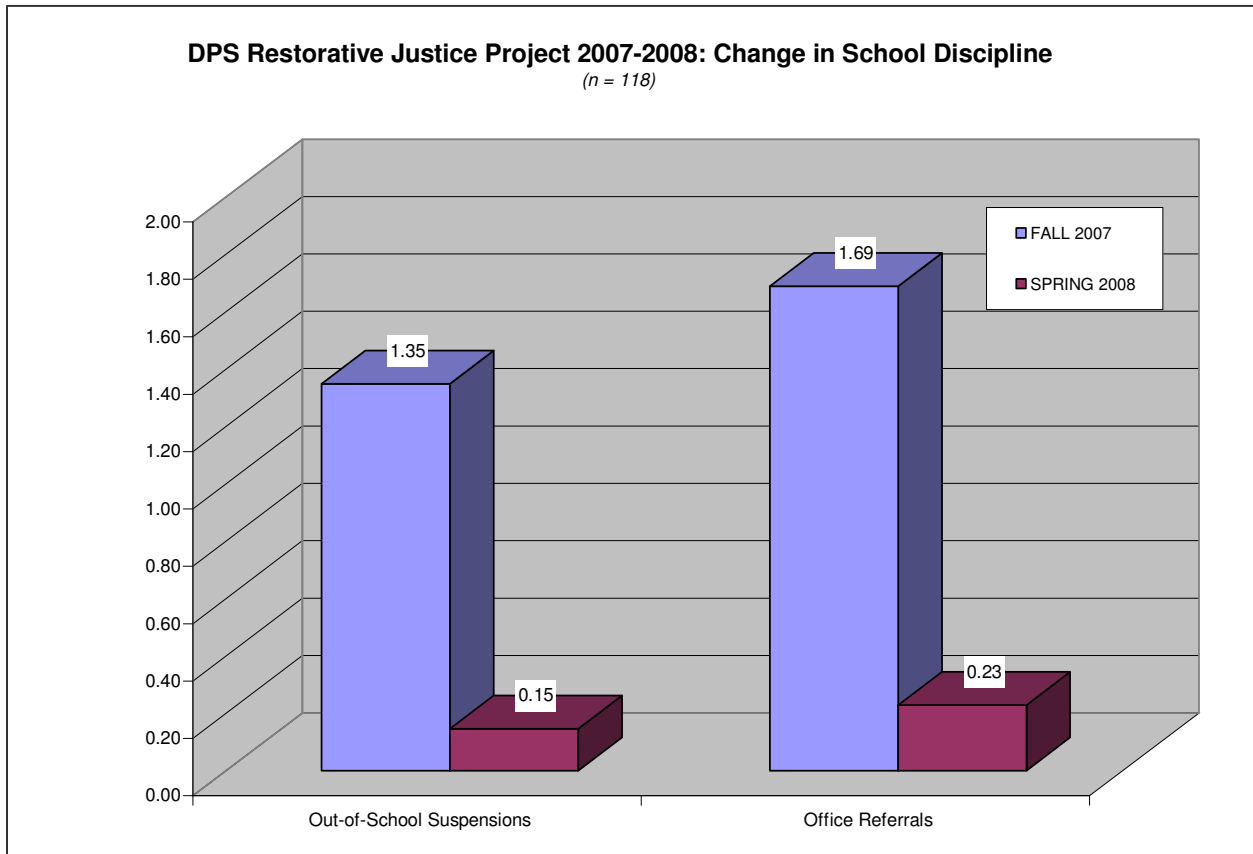
Detailed Attendance Outcomes

- Thirteen percent of the students in the program have improved their overall average daily attendance compared to last year's semester average. Those improving reduced their absences by 45% from an average of eleven days of absence per semester to six days per semester.
- Eighteen percent of the program's students lowered their average number of tardies per semester by fourteen percent.



Detailed Behavioral Outcomes

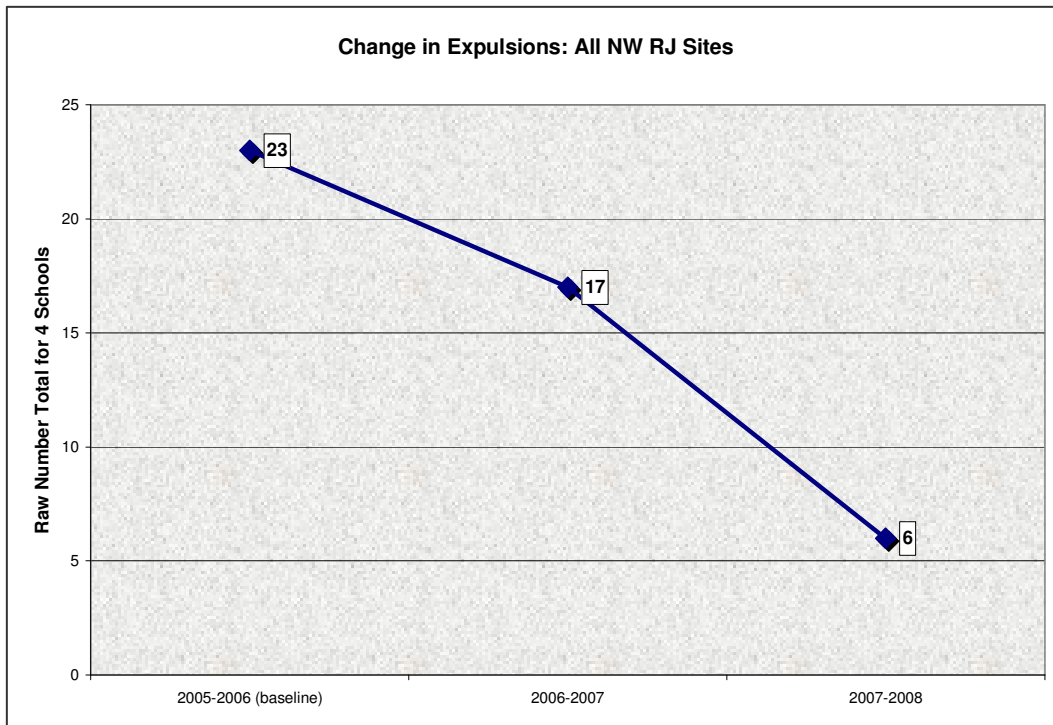
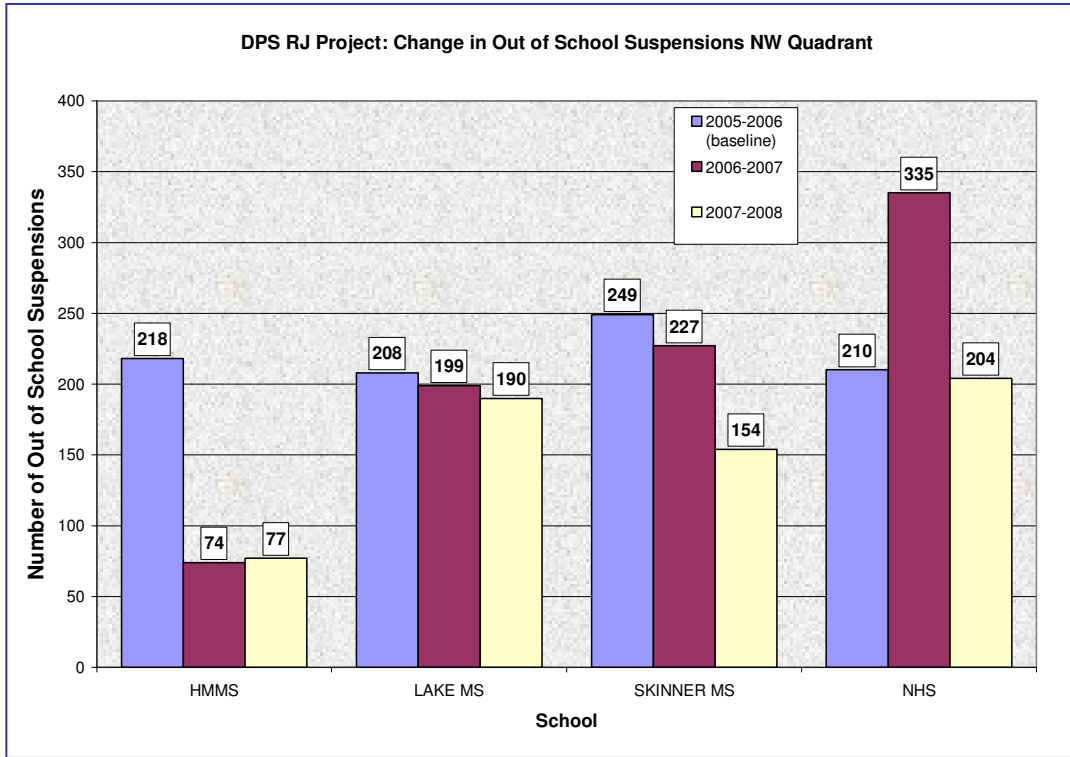
- Fifteen percent of participating students showed an 87% reduction in the number of office referrals in the second semester compared with the first semester
- Thirteen percent of students had an average reduction of 92% in the number of out of school suspensions in the second semester.



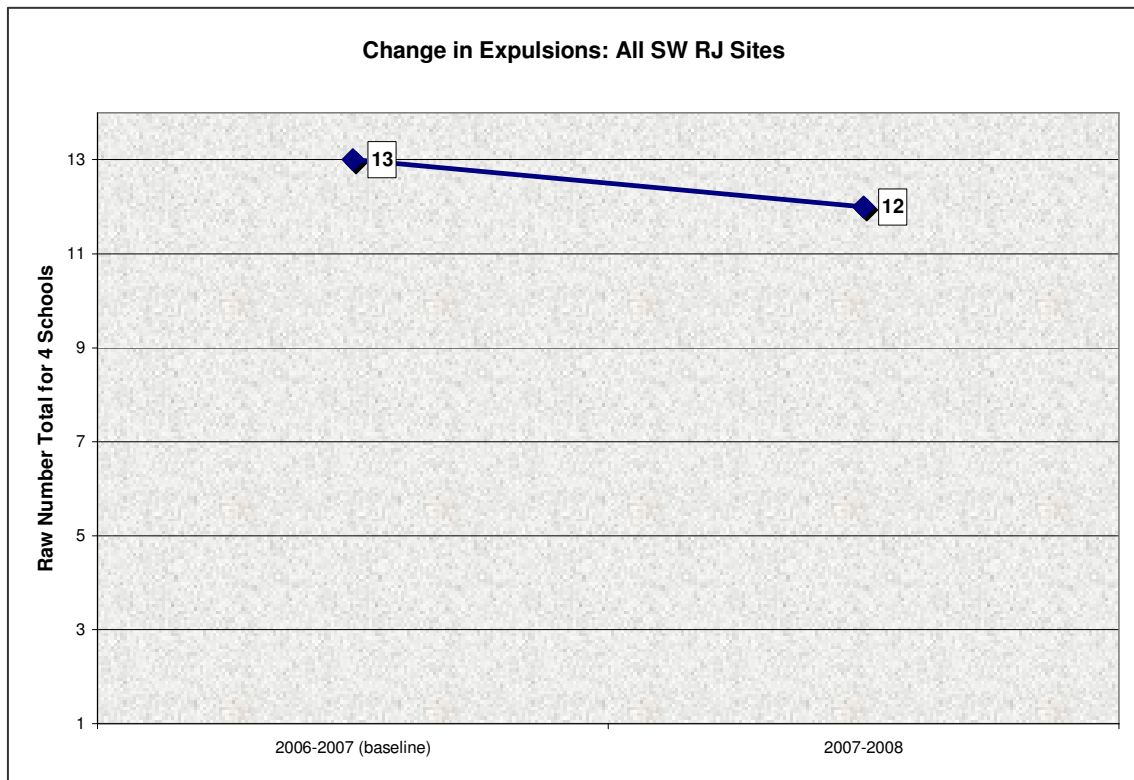
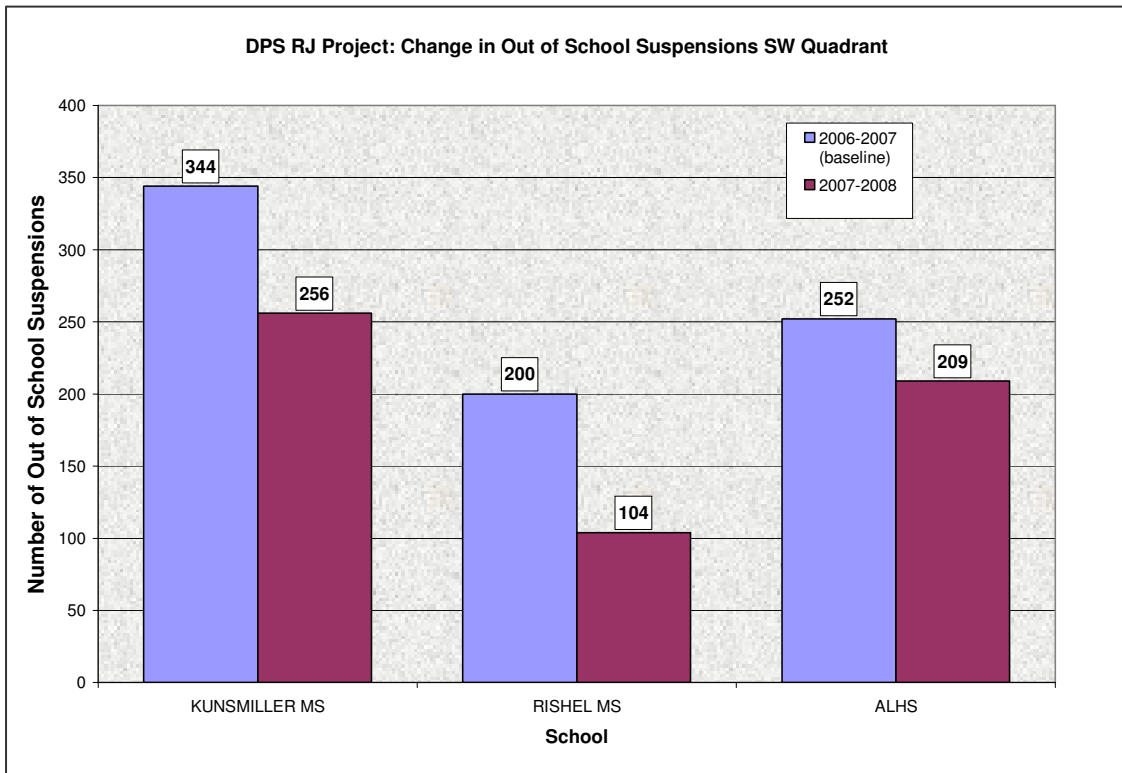
The above improvements in discipline referrals represent a significant increase in the time students were engaged in education at school, as well as a decrease in time school administration spent in dealing with discipline situations.

Schoolwide Outcomes

The major goal of the DPS Restorative Justice Project is to reduce suspensions, expulsions from school. Further, the project aims to prevent the recurrence of the behavior leading to discipline referrals. Both suspensions and expulsions have shown steady, significant reductions in the 2nd year of the NW quadrant schools as shown in the following charts.

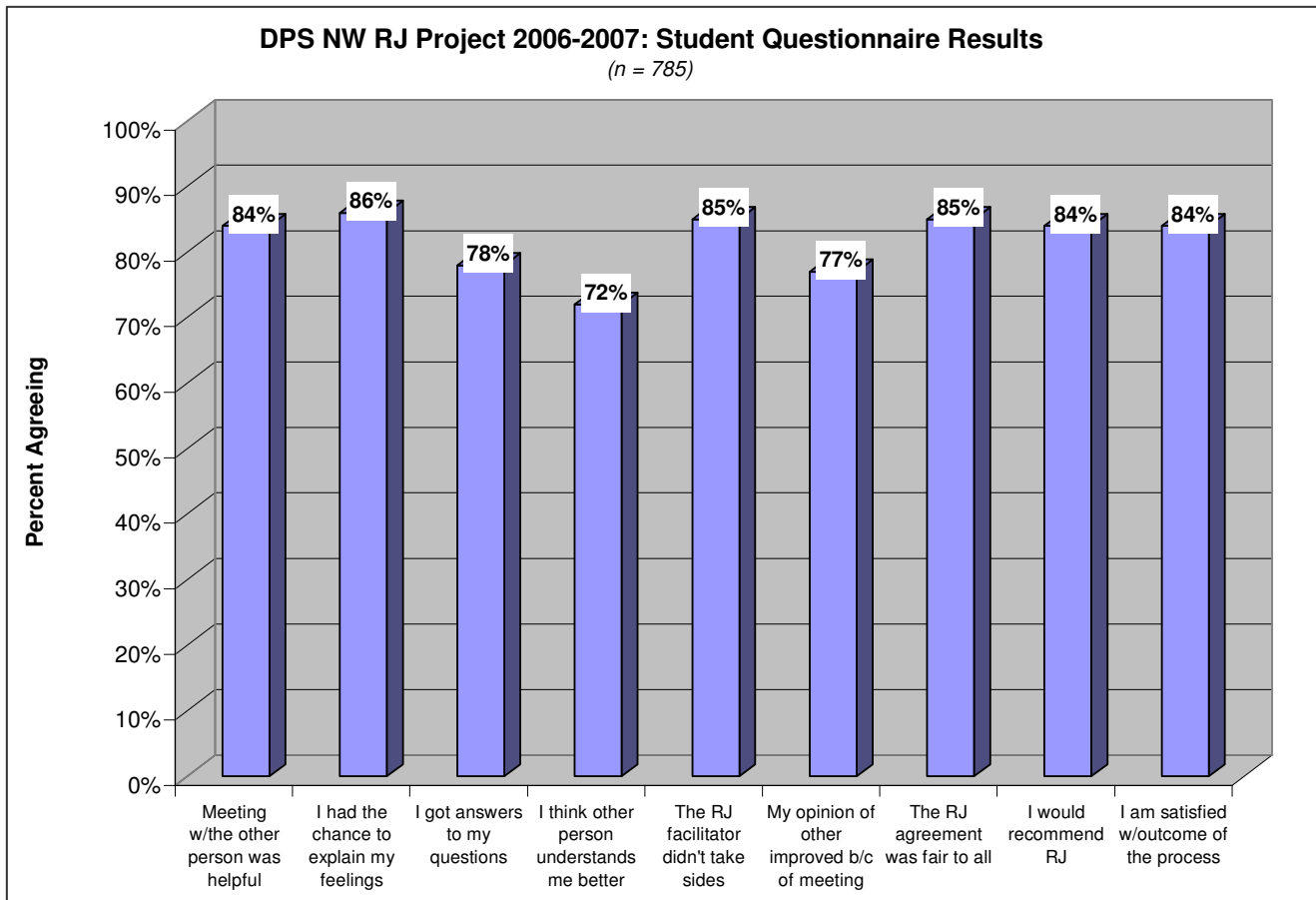


The SW Quadrant did not begin serving students until January of 2008. Despite the short duration of the project in these three schools during 2007-2008, reductions in school suspensions and expulsions were noted as illustrated below.



Student Participant Feedback

When students were surveyed about the restorative process, 86% agreed that the meeting was an acceptable method by which to explain their feelings. Seventy-seven percent of students agreed that their opinion of the other individual(s) improved since the meeting took place. Eighty-five percent of all students in the program agreed that the restorative agreement reached at the conclusion of the process was fair. Eighty-four percent of participants reported that they were satisfied with the outcome. The chart below illustrates these outcomes.

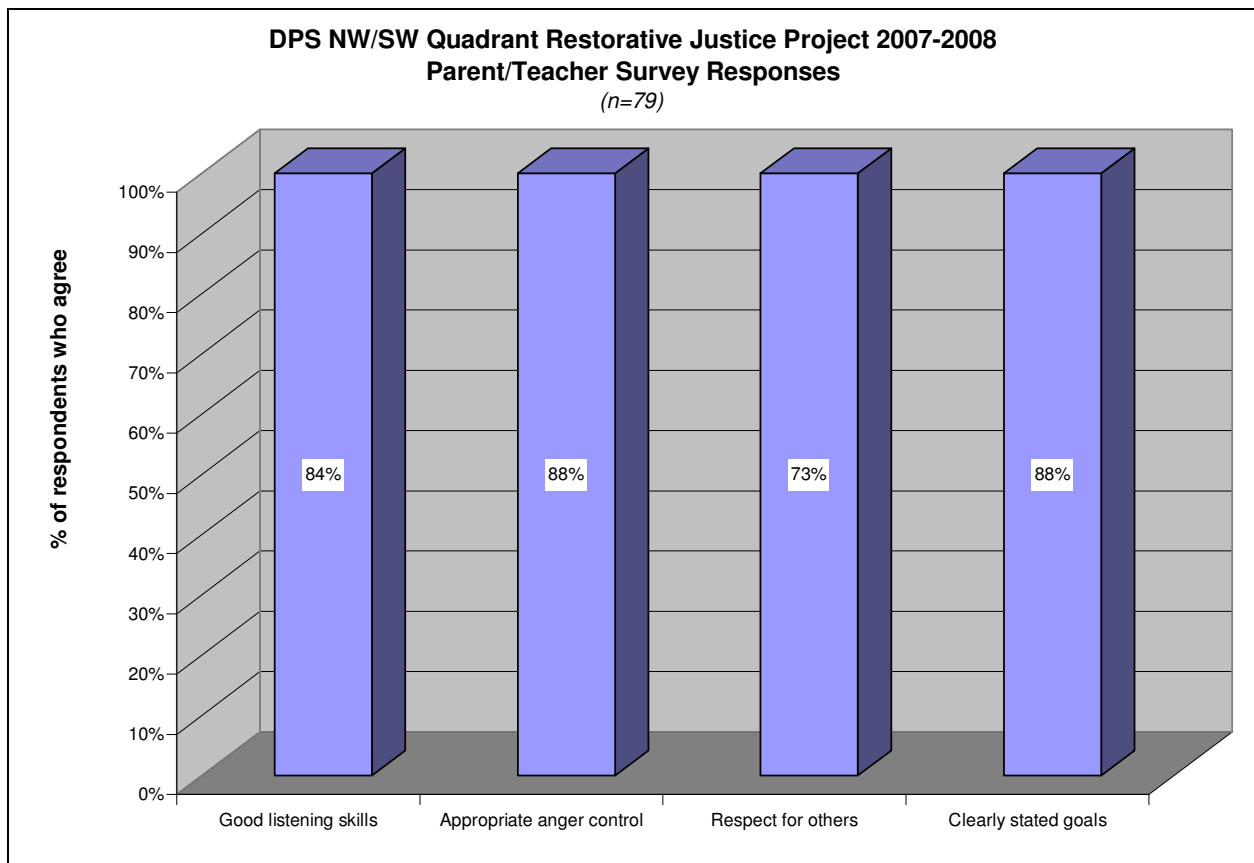


In regards to the staying power of the intervention meeting, 75% of the students reported they always completed the agreement, 62% of the participants reported the other individual involved always completed the agreement, and 63% of the students responded that they would use what they had learned in the future. In follow-up surveys with students, 88% reported they would recommend the process to a friend, 93% reported they had learned something by participating in the process,

Family and Community Involvement

Two hundred and two parents and other family members attended conferences with their students, and 187 direct telephone contacts were made with parents about the process. Two hundred sixty-nine teachers and other school staff members participated in the conferences. Two hundred fifty-five students other than those referred participated in the conferences, and volunteer RJ facilitators participated in 60 instances over the course of the year.

Parents and teachers gave positive feedback about what they saw in the RJ process. Parents and teachers that completed the exit survey agreed that students showed good listening skills, appropriate anger control, respect for others, and clearly stated goals and actions to address the harm done in the referring incident. The chart following is indicative of the impact the process has had on participating students, which was clear to observing adults in the role of teacher or parent.



Summary

The second year of the DPS NW Restorative Justice Project, and first year for the SW expansion, was marked by the successful continuation of the program in the NW schools and launching in two middle schools and their feeder system high school in the SW quadrant. Due to the process of posting, interviewing, hiring, and training of the RJ coordinators, the SW quadrant did not begin serving students until January of 2008. Despite the challenge of time and systems, over one thousand referrals were made for RJ services, involving an unduplicated count of 812 students. Nearly 180 of these cases were in lieu of suspension or provided for reduced out of school suspension as a result of the referral. The majority of cases referred were described as non-physical, isolated cases of “interpersonal conflict,” which were the targeted offenses for the original project proposal. Over half of the cases ended up in a formal “restorative agreement,” and according to self report, the majority of the agreements were followed by all parties.

Students, parents, and teachers gave strong endorsement for the RJ process in terms of its fairness, helpfulness with solving the conflict, and aid in improving understanding. Additionally, parents and teachers reported students’ demonstration of good listening skills, empathy, anger control, respect, and appropriate reparative action planning as a result of the mediation and conferences. Two hundred two parents directly participated in the RJ process, and students reported telling their parents if they were not present. The majority of students agreed that the mediation helped the relationship with the other person or persons involved in the original incident. Most stated that they would recommend the RJ process to other students.

All schools showed reductions in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions compared to the prior year’s total, and many students showed significant reductions in absences, tardies, office referrals, and out-of-school suspensions.