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# My Leadership Experiences with Peace Circles as a Restorative Practice

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO


MY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES WITH PEACE CIRCLES

AS A RESTORATIVE PRACTICE


A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION


BY

EL-ROY ESTES


CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is the fourth quarter of the game. . . The 2-minute warning clock is now ticking I am writing this last page of this dissertation with triumph.  I am anxiously waiting for the sound of the horn so I can celebrate this victory.  Before I celebrate this great feat, I have to acknowledge those special individuals who contributed to my successful completion of this doctoral program.

First, I would like to give a special thanks to my wife, Mauricia for the support throughout this travel up the mountain to achieving this doctoral degree.  Thanks for being that critical friend as you reviewed my dissertation.  I know it was difficult for you as my wife to be critical and at the same time continue to be *my cheerleader*.  I can recall the long and late nights up trying to complete this process.  Thanks for the late night meals and snacks making sure my body and mind were energized.  Foremost, thanks for being patient and understanding as I traveled down this endless road.

I would like to acknowledge our first born son, Essiah El who was born into existence on November 12, 2015, the same day I was scheduled to defend my proposal which was later rescheduled.  I would like to thank Essiah for "organizing" my papers and books as I was completing this paper.  I would like to also thank him for assisting me "type" some of the chapters while he sat on my lap just typing away.

To complete my family circle, I would like to thank my mother for her continued support throughout my entire life. I appreciate the guidance and "tough love" you provided.  I understand now. Thanks again, Mommie for being my first teacher!

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee members, Dr. Felicia Stewart, Dr. Diane Morrison and Dr. Celia Arresola whose knowledge, dedication and support was vital during this process. Even though my chairperson did not begin the process initially with me, it was not obvious.  Dr. Celia Arresola stepped right in and did not miss a beat.  I would like to give Dr. Arresola a special thanks for her time, patience and effort while tirelessly supporting me.  Dr. Marla Israel was my first chairperson who initially ignited the fire to start the process.  She was not a member of the Loyola University staff when I completed my dissertation process, but I still would like to acknowledge by expressing my gratitude.  Thank you, Dr. Israel.

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ABSTRACT

Restorative practices emerged on the scene within the Chicago Public

Schools (CPS) as of recent. In 2006, CPS revamped their Student Code of

Misconduct handbook from a strict and stern "zero-tolerance" voice to a more

sensitive and subtle "restorative talk" approach. With this transition in effect, the

school's culture and climate are expected to positively improve and at the same

time support the social and emotional and academic performance of the students.

Peace Circles is one of the alternate solutions to address these issues by decreasing

out-of-school suspensions and improving social and emotional and academic learning.

This capstone self-study will focus on my reflections as a leader implementing Peace

Circles. I will be reflecting on my leadership experiences of the Peace Circle

implementation throughout the school's main building campus which is comprised

of 13 classrooms serving grades three through eight. According to Pine (2008),

self-study is a form of action research that educators can focus on educational field

experiences and professional development. To inform my self-study, I will engage

in reflective journaling regarding publicly available data as well as document

analysis of school-wide policies around discipline and restorative practices.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

**Background to the Study**

A fight between two students breaks out in the middle of a lesson. Neither

student is suspended.  A student walks out of the classroom and returns to the

classroom.  A student curses at the teacher in the hallway in front of the other

students.  The same student is sitting right in front of the teacher the following period

after being removed for only 59 minutes.  Eating is not allowed in the classrooms,

but a student decides to eat some *Flamin' Hots* chips from their school desk.  The

teacher caught the student red-handed with red fingertips with the bag of chips and

immediately sends the student to the Dean of Students, but the student later returns to

the classroom during the same class period. Two students had to be separated by two

security guards in the lunchroom. Earlier, the same two students had a conflict in the

classroom regarding a Facebook post.  The students returned to class from the dean's

office later in the same day.  Again, no consequences and no punishment.  Is this the

culture of a school practicing Restorative Justice?

Clifford (2015) indicated that restorative thinking is shifting from a punishment-

oriented mentality.  To the untrained person regarding Restorative Practices, these are

some examples of how the consequences could look like the result of disruptive

behaviors.  Losen (2015) noted many teachers rely on exclusionary discipline as a direct

reaction from student misbehavior.  Is this right?  Is it fair to the students?  Is it fair to the teachers?  Clifford (2015) further indicated students, teachers, and administrators find it challenging to make this restorative way of thinking shift, especially from theory to practice.  There is much debate about implementing restorative practices in the school system.  Do Restorative Practices work?  Implementing Peace Circles is my choice of restorative practice to address social and emotional issues.  I will conduct this action self-study research and share my experiences with Peace Circles as a restorative practice.

Action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 3).  As a school leader, I will engage in an alternate solution to dealing with out-of-school suspensions from a restorative justice approach.  My leadership experiences will provide insight on Peace Circles as a restorative practice.  Stringer (2014) noted that action- research studies are subject to critical analysis to reveal concepts, theories, and underlying assumptions on which their claims and viewpoints are based.   This action research self-study will be introduced by examining the literature and exploring the social and emotional issues being experienced by the students, such as conflict resolution problems, classroom interruptions, and social media abuse; all issues have an opportunity to impede student academics.  All solutions I identify are strictly targeted to address the social and emotional issues experienced by students in the main building campus classrooms.  Following my proposed solution, the context describes all stakeholders directly impacted by the study.  "The research in teacher

education over the last two decades has helped to make clear that simply telling prospective teachers what to do and how to do it, is not the same as creating real and meaningful learning experiences" (Lassonde, Galman & Kosnik, 2015, Foreword). I will share my leadership experiences from observing and interacting with the Peace Circle Initiative program implemented on the main building campus at my school in hopes of creating positive opportunities for other educational leaders interested in restorative justice practices as an alternate approach to improve the social and emotional skills of the students. I hope to positively contribute to the implementation of the restorative practice initiative being implemented in our school system.

The school being researched is departmentalized by grade level. I am the assistant principal and oversee the Middle School department. The current principal of the school is primarily in charge of the primary department. The resident principal from Teach for America is the principal of the intermediate department. The school is a neighborhood boundary school. The campus consists of the main building that houses third through eighth-grade students, the primary building, which houses first through second-grade students, a state pre-school program and two mobile buildings for the kindergarten students. There are approximately 500 students. The grade levels range from pre-school to eighth-grade. The student population status of low income is 93.4%, 12.1% are Diverse Learners students, and about .2% of the student population is categorized as Limited-English Proficient. The student demographics range from Black (97%), Hispanic (1.8%), White (0.2%), Asian, American Indian (0.2%) and multi-racial students (0.9%). The third through eighth-

grade student population is similar to a middle school atmosphere. Students in these particular grades operate on a departmental schedule. Students are provided instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, algebra (8th grade only), science, social science and a foreign language. Students receive Spanish instruction four days a week. They switch classes similar to the atmosphere of a high school. This strategy was designed to prepare them for high school and then college and careers.

The main building campus population consists of approximately 330 students. This population of the school is the backbone of the school. Upon reviewing the 2015 School Quality Rating Report, it was discovered that students in grades 3rd through 8th performed better than 77% of school nationally on the NWEA Map test. The diverse learner priority group only performed better than 37% of schools nationally. As far as achieving their NWEA growth percentage and making national average growth, only 62% of the students in the main building campus were making their target growth. As far as attainment on the NWEA test, students in 3rd through 8th grade performed better than 70% of schools nationally in reading and better than 80% of school nationally in mathematics.

The students in the main building campus represent a wide range of academic abilities and social and emotional related issues. Students are experiencing and displaying their social skills immaturely by demonstrating a lack of success with conflict resolution, cooperating with each other and positive interactions. This immaturity and lack of understanding of conflict and resolution is an issue with the students and may impede their academic achievement.

Stringer (2014) points out that action research has an approach which includes all relevant stakeholders in the process of the research investigation. The main stakeholders affected by this issue are the students, particularly the students housed in the main building. Specifically, third through eighth-grade. Along with their inconsistent academic achievement, I have observed the students are having in-class social conflicts such as arguments and fights. Due to their inexperience in dealing with conflict resolution and social and emotional related issues, I can assume the students are experiencing classroom interruptions.

The other stakeholders affected by this issue are specifically teachers who instruct these particular groups of students. Many of the teachers take pride in their students and their instruction. The motto for the teachers is, "Treat them like they're your own." When the teachers are working with the students on an individual basis to improve their achievement levels, the students feel very much appreciated. However, based on observations, the recent social and emotional issues are affecting the instruction in the classroom. Teachers have to deal with the social issues in the classroom sometimes even before they can instruct the students. There are times when social issues such as arguments and fights interrupt classroom instruction. If the teachers are properly trained in dealing with the social and emotional issues, the students may be more focused, and their academics may excel.

The families of the student population are key stakeholders who are affected by the social and emotional issues. The school is a family-oriented school whose stakeholders have a unique connection with the school. Six degrees of separation

does apply for this surrounding community. Most of the students are from the neighborhood. Some students have relocated out of the attendance boundaries but still, choose to travel from afar and stay enrolled. Many of the students' parents are alumni of the school. There are some grandparents who still reside in the neighborhood who are graduates too. The school has earned full trust from the families in the community. Our students spend many hours before and after school. We offer overnight activities where many of students participate in the events. With this opportunity, the parents want to work with the school to address the social issues their children are experiencing. With the parents on board to support, hopefully the administration can work together to find a solution to the social and emotional issues of the children.

According to the 2014-2016 Continuous Improvement Working Plan (CIWP) and the mission statement, the purpose of the school is to provide a high quality educational experience that focuses on the issues related to the diverse needs of the students while providing them with the intellectual skills needed to compete and succeed in our global community. The vision is to provide a safe and nurturing school environment where students, parents, staff, and community members strive for academic excellence and where diversity is recognized and valued as all stakeholders contribute to our students becoming life- long learners and positive contributors to our global community. To fulfill the mission and vision, I think an action plan is necessary to address the social and emotional needs of the students. By finding a way to address the social and emotional problems of the students, the students will

hopefully improve their social skills and possibly their academic achievement.

## Problem Statement

"Critics have challenged the use of suspension based on lost instructional time, persistent racial disparities, and the association between suspension and long-term negative student outcomes" (Losen, 2015, p. 32). As the administrator handling most of the discipline, I have observed students particularly in grades, third through eighth, experiencing some social and emotional issues. Within these groups of students, there are some issues impeding student achievement. The most common issue between all classrooms is the social interactions. All classes have social issue related incidents. Losen indicated Black females are at a greater risk of facing out-of-school suspension than White and Latino male students. The social conflict issues are so disturbing that teachers must address the issues before they can instruct the young women. If the issues were not resolved within the classroom, the instructor would contact me to address the issue. Losen indicated Black boys are suspended the most and White girls are suspended the least. The male population is a very competitive group, academically and socially; sometimes their testosterone takes over preventing them from focusing academically. The boys are involved in physical altercations and verbal disagreements with each other. Normally, teachers will contact me to address the young men, investigate and resolve the problems that are affecting the classroom environment and preventing them from teaching.

One of the contributing categories affecting the need for improving the social and emotional needs of students is the social behavior of all the students. The abuse of

social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Kik) has been a source of the problems. Our students are posting pictures and making offensive comments via these social media networks. These incidents are causing other negative issues and problems across the school campus. This specific type of misbehavior is addressed in the CPS Student Code of Conduct Handbook as a group 3 misconduct, specifically, 3-11: Use of cellular telephones or other information technology device to harass, incite violence, or interrupt other students' participation in school activities, including use of device to record others without permission or unauthorized distribution of recordings (Chicago Public Schools, 2015). Students are not prepared to handle conflict and resolution situations. Developing student conflict resolution skills may reduce the number of social and emotional related issues occurring around the school campus. If the school was to improve in this area, the students might have a greater chance of improving socially and academically. Black and Latino boys experience great disparities in exclusionary discipline in comparison to other races of students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Losen, 2015; Rudd, 2014). Not only is this an issue within the walls of this school campus located on the south side of Chicago, but it has also become a national issue. Black and Latino students throughout North America are being mentioned in issues involving education (Kafele, 2009; Kunjufu, 2011; Tatum, 2005). According to Rudd (2014),

> Research suggests that Black students as young as age five are routinely
> suspended and expelled from schools for minor infractions like talking back
> to teachers or writing on their desks. In a simple analysis of this phenomenon,

the over-zealous application of *zero tolerance* policies gets all the blame. (p.

2)

Are our Black students given a chance?  Black students are not understood;

Black students' behavior issues are not worse than white students' behavior "but

simply different" (Downey & Pribesh, 2014, p. 3).  Cultures are similar but also

different.  Should Black students be treated differently due to their culture?  Downey

and Pribesh noted that White teachers do not understand the unique culture of Black

student and are not trained with class management skills to motivate Black children.

With this wide gap of the disparity between Black students and other students

continuing over the past decades, Black parents are starting to feel their children are

being targeted.  Nationally, many schools are shifting their discipline policies

because exclusionary discipline does not improve student behavior nor increase

student achievement (Rowe, 2016).  The students in my school building are

experiencing some of the same issues which lead me as the assistant principal to

focus on ensuring all my students are being treated fair.

According to the National Education Association (2011) in individual schools

and districts across the country, educators are using a range of emerging strategies to

narrow achievement gaps, boost graduation rates, and provide more equitable

treatment for America's Black students.  For adequate success, the whole child needs

to be educated (academically, socially and emotionally (Kafele, 2009; Kunjufu,

1989; Robins, Crawley & Gilliam, 2013).

There has been a controversy about different alternate solutions to address the

high rate of suspensions in the education system. According to Peterson (2005), this concern has been driven by the over-representation of some minority groups among those who are suspended from schools. According to TeachSafeSchool.org website,

> The incidence of out-of-school suspensions" is increasing dramatically. For example, the Chicago public school system suspended over 20,000 students in 2003, more than doubling the rate over the past decade. The major reasons offered by principals for such suspensions are fighting, students' use of profanity, disrespect toward school staff, and violation of Zero Tolerance Policies. There is much controversy over the effectiveness of school suspension since it does not teach students more effective ways to handle conflict. Instead, it results in a loss of academic instructional time for a subgroup of students who need it most. Moreover, the disproportionate number of African-American students who are suspended is troublesome. This has led some critics to characterize such suspension policies to disenfranchise groups of children from their education. (Alternatives to Out-Of-School Suspensions, para. 2)

Peterson (2005) further noted emerging research indicates that these types of consequences are not likely to change the inappropriate behavior of the students involved instead, these consequences may result in the suspended student's academic progress being more difficult and increasing the likelihood of the student dropping out of school or having other negative outcomes.

With that being said, there has to be an alternative but which idea is practical

to use as an alternative to suspensions?  According to CPS (2005), the Suspension and Expulsion Reduction Plan (SERP) was to simplify and clarify the language of the policy to help guide schools implementing new restorative practices with the intent to address student misconducts and have students remain in school.  I have selected and experienced other alternative practices such as CHAMPS and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) being implemented in the past and not being effective.  I am left with the option to select Peace Circles as a restorative practice to address the social and emotional issues being experienced within the classrooms on the main building campus of my school.  Specifically, the third through eighth-grade group of students were selected to observe as a part of this self-study based upon this group experiencing a high level of social and emotional issues.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting this self-study is to examine my leadership experiences engaging in Peace Circles at the main building campus at my school. Schumacher (2014) suggests *Circles* might be a restorative practice option for building positive student peer relationships and supporting social-emotional throughout the school building.  With the proper action plan in effect, the main building campus classrooms have an opportunity to resolve conflict issues and increase academic performance.  Stringer (2014) identified the underlying problem in action research is to establish the root of the issue or problem and how it might be stated.  This leads me to the following research questions to investigate in my self-study:

   1)  What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a

new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2) What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3) How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4) How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

James, Milenkiewicz and Buckman (2008) noted when implemented by school leaders; action research creates an educational setting to support long-term school reform. The ultimate goal of this research is to share my leadership experiences from this self-study with other educators in leadership positions across North America experiencing social and emotional issues. My leadership experiences will provide leaders a real experience of Peace Circles influencing social and emotional issues and academics of Black students at the elementary school level.

The main question specifically addresses my expectations from this self-study research. When the students in the third through eighth-grade classes are able to personally resolve their own conflicts and disagreements, hopefully, they will have the opportunity to positively impact their social and emotional issues and increase their academic performance. By carefully examining the primary and the secondary research questions, my next step is to provide a rationale to the significance of this self-study.

## Significance of the Study

The significance of this self-study research is to share my leadership experiences and expose potential success for more public schools to try restorative practices as an alternative to out of school suspensions for the improvement in the areas of academics and social and emotional learning.  With the limited research in this area of social and emotional issues in elementary schooling, this study will add to the literature of this area.  This self-study research also has the potential to influence school leaders to venture into Peace Circles as an option to address student academic achievement and social and emotional development of Black students (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Hughes, 2007; Smyth, 2010).  This self-study research has significant implications that restorative practices, specifically, Peace Circles may support educational leaders experiencing social and emotional issues within the walls of their school buildings.

There is a big disparity between the suspension rates of black students and their counterparts in most urban public schools.  Garcia (2015) noted that researchers found Black students struggling academically but still facing disciplinary actions at a disproportionate rate.  According to Chicago Public Schools [CPS] (2014), they have been working toward a more equitable approach to student discipline since 2012, when they amended their Student Code of Conduct (SCC) to put a greater focus on restorative practices particularly for Black and Latino students.  A few organizations are beginning to adopt the restorative approach of implementing Peace Circles (Butigan, 2012).  Ames Middle School, located on the west side of Chicago is a

public school with similar statistical demographics as my school, partnered with

Elev8, a national demonstration project supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Ames was experiencing an abundance of fights and gang violence. In the past year,

they lost two of their students to gang violence. Teaching conflict resolution has

taken on a special urgency at Ames (Local Initiatives Support Corporation [LISC]

Chicago, 2015). Their goal was to teach social conflict resolution with middle

school students by using Peace Circles. Additionally, the state of Illinois has

developed the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards. These standards

have been developed in accordance with Section 15(a) of Public Act 93-0495. This

Act calls upon the Illinois State Board of Education to "develop and implement a plan

to incorporate social and emotional development standards as part of the Illinois

Learning Standards." These standards and the strategies underlying them are ways of

being proactive, targeting recidivism and fighting the storm of violence blowing

through the windy city of Chicago. The current state of Black students being

addressed may benefit other schools and districts heavily populated with black youths

experiencing social and emotional issues.

     With the limited research, there is not one way to identify a specific solution to

address all the social and emotional needs of the elementary school students.

However, I think there are possible solutions to target and address the social and

emotional issues in the classroom. In order to address the issues with the third

through eighth-grade students, I will implement the Peace Circle concept as part of

the curriculum for the main building campus. Isaacs (2011) noted that James

Monroe High School in Rochester, NY, with a new administration in place, chose to implement a program to improve numerous issues within the school. In fact, the school's principal began using restorative practices specifically Peace Circles to help combat issues over suspension rates, violence within the school, and advancement in education.

According to the Office of Social and Emotional Learning (2015), Circles provide an opportunity for students to build caring relationships with their peers and teachers, to actively participate and practice social and emotional skills and feel valued and connected to the school community. CPS selected and implemented Peace Circles as a curricular model during the 2015 Summer Bridge Program. The Peace Classroom Circle structure was used in Summer Bridge to provide space in the day for students and their teacher to know one another and to set the stage for the personalized learning environment that could lead to stronger gains.

In fact, the Office of Social and Emotional Learning (2015) noted,

In a study of the Chicago Public Schools Summer Bridge Program, researchers from the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) found that while curriculum and materials were uniform across school sites, differences in student gains were correlated with reports of the quality of the learning environment- test score increases were most pronounced where students received more individual attention and had higher quality interactions with teacher. (p. 2)

Saftler (2015) stated the "Peace Circle" activity was meant to build trust and reduce conflict by giving kids a chance to express themselves vocally. It is the hope

of this self-study research that Peace Circles will be highlighted and exposed to address the social and emotional issues in the classrooms. In order to achieve the success of this initiative, I will validate proper and successful implementation ensuring the Peace Circle Initiative is implemented with fidelity. Saftler noted that Peace Circle Facilitation training teaches one to be a diligent circle keeper with eyes, ears, and hearts open and constantly listening to the messages being delivered around the circle. According to Saftler, each circle tends to have a life of its own and a skilled facilitator needs be trained to "read" the course the circle is moving and gently steer the direction. Most of the students like hip-hop and rap, so implementing the microphone as the talking piece within the Peace Circle would possibly increase the peace and build more trust and respect.

## Overview of Methodology

The methodology for this research will be a self-study. Stringer (2014) explains that action research is an approach to investigate and find effective solutions to problems confronted in everyday life situations. My main objective as the assistant principal is to be an effective instructional school leader. To address the social and emotional issues and to increase student achievement, my decisions need to resolve around the students and the instructional teachers and at the same be in the best interests of both stakeholders. Stringer stated the primary objective of action research is to gather information for the researcher to understand the experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders who are directly affected by the issue being investigated. This self-study will focus on my leadership experiences of the Peace

Circle implementation throughout the school's main building campus which is comprised of 13 classrooms serving grades three through eight. The main campus building consists of approximately 330 students.

According to Stringer (2014), "information to be gathered in any investigation will be determined to a large extent by the nature of the issue or problem investigated" (p. 103). These data will be collected from different sources to verify the social and emotional issues. This self-study will reflect on self-reflections and personal experiences throughout the implementation of the Peace Circles and the effectiveness to improve social and emotional issues of students based upon the cross-examination of professional development agendas, professional development documentation, classroom observations, behavior data and student academic data.

Based upon the 5Essentials Survey Data, I will reflect on the use of Peace Circles as an effective solution to improving social and emotional issues throughout the school environment of an urban elementary school. I want all students to feel comfortable in the school environment ensuring the school is safe and orderly. All students should feel respected by their teachers and their peers.

Through the methodology of action research, teachers gain an understanding of self-assessment and reflection in order to raise questions about theory and practice (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Sagor, 2000). All teachers will be engaged in Peace Circle professional development administered by me as the instructional leader and from the Social and Emotional Specialist from the network office. As the building, assistant principal reflecting on restorative justice professional

development, I will reflect on the social and emotional issues being addressed through Peace Circle professional development training.

Stringer (2014) noted that researchers need to identify the principal stakeholders who have contributed to the study. In 2014-15, a needs assessment was performed indicating a need for this restorative practice initiative. Stringer claimed as people reveal relevant details of their situation internally, they clearly understand the ways in which the research problem is linked to their organization. The aforementioned needs based assessment information provided firsthand sources of understanding. "The structural frame emphasizes productivity and posits that classrooms and schools work best when goals and roles are clear and when efforts of individuals and groups are highly coordinated through authority, policies, and rules as well as through informal strategies" (Bolman & Deal, 2012, p. 4). Bolman and Deal (2008) stated that working as a functioning team is critical. All teachers (Pre-school through eighth-grade) will be engaged in Peace Circle professional development administered by the building assistant principal as the instructional leader with conversations after each professional development to illuminate the teachers' understanding of the Peace Circle foundational claims and implementation steps.

Stringer (2014) notes there is a real sense of objectivity when collecting data, as one ensures that any of the collected information is not tainted or influenced by any participant that may trigger any biases. Stringer also noted the credibility is enhanced when multiple sources of information are included in the data. With the various types and sources of data mentioned, the research study will improve reliability and validity

by triangulating the following different methods of data: restorative justice

documents, School Progress Reports, School Quality Rating Report, Peace Circle

observations, 5Essentials survey data, professional development observations, and

agendas.  All the above information combined has at least three types of data derived

from three different sources to increase the validity.  These data sources collected

from the main and secondary questions will correlate to addressing the social and

emotional issues on the main building campus. The data analysis and findings of this

self-study will be analyzed through the Multiple Ethical Paradigm (MEP) approach

(Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011), and the Illinois Social Emotional Standards (2013).

**Conceptual Frameworks**

According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), ethics was identified as one of

the competencies necessary for school leaders within the Interstate School Leaders

Licensure Consortium (ISLC): Standards for School Leaders.  Stefkovich (2014)

concluded that if there is a moral imperative for educational leaders, it is to act in the

best interests of the student.   The best interests of the students are at the center of the

Multiple Ethical Paradigm Framework (2011), which includes justice, care, critique,

and profession.  Hinman (2003) stated that one inevitably faces choices that hurt or

help other people, choices that may infringe on their rights or violate their dignity or

use them as mere tools to our own ends.  As the building assistant principal of the

study school, I will view each ethical decision through and based on the conceptual

framework of the Multiple Ethical Paradigms approach.  Figure 1 displays the model.

Table 1 displays how the Multiple Ethical Paradigms are utilized to analyze my

decisions as the assistant principal.
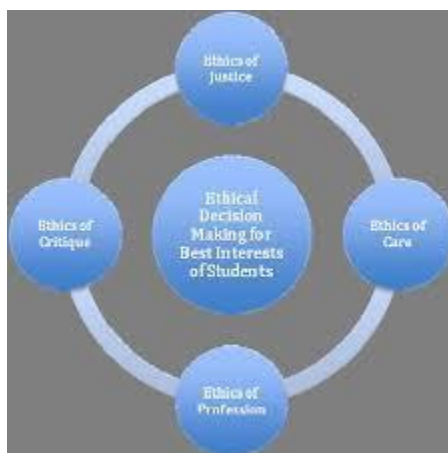


Adapted from "Making Our Judgments Right: Ethics of Corporal Punishment in Indian Schools" by A. Tirawi, 2015, *International Education Studies,* 8, p. 72.

*Figure 1.* Multiple Ethical Paradigm (MEP) Approach Model

Table 1

*Applying Multiple Ethical Paradigm (MEP) Framework*

| MEP FRAMEWORKS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| JUSTICE | CARE | CRITIQUE | PROFESSION |
| The Peace Circle restorative practice was selected based on the "greater good" of addressing the social and emotional issues of the main building campus classrooms. | The participating stakeholders are investing time and displaying their "duty of care" for the students. | Within the process of the Peace Circle, the Black male student voice will be provided an opportunity to be heard. | Throughout the research process, the stakeholders will be provided the necessary training to be successful in the implementation of Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues of all classroom. |

Immanuel Kant's philosophy seems to best summarize the viewpoint of justice (deontology)… "Kant maintains that any action, in order to be moral, must be taken in the belief and because of the belief than it is right- from duty, not because or personal inclination, gain, or love" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 20). Hinman (2003) noted utilitarianism is concerned with the consequences for everyone. Looking through this lens of justice, I will make decisions for the greater good of all involved students and participating instructional leaders.

According to Stefkovich (2014), when the ethic of care is valued, school leaders focus on relationships when making decisions rather than strategies and rules. Stringer (2014) shared that as the researcher we have a "duty of care" in relation to all people we engage in processes of investigation. Stefkovich (2014) also noted the ethic of care shifts the emphasis on rights and laws to compassion and empathy. My decisions as the assistant principal will be to address the social and emotional needs of the students through the lens of the ethic of care so that I will demonstrate care, compassion, and empathy for all stakeholders.

According to Stefkovich (2014), the ethic of critique seeks to challenge the "status quo" and give voice to individuals normally not heard. Assistant principals using the ethical lens of critique seek to hear the unheard voices of the students in the main building campus classrooms.

According to Stefkovich (2014), the ethic of profession considers the ethics of justice, care, and critique as well as what educational leaders experience personally and professionally. As the instructional leader of the building using the ethical lens

of profession requires me to make moral decisions with consideration of professional principles and expectations.

Examining and analyzing data through different lenses may offer the opportunity for me to increase the validity and provide support to the rationale of making ethical decisions. Educational leaders have struggled with the issues of justice, critique, and care related to the education of children and youth but with the inclusion of profession, they should make "a judgment that places the best interest of the student at the center of all ethical decision making" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 23). Shapiro and Stefkovich further noted that in educational leadership there is a belief that there is a moral imperative for the profession to serve the "best interests of the student," and this ideal must lie at the heart of any professional paradigm for educational leaders (p. 25). Looking through the multiple ethical paradigm lenses, lead to the question; is it in the best interests of the students to implement Peace Circles to address their social and emotional dilemmas?

According to ISBE (2013) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to:

➢ recognize and manage their emotions;

➢ demonstrate caring and concern for others;

➢ establish positive relationships;

➢ make responsible decisions; and

➢ handle challenging situations constructively.

ISBE (2013) noted it is highly recommended to integrate social and emotional into systems and practices. Integration can occur by:

➢ examining existing systems and structures to determine how social and emotional learning efforts can be integrated into them;

➢ embedding SEL instruction into existing curricula;

➢ taking advantage of teachable moments that occur naturally throughout the day;

➢ promoting students' feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and competence; and

➢ providing opportunities for students to practice social and emotional competencies. (pp. 2-5)

ISBE (2013) also indicated quality SEL instruction occurs when students learn to process, integrate, and selectively apply SEL skills in developmentally, contextually and culturally appropriate ways in conjunction with a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate that may result in positive outcomes including:

➢ promotion of mental wellness;

➢ prevention of mental health issues;

➢ school connectedness;

➢ reduction in student absenteeism;

➢ reduction in suspensions;

➢ adoption, implementation, and institutionalization of new practices; and

> ➤ improved academic outcomes. (p. 3)

Using the MEP approach in combination with the Social and Emotional Learning Standards as conceptual frameworks in this self-study, I will seek to address the following questions:

1) What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2)  What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3)  How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4)  How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

## Limitations

Calabrese (2012) noted the limitations could identify any potential weakness of a research that may influence the methods and findings. Based on the design of the research, a few limitations were naturally created. This self-study is limited to the selection of classrooms of Black students with social and emotional issues on the main building school campus at the elementary school level. Due to the small sample size of 330 students represented at one school location, the experiences and observations shared of this self-study results may not be generalized beyond the walls of the main building classrooms represented in this study.

Zeichner (2007) suggests,

Although there is clear evidence in many self-studies in teacher education that the teacher educators who conducted them benefited from the research experience in a personal way and became better teacher educators as a result, there has been little attention to how we can begin to accumulate knowledge across these individual studies in a way that will influence policy makers and other teacher education practitioners. (p. 37)

Therefore, the implementation of Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues with elementary students at one school district building may not generalize to other classrooms, schools, and districts in urban schools.

## Biases

According to Herr and Anderson (2005), action research is criticized due to groups being favored over the individual being compared and studied. Herr and Anderson further stated some psychologists view action research as an opportunity for researchers and participants to gain an advantage in relation to the research rather than a threat to the validity of the research. Based on me being the assistant principal primarily conducting and analyzing this action research self-study increases the possibility of biased findings. Zeichner (2007) noted that self-study work is not taken very seriously as research by many outsiders to the teacher education community. Self-study research importance is not understood.

Herr and Anderson (2005) noted it is difficult to separate the self- study practice from the study of the outcomes of actions initiated in a setting. The thought of me acting as an inside researcher in collaboration with instructional teachers acting

as an inside researcher from within the building to conduct a self-study in my own building tends to open the door for some biases.  The attention of the readers is drawn to the methodology of self-study rather than to what teacher educators learn through their inquiries about particular issues (Zeichner, 2015, p. 37).  The incorporation of a research journal to self-reflect on my experiences as the assistant principal can be a strategy to facilitate reflexivity to examine "personal assumptions and goals" and clarify "individual belief systems and subjectivities" (Russel & Kelly, as cited in Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695).

**Organization of the Action Research Self-Study Project**

Chapter II consists of the review of literature for this self-study.  Calabrese (2012) noted that Chapter II presents a review of the relevant literature related to the researcher's essential questions or hypotheses of the action research with the following components often found in this section:

a.  Introduction to the Literature Review;

b.  Body of the Literature Review;

c.  Competing Perspectives;

d.  Conceptual Framework;

e.  Synthesis of the Research;

f.  Critical Analysis; and

g.  Conclusion of the Literature Review.

According to Calabrese (2012), in Chapter III, the researcher describes the research perspective, research design and its limitations, subjects, research variables,

instruments and measures of data collection, data analysis, and validity, and reliability and triangulation as well as the methods used in the study. Chapter three consists of the review of the methodology used in this self-study research.

According to Calabrese (2012), Chapter IV is the findings chapter. I will analyze the data from this study in this section. My analysis will be conducted through the conceptual framework of the ethical lens of utilitarian, care, critique and profession.

According to Calabrese (2012), the researcher summarizes the results identified in Chapter IV and offering a rationale why the study is an important contribution to new knowledge and how it advances practice. My research questions will be discussed concluding with the implications of educational leadership in urban public schools.

## Key Terms

Calabrese (2012) stated that key terms referred to the specific terms central to the study and used throughout an action research project. The following guide will provide definitions for the key terms mentioned throughout this research study:

**Attainment** - is the levels of achievement students reach at a point in time, e.g., on a standardized test at the end of a given school year. Academic attainment levels, usually represented by numerical scores or standards of achievement, are typically used to rate institutional performance. In contrast, growth relates to the academic gain or progress students make over a period (Oecd.org, as retrieved from http://www.oecd. org/edu/skills-beyond-school/Litterature%20Review%20VAM.pdf, April 2017).

**Continuous Improvement Work Plan** (**CIWP**) - is the two-year school improvement plan required of all CPS schools. The purpose of the CIWP is to establish each school's mission, its strategic priorities, and the steps the school will take to accomplish its goals (Chicago Public Schools, as retrieved from schoolreports.cps.edu/ciwp/PrincipalILTTrainingPresentation.pptx, July 2015).

**CPS Dashboard Website -** is a comprehensive educational data warehouse complete with role-based interactive dashboards, analytic reports, and analytic applications that push the culture of data-driven decision making to all levels of the organization, including schools, area instruction offices, and the central office (Clarity Partners, LLC, as retrieved from http://www.claritypartners.com/2009-press-releases/2009/03/chicago-public-schools-performance-management-dashboard-goes-live/, July 2015).

**Facebook** - is a popular social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues (What is.com, as retrieved from http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook, July 2015).

**Growth** - the change in what a student or group of students knows or can do between two points in time using the same/similar measure.  (Ilprincipal.org, as retrieved from http://www.ilprincipals.org/resources/resource-documents/principal-evaluation/ipep/IdentifyingStudentGrowthCriteria.pdf, April 2017).

**Kik -** is a social networking tool with over 40% of American youth using Kik

to chat, browse and share with their friends. Only Kik lets you connect with all your friends, no matter where you meet them – at school, on your favorite social app, or in an online game. (Kik.com, as retrieved from http://www.kik.com/, July 2015).

**Instagram -** is a free and simple way to share your life and keep up with other people (Instagram.com, as retrieved from https://instagram.com/, July 2015).

**Middle school -** a school for children that usually includes grades five to eight or six to eight (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, as retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/middle%20school, July 2015).

**Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) -** measures the achievement of students in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight and science in grades four and seven (Illinois State Board of Education, as retrieved from www.ISBE.net, July 2015).

**Peace Circles -** are restorative justice practices based on ancient indigenous customs performed throughout history. Peace Circles provide a safe environment for schools to bring together diverse groups of people to share their experiences to gain a greater sense of understanding for one another. Participants learn to appreciate similarities and respect differences. The goal is to break down barriers and stereotypes and facilitate honest dialogue (Peacecircles.com, as retrieved from http://peacecircles.com/peace-circles/middle-high-school/, July 2015).

**Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (P.B.I.S)** - is a framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based

behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.  PBIS IS NOT a packaged curriculum, scripted intervention, or manualized strategy. PBIS IS a prevention-oriented way for school personnel to (a) organize evidence-based practices, (b) improve their implementation of those practices, and (c) maximize academic and social behavior outcomes for students.  PBIS supports the success of ALL students. (PBIS.org, as retrieved from https://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners/pbis-faqs, April 2017).

**Restorative justice (RJ)** - is a powerful approach to discipline that focuses on repairing harm through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders Implemented well, RJ shifts the focus of discipline from punishment to learning and from the individual to the community. However, it is often misperceived and misapplied. (Edweek.org, as retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/ classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2016/02/response_how_to_practice_restorative_j ustice_in_schools.html, April 2017).

**Single-sex education -** also referred to as single-gender education, is the practice of educating girls and boys in separate classes or schools (About.com, as retrieved from http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/what -is-single-sex-education-def.htm, July 2015).

**Social and emotional learning** (SEL) - is the process through which children and adults  acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills

necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, as retrieved from http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/, July 2015).

**Stakeholder -** In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives (Glossary of Education Reform, as retrieved from http://edglossary.org/stakeholder/, July 2015).

**Student Code of Conduct (SCC) -** is adopted by the Chicago Board of Education each year to help create a safe environment for all students and school personnel. The SCC sets forth the expected behaviors for students and a transparent process for administrators to redirect inappropriate behavior. (Chicago Public Schools, as retrieved from http://cps.edu/Pages/StudentCodeofConduct.aspx, July 2015).

**Twitter -** is a free social networking micro-blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets. (Whatis.com, as retrieved from http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Twitter, July 2015).

**Utilitarian -** is the belief that a morally good action is one that helps the greatest number of people (Merriam- Webster's Online Dictionary, as retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/utilitarianism, July 2015).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Introduction**

This chapter will present a review of the literature, which addresses the social and emotional issues in elementary school classrooms through the implementation of Peace Circles. With the incorporation of this self-study, I hope sharing my experiences and exposing the potential of Peace Circles addressing social and emotional issues will further share a better understanding of this restorative practice. Pine (2008) noted self-study in teacher education has two broad purposes: facilitating the personal-professional development of teacher educators and developing a deeper understanding of teacher education practices, processes, programs and contexts, in which studies focus on broader programmatic and institutional issues. The history and structure of Peace Circles will be reviewed through the Multiple Ethical Paradigm approach. Finally, Social and Emotional Learning will be defined and reviewed through the two frameworks: Multiple Ethical Paradigms approach (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011) and the Illinois Social and Emotional Standards (ISBE, 2013). The purpose of this review is to provide an understanding of the previous research in this area, as well as to provide a rationale for the choice of Peace Circles to address the social and emotional and academic needs of Black elementary school level students based on the following questions:

1) What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2) What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3) How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4) How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

## History of Peace Circles

According to Pranis and Valandra (2002), Pranis (2013), and Valandra (2005), the Peace Circle process being used today is rooted in the tradition of talking Circles that the Indigenous Peoples in North America use and have used for many years ago. According to Keller (2007), the Native Indians were totally against the court system with a long history of oppression and distrust. The court system and their practices were viewed as alien and offensive to the Indian culture. Keller (2007) further stated the Native Americans were more concerned with the process of healing and the restoration of harmony. These early initiatives appeared in the 1980's in the American Southwest, American Northwest, and Canada but arguably, the best-known effort appeared in North American with the Navajo Peacemaking Courts (Keller, 2007; Parker, 2001; Pranis & Valandra, 2002). In the Yukon Territory, involving the court in collaboration with the Aboriginal communities, there was the establishment of the sentencing circles which later were called peacemaking circles (Keller, 2007;

Parker, 2001).  Szego (2013) noted Peacemaking Circles were used many years ago

by the Native Americans to deal with social related issues including conflict.

Circles were first introduced to non-native people in the early 1990's (Pranis

& Valandra, 2002; Szego, 2013).  The First Nation contributed to the use of Circles

among non-natives in the United States and Canada. Pranis and Valandra (2002)

noted:

> In Yukon, Harold and Phil Gatensby, members of the Carcross/Tagish and
>
> Dahka T'lingit First Nations, and Mark Wedge, a member of the Carcross/
>
> Tagish First Nation, have also trained many non-Native people in Circles,
>
> especially professionals in criminal justice systems, juvenile justice systems
>
> and in schools. (para. 4)

According to Saftler (2015), Peace Circles are restorative justice practices

based on ancient indigenous traditional customs.  Peace circles provide a safe

environment for schools to bring together diverse groups of people to share their

experiences to gain a greater sense of understanding for one another. Participants

learn to appreciate similarities and respect differences. The goal is to break down

barriers and stereotypes and facilitate honest dialogue.  The Peace Circle event is

designed to promote equality, respect, and tolerance. Participants share life

experiences, work toward creating a caring community, and experience a feeling of

connection (Middle and High School Peace Circles, para. 1).

Peace Circles became a widespread movement among schools in the United

States.  According to Pranis and Valandra (2002) in Minnesota, Dakota-Ojibwe

playwright and scholar, Dr. Chuck Robertson was a strong advocate of using Circles with Native and non-Native communities, especially around schools.  With his Circle associates, Jamie Williams and Oscar Reed, Dr. Robertson trained and worked with hundreds of educators to bring the Circle process into school settings.  Losen (2015) indicated the Denver Public School System was one of the first urban school districts to implement restorative justice practices in 2006.  American schools are now attempting the use of Peace Circles as an alternative conflict resolution method and as a restorative practice to giving students a second chance.

## Structure of Peace Circles

Stefkovich (2014) noted the principle of benefit maximization or utilitarianism determines the right and wrong connected to consequences.  To better understand and maximize the benefits of Peace Circles, the instructional leader, participating teachers and students must understand the structure of Peace Circles.  There are some key structures to Peace Circles.  Pranis (2013) noted that Peace Circles are directed towards healing.  With the following components and structures of the Peace Circles in place, the chances of properly addressing the social and emotional needs of the students may increase.  Hopefully, the result of the implementation of the Peace Circle is the greatest benefit for the third through eighth-grade Black students in the main building campus classrooms.  The final results and shared leadership experiences of this self-study research may inform others if the Peace Circle selection and decision process maximizes the potential for addressing the social and emotional issues while satisfying the greatest number of

stakeholders.  According to Szego (2013), Peace Circles are unique, but generally,
each circle has the following components:

> ➢ Are designed by those who use them;

> ➢ Are guided by a common concern;

> ➢ Require that participants act on their personal values;

> ➢ Include all parties involved with the topic or situation;

> ➢ Offer everyone an opportunity to participate;

> ➢ Take a holistic approach, including the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual;

> ➢ Maintain respect for all who participate; and

> ➢ Encourage exploring solutions beneficial to all participants.

However, there are some key structures that define Peace Circles:

> ➢ Participants are seated in a circle;

> ➢ A talking piece is used to ensure respect between speakers and listeners;

> ➢ A Circle ideally has two "keepers" who guide the participants, facilitate the process and keep the Circle as a safe space where people are respectful of one another; and

> ➢ Consensus decision making honors the values and principles of pe-acemaking and helps the participants stay grounded in them. (A'Onsonton, 2000)

For the sake of the elementary students on the main building campus, the
Peace Circles may be the more appropriate solution to address their social and

emotional needs. This is because most of their behavioral issues deal with verbal arguments and physical fights stemming from social conflicts to which they are unable to resolve, Peace Circles may be a possible solution. According to Saftler (2015), Peace Circles allow students to explore different ways of resolving conflict in the school atmosphere while building and creating relationships with their peers.

## Social and Emotional

To better understand the social and emotional issues the students are experiencing, the instructional leader and instructional teachers must understand the meaning of the term Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). ISBE's website defines SEL as

> The process, through which children develop awareness and management of their emotions, set and achieve important personal and academic goals, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision-making and responsible behaviors to achieve school and life success. (ISBE, 2013, Design for Social and Emotional Learning Standards, para. 1)

According to Gordon, Ji, Muhall, Shaw and Weissberg (2011), social and emotional learning skills include recognizing and managing emotions, caring for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. The foundation for implementing a solid SEL program lies within the guidelines of the standards. Gordon et al. noted schools that implement programs that improve students' social and emotional

competencies could positively affect academic and social-behavioral outcomes.  In order for me to effectively implement the Peace Circles Program, I must use the SEL standards as the foundation for successful implementation with hopes of addressing the social and emotional issues of the students.

According to ISBE (2013), the standards and benchmarks were expected to meet the following criteria:

➢ Be clear and meaningful to educators, students, parents and the community;

➢ Include an appropriate combination of knowledge and skills;

➢ Be specific enough to convey what students should learn, but broad enough to allow for a variety of approaches to teaching and aligning curriculum; and

➢ Be specific enough to allow for classroom assessments to measure student progress.

ISBE also noted SEL competencies improve students' social/emotional development, readiness to learn, classroom behavior, and academic performance.  To address the social and emotional issues of the main building campus population with the best interests of the students, I will closely examine the SEL standards through the ethics of profession.  The Multiple Ethical Paradigms Model is below.
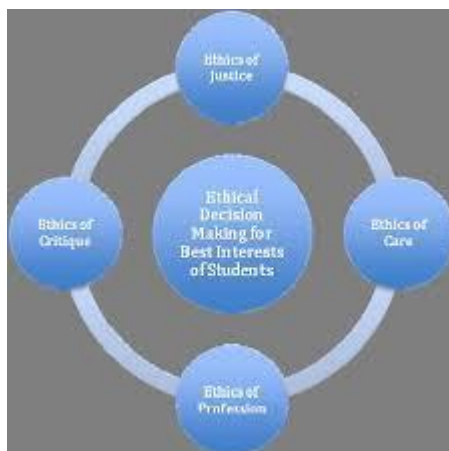
Adapted from "Making Our Judgments Right: Ethics of Corporal Punishment in Indian Schools" by A. Tirawi, 2015, *International Education Studies,* 8, p. 72.

*Figure 2.* Multiple Ethical Paradigm Approach

Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) have been developed in accordance with Section 15(a) of Public Act 93-0496. According to the ISBE website, this Act calls upon the Illinois State Board of Education to "develop and implement a plan to incorporate social and emotional development standards as part of the Illinois Learning Standards." Stefkovich (2014) noted Staratt's articulation of a multidimensional ethical framework paved the way for subsequent scholars to think of the paradigms of justice, care, and critique not as totally distinct entities but as complementary as a "tapestry of ethical perspectives" (p. 14). Based on both the ethical lens of justice, care, critique, profession which combines to be the Multiple Ethical Paradigm Frameworks, the research will review the literature using a combination of both frameworks.

According to Gordon et al. (2011), Illinois is a leader in integrating SEL into educational institutions. Illinois has been identified as the first state to adopt SEL

learning standards.  The SEL goals, learning standards, benchmarks and performance descriptors consist of the SEL frameworks. Figure 3 displays the SEL Standards Frameworks.
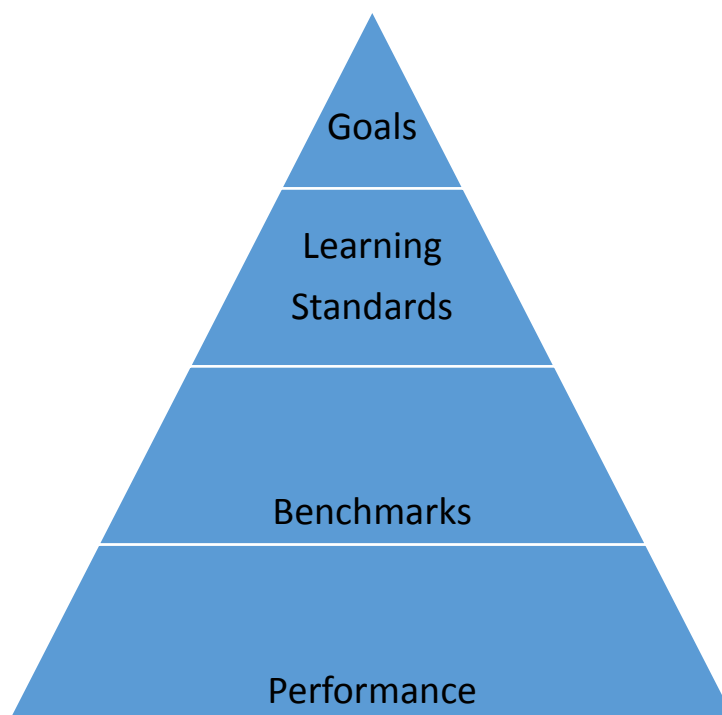


*Figure 3.* SEL Standards Framework

The following three goals are broad statements that organize the knowledge and skill that compromise the SEL content:

> ➢ Goal 1 - Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success;

> ➢ Goal 2 - Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and

> ➢ Goal 3 - Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. (ISBE, 2013, p. 6)

The SEL standards framework was created for the best interests of the students. All three goals from the SEL of the Illinois Learning Standards relate to the improvement of the students' social and self-awareness.

The best interests of the students are emphasized in Figure 4. Best Interests of the Student Model. The model displays the concept of rights, responsibility, and respect. Stefkovich (2014) noted this model acknowledges rights as essential and top priority in determining a student's best interest. Students have rights and should be treated no different than any human being. Stefkovich also noted that individual students identified with rights must also accompany responsibilities along with the rights. Stefkovich further noted "…respect as part of the cornerstone of ethical behavior…more positive, mutual interaction, focusing on the individual" (p. 27). Basically, students are individuals, and every individual deserves respect no matter the circumstances.

The best interests of the student are a top priority when making ethical decisions as an educational leader. The SEL standards framework and the three SEL goals focus primarily on the student. The best interest of the student is embedded in all three goals with the goal of developing the whole student socially and emotionally. Ultimately, the Peace Circle process has the potential of preparing the students and at the same time fulfilling the vision statement of the school, "…all stakeholders contribute to our students becoming life-long learners and positive contributors in our global community" (CIWP, 2014).

RESPONSIBILITY          RESPECT

**BEST INTERESTS OF**

**THE STUDENT**

RIGHTS
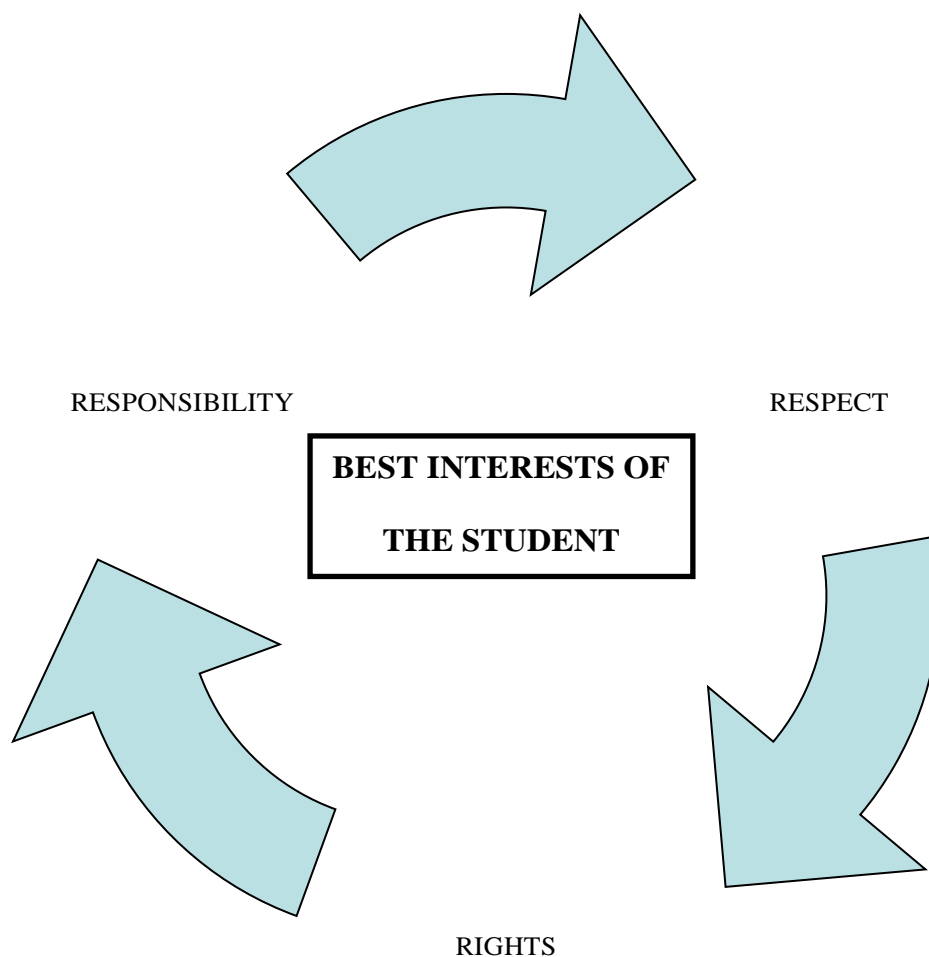
*Note:* From *Best Interests of the Student* by A. Stefkovich, 2014, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions, p. 28.

*Figure 4.* Best Interests Model

This model relies on context, takes into account the students' voices and

begins with the assumption that school officials will engage in active inquiry

and self- reflection in order to make decisions that are truly in the best interests

of the student. (Stefkovich, 2014, p. 29)

Peace Circles were selected as a restorative practice that provides the safe space for

self-reflections and student voice.  The Peace Circle process was also selected as an

alternative to out-of-school suspensions and a strategy to address the social and

emotional issues being experienced by the students on the main building campus.

The SEL framework provides instructional leaders an opportunity to support all

students socially and emotionally through the three goals.  Additionally, according to

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001), the Multiple Ethical Paradigms incorporates the

voices of the students, who support the assertion that the study of ethics is needed for

all school leaders, particularly considering changes in society.

  "Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that

is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas" (Shapiro &

Stefkovich, 2011, p. 3).  As the assistant principal of the school, I made the ethical

decision to implement Peace Circles to address the social and emotional dilemma the

middle school students are facing is an ethical decision.  Shapiro and Stefkovich

stated that students and practitioners needed to open their minds and look through

lenses of different perspectives because dilemmas in educational institutions can be

complicated and may naturally lead to the use of two or more paradigms to solve

problems.  "In the paradoxical, unstable, and ethically polarized era, we began to

think that there was a need to offer differing perspectives to help educational leaders

solve real-life dilemmas that they frequently face in their schools and in their

communities" (p. 3).

  With the selection and implementation of Peace Circles on the main building

campus to hopefully address the social and emotional issues of the school and myself

being one of the school administrators, I made an ethical decision with this best interest of the students in mind.

## Peace Circle Implementation

According to Atkinson and Mattiani, cited by Alternatives, Incorporated (2008), "Persons interested in developing circle programs are strongly advised to attend circle training, and to become very familiar with some of the materials cited below" (para. 4). These implementation steps have been aligned to the Illinois Social and Emotional Learning Standards.

➢ The Circle Keeper brings those involved or affected together into a single circle, usually after meeting with them individually to obtain agreement and commitment to participation in the circle process (which may in some cases be offered as an alternative to legal or disciplinary procedures); *GOAL 2-Interpersonal skills* is displayed throughout the process of the Peace Circle giving all student the opportunity to be respectful while others are speaking and the opportunity for all students to speak in the Peace Circle process.

➢ In traditional settings, an opening prayer is offered. In secular settings, an alternate opening may be used to set a tone of welcome, warmth, and partnership. A commitment to participating with an open heart and mind is requested of all; *GOAL 1-Self-awareness* is displayed is the introduction and welcoming process of the Peace Circle.

➢ The Circle Keeper then clarifies the issue to be discussed, as well as how

the process will work: the Talking Piece will be passed clockwise around the circle; only the person holding the talking piece may speak, and others should simply listen; *GOAL 3-Responsible Behaviors* is displayed with the participating student understanding and following the proper process of passing the talking piece in the Peace Circle.

➢ The circle then usually begins by asking the affected parties to describe their understanding of what transpired and their feelings about it; *GOAL 2-SOCIAL AWARENESS* is express by the students when they are sharing their understanding of their wrongdoings and being able to talk about it.

➢ When its their turn, the offender(s) are given the opportunity to explain their behavior in full. Denial and excuses can be directly confronted, and clarifications offered by supporters, victims and others affected, and other community members present when the Talking Piece comes to them. The goal of this part of the process is to clarify the situation and get at the root of the problem; *GOAL 2-SOCIAL AWARENESS AND INTERPERSONAL* is also expressed by the students being able to admit their faults and wrongdoings with the affected individual and discussing an alternative the solving the problem at state.

➢ The Circle Keeper provides leadership and guidance to circle participants (in Native cultures often by drawing on traditional values and cultural stories). In secular settings, the Circle Keeper's role is the same, but the values and stories may differ according to the group's culture. As the

Talking Piece travels around the circle multiple times, discussion continues on the nature of the problem and what might be done to heal the damage that has been done among individuals and the community, with the goal of reaching an agreement among all present; *GOAL 1-SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS TO ACHIEVE SCHOOL AND LIFE SUCCESS* is being displayed from the student understanding the Peace Circle process and utilizing the learned skills in real-life situations.

➢ Circle participants develop a holistic action plan, often including restitution or reparations to repair the damaged relationships. To ensure on-going support and accountability, follow-up circles are often planned before the end of the circle; *GOAL 1-SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS TO ACHIEVE SCHOOL AND LIFE SUCCESS* is being displayed from the student understanding the Peace Circle process and utilizing the learned skills in real-life situations.

➢ Those participating generally close with some form of ritual (handshakes, thank you's), and then share refreshments together. (Atkinson & Mattiani, 2008, para. 4) *GOAL 2-SOCIAL AWARENESS AND INTERPERSONAL* is being displayed at the closing of the Peace Circle process.

With proper Peace Circle training to help guide and steer the implementation of the Peace Circles process, my school will have an opportunity to address the three goals of the Illinois Social and Emotional Standards.  With this opportunity, the students on the main building campus will be challenged with the task of improving

their social and emotional skills.

## Restorative Justice

According to Gumz and Grant (2009), restorative justice is an alternative for dealing with any wrong doing and at the same time seeking alternative ways to bring healing to those who are hurt. According to Alternatives Inc. (2013), restorative justice uses multiple strategies to involve individuals who are directly affected by a specific wrongdoing and collectively "address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and make things as right as possible" (p. 1). Alternatives Inc. stated restorative practices bring together the key stakeholders to address the following three questions:

> ➢ Who has been hurt?
>
> ➢ What are their needs?
>
> ➢ What needs to be done to make things right?

Zehr noted the three pillars of restorative justice as follows:

> ➢ Restorative justice focuses on crime done to individuals and communities, with harm to victims, offenders, and the community in need of healing;
>
> ➢ Wrongs and offenses to victims mean that offenders need to be held accountable and responsible;
>
> ➢ Restorative justice principles emphasize the importance of victims, offenders, and the community to be involved in a dialogue about what justice means in a particular case, (cited by Gumz & Grant, 2009, p. 120)

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has teamed up with Alternative Inc. as a

vendor to support and implement Peace Circles.  CPS is experimenting with

Alternatives Solutions, Inc. to address their social and emotional issues and reduce

out-of-school suspensions.  Michael T. Meyer acting as a restorative justice specialist

at Alternative Solutions, Inc. trains selected individuals from CPS schools as a train-

the-trainer model.  This summer, the researcher participated in a two-day training

session becoming a certified Peace Circle Keeper and engaging in Peace Circle

professional development in restorative practices.

In light of senseless murders of Black males by White police officers, these

types of incidents have triggered a mass negative outlook at police officers in many

of the Black communities across the nation.  Many Black communities are now in

full support of the Black Lives Matter Movement.  With the help of social media, it

has become widespread.  This movement was established in July 2013 after the

acquittal of a White police officer, George Zimmerman, who fatally shot a young

Black male, Trayvon Martin in the state of Florida.  As of recent, this movement

targeting police brutality against Black males has become stronger and has reached

national awareness after a string of high-alert reported fatal police brutalities against

two more unarmed Black males.  A year later on July 9, 2014, after the Trayvon

Martin incident, Eric Garner was choked to death by a White police officer during an

arrest for selling single untaxed cigarettes.  Baker, Goodman, and Mueller (2015)

noted that Mr. Garner's last words, "I can't breathe" became a rally cry for a protest

movement.  One month later, another teenager, Michael Brown was fatally shot by a

White police officer, Darren Wilson, in Ferguson, Missouri.  This incident sparked a

riot in the heavily Black community of Ferguson igniting worldwide attention. After this incident, the Black Lives Matter movement reached a high-level of nationwide support especially throughout the Black communities; sparking protests and riots.

According to Restorative Justice.org (2015), over-representation of minorities in the criminal justice system is a problem around the world… "It raises questions about the fairness of the justice system itself and of how a larger social justice problems influence the justice system" (para. 1).

After these racial inequalities and police brutalities against Black individuals, this may be perfect timing to implement Peace Circles to address social and emotional issues and contribute to initiating some healing strategies in the elementary classrooms of young Black students. This gives more reason to say Black lives matter.

<p style="text-align:center"><strong>Summary</strong></p>

Greatness, turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice (Collins, 2005 p. 31). In attempting to improve schools and increase student achievement, school administrators must carefully focus on which conceptual framework to examine when adopting change. This self-study's purpose is to examine the implementation of Peace Circles addressing the social and emotional issues in the classrooms of Black students in an urban public elementary school. The literature review of this chapter has attempted to provide an understanding of the related research. This review process includes the discussion and review about the literature of Peace Circles' history and structure and the social and emotional standards framework and

definition.

Upon conducting the review of the literature, there is very limited research that addresses both social and emotional issues directly related to Black students, particularly at the elementary school level. With greater knowledge and a better understanding of the reviewed literature, the assistant principal may be to implement a successful Peace Circle program.

With that in mind, this self-study may shed some light on Peace Circles as a restorative practice to improve the social and emotional issues in the classroom of Black students in urban schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

James et al. (2008) suggest when participatory action research (PAR) methodology is implemented by school leaders; PAR creates an educational setting to support long-term school reform. My experiences and growth as an administrator will be documented through my self-study research in the hope of having implications for approaches and strategies to be used by other educational leaders in the evaluation of their own practices in their school buildings.

James et al. (2008) also suggest educators conducting research alone can utilize PAR as a tool for professional development. Throughout my self-study research, I will be reflecting on my leadership experiences of the Peace Circle professional development training and implementation throughout the school's main building campus. James et al. noted that PAR is a relevant form of professional development for educators focusing on context and content. All teachers will be engaged in Peace Circle professional development administered by myself as the instructional leader. As the building assistant principal reflecting on restorative justice professional development, I will reflect on the social and emotional issues being addressed through Peace Circle training. James et al. further suggest PAR supports the movement from centralized solutions to complex conditions in

individual school buildings increasing the potential for all students to experience academic success.  There is limited research on social and emotional issues in elementary educational settings.  The aim of my action research self-study is to focus on my leadership experiences and reflections while addressing the social and emotional issues encountered by the student population throughout the school's main building campus with the implementation of Peace Circles as a restorative justice practice.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

According to Saftler (2015), Peace Circles have the potential to address complex and sophisticated social dynamics and moral issues far more advanced than what current social psychology theory would deem elementary students capable. Kaba (2014) noted the circle process could be used for both problem solving and conflict resolution in school settings.  This leads me as an instructional leader of this elementary school to the following research questions to answer in the self-study:

1) What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2) What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3) How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4) How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

**Research Design and Justification for the Design**

According to Herr and Anderson (2005), action research is best done when a team of stakeholders collaborates with the same goal searching for a solution to the problem at stake. Bolman and Deal (2008) noted that effective teams take the time to explore who is best suited for a particular task as well as how individual roles come together. Bolman and Deal further stated the efforts of individual players are not independent but instead are tightly coordinated. Moreover, Bolman and Deal quoted George Allen, former coach of the Washington Redskins, "A football team is a lot like a machine. It's made up of parts. If one part doesn't work, one player pulling against you and not doing his job, the whole machine fails" (p. 108). This is similar to the design of this self-study research. I am researching and observing the teachers interacting in the Peace Circle professional development training. Also, I am also observing the students interacting with each other alongside the teachers. James et al. (2008) PAR allows educational leaders to engage and involve their school in tackling some of the hardest questions in education. James et al. included PAR practitioners address two types of purpose: what they want to learn (research) and what they want to improve because of the learning (action) (p. 32). Overall, I am conducting and observing while participating in this action research self-study at my respective school trying to address the social and emotional issues of my own students. This action research self-study will focus on 13 classrooms serving grades three through eight consisting of approximately 330 students.

According to Stringer (2014), the first cycle of an action research process is qualitative requiring researchers to gather information about participants' experiences and perspectives and to define the problem or issue in terms that "make sense" in their own terms. The quantitative data will be collected from different sources.
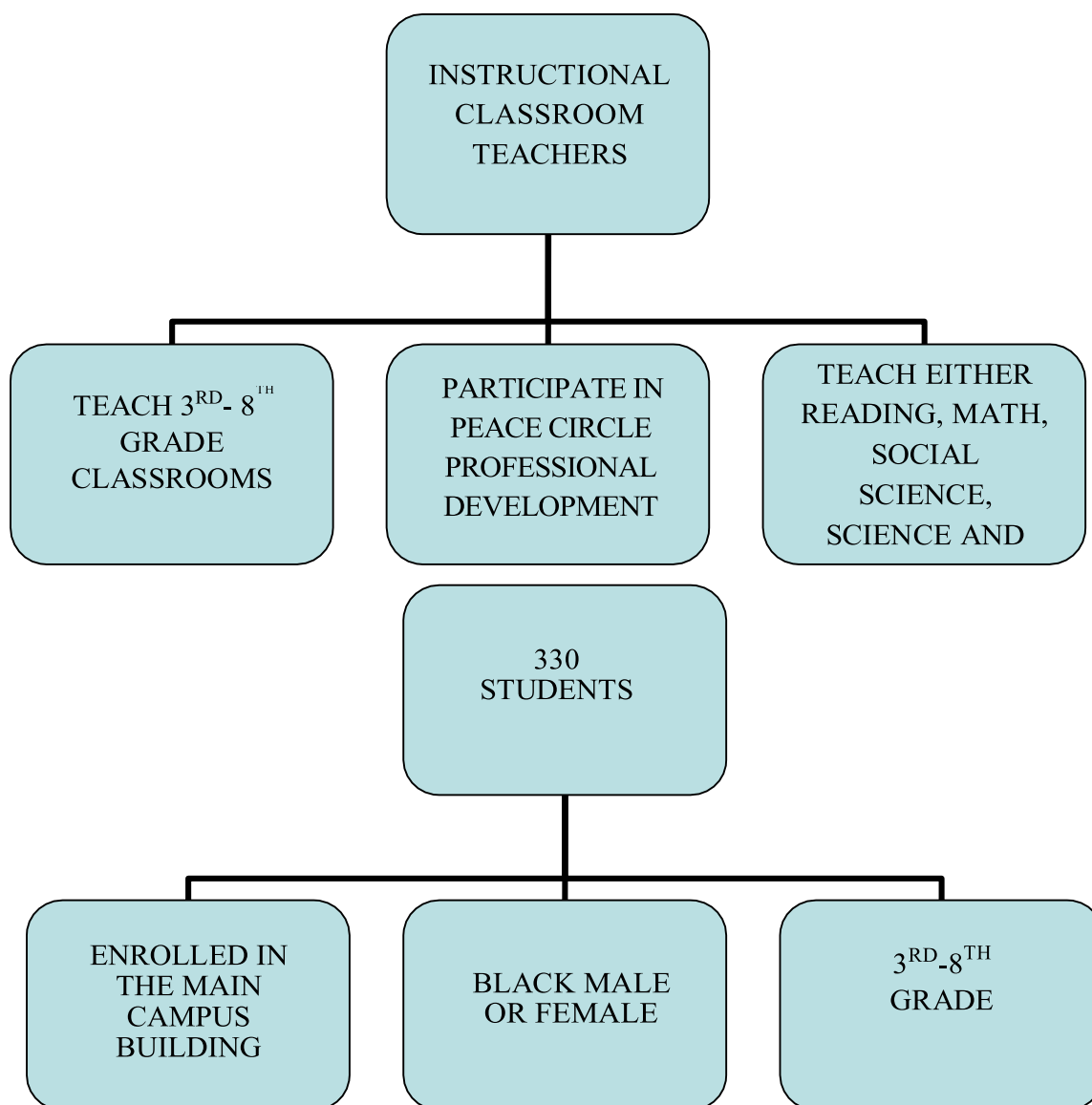


*Figure 5*. Participant Samples

In addition to the 2014-2015 needs assessment, student academic data, classroom observations, professional development agendas, meeting minutes and 5Essentials Survey Data from the years 2014-2015 (see Figure 6), I will collect these data to cross-examine for relevancy to the social and emotional issues of the main building campus classrooms.

To analyze the social and emotional issues within the classroom, I will investigate and collect data from the CPS Dashboard Website. This particular site stores the bulk of CPS student data ranging from academics to behavior. Specifically, I will utilize this analytical tool to generate a report identifying what part of the campus the social issues are occurring. With this report, I will analyze and verify data to see if most of the social and emotional issues are mostly occurring in the instructional setting of the school campus. At this time of the writing, the 2015 5Essential Survey Data reveals a *VERY WEAK* performance status in the Supportive Environment category for this school.

According to the Illinois State Board of Education (2015), the 5Essentials Survey is an evidence based system designed to drive improvement in schools by measuring changes in a school. It reliably measures changes in a school organization through the 5Essential Survey and provides individualized, actionable reports for each school based on the feedback from teachers and students in grades fourth through eighth. The 5Essentials system is reliable and critical for school success based on more than 20 years of research conducted by the University of Chicago Consortium based on the five following components:
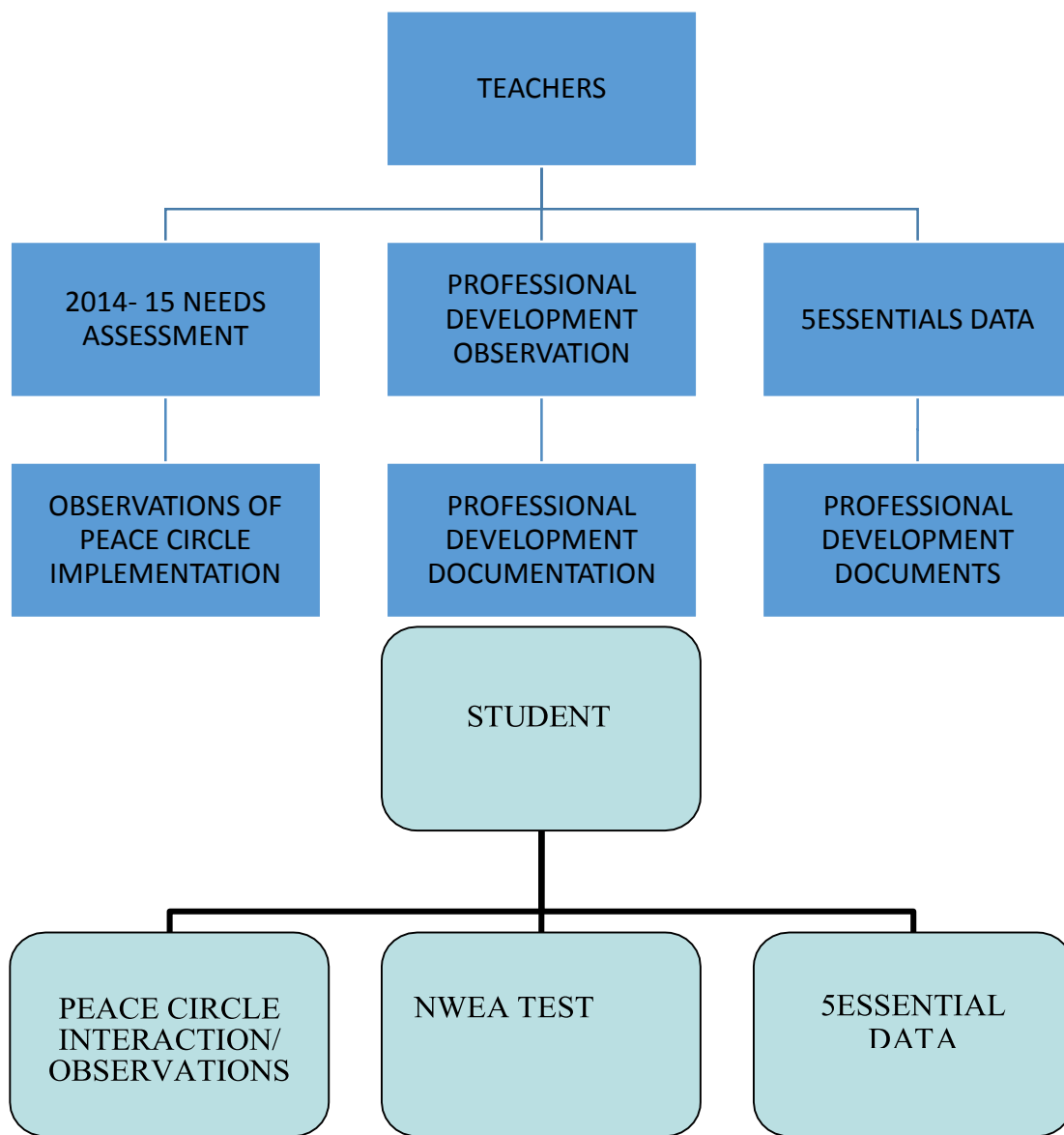
```
                              ┌──────────────┐
                              │   TEACHERS   │
                              └──────────────┘
```

| 2014- 15 NEEDS ASSESSMENT | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATION | 5ESSENTIALS DATA |
|---|---|---|
| OBSERVATIONS OF PEACE CIRCLE IMPLEMENTATION | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTATION | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS |

```
                              ┌──────────────┐
                              │   STUDENT    │
                              └──────────────┘
```

| PEACE CIRCLE INTERACTION/ OBSERVATIONS | NWEA TEST | 5ESSENTIAL DATA |
|---|---|---|

*Figure 6*. Data Sources

➢ Effective Leaders: The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.

➢ Collaborative Teachers: The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.

➢ Involved Families: The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.

➢ Supportive Environment: The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.

➢ Ambitious Instruction: Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge. (ISBE, "Frequently Asked Questions sec., para. 1)

By concentrating on the supportive environment component of the 5Essentials Survey, I will be able to analyze the feedback provided by teachers and students to verify if social and emotional issues affect the school environment. This vital information will also assist me as one of the instructional leaders of the study school. I will have an opportunity to examine and measure effectiveness and success of the school environment based on the components of the 5Essentials Survey. Herr and Anderson (2005) noted insider researchers collaborating with other participating insiders throughout the study would create the greatest impact on the study making the research more democratic too. As the assistant principal conducting this self-study, teacher collaboration will be a direct contribution to the research.

With the various types and sources of data mentioned, the research study will improve reliability and validity by triangulating the following different methods of data: CPS restorative justice documents and professional development documents in relation to restorative practices. All of the above information combined has at least

three types of data derived from three different sources to increase the validity. Figure

7 illustrates the triangulation of the data using the ethical lens of Multiple Ethical

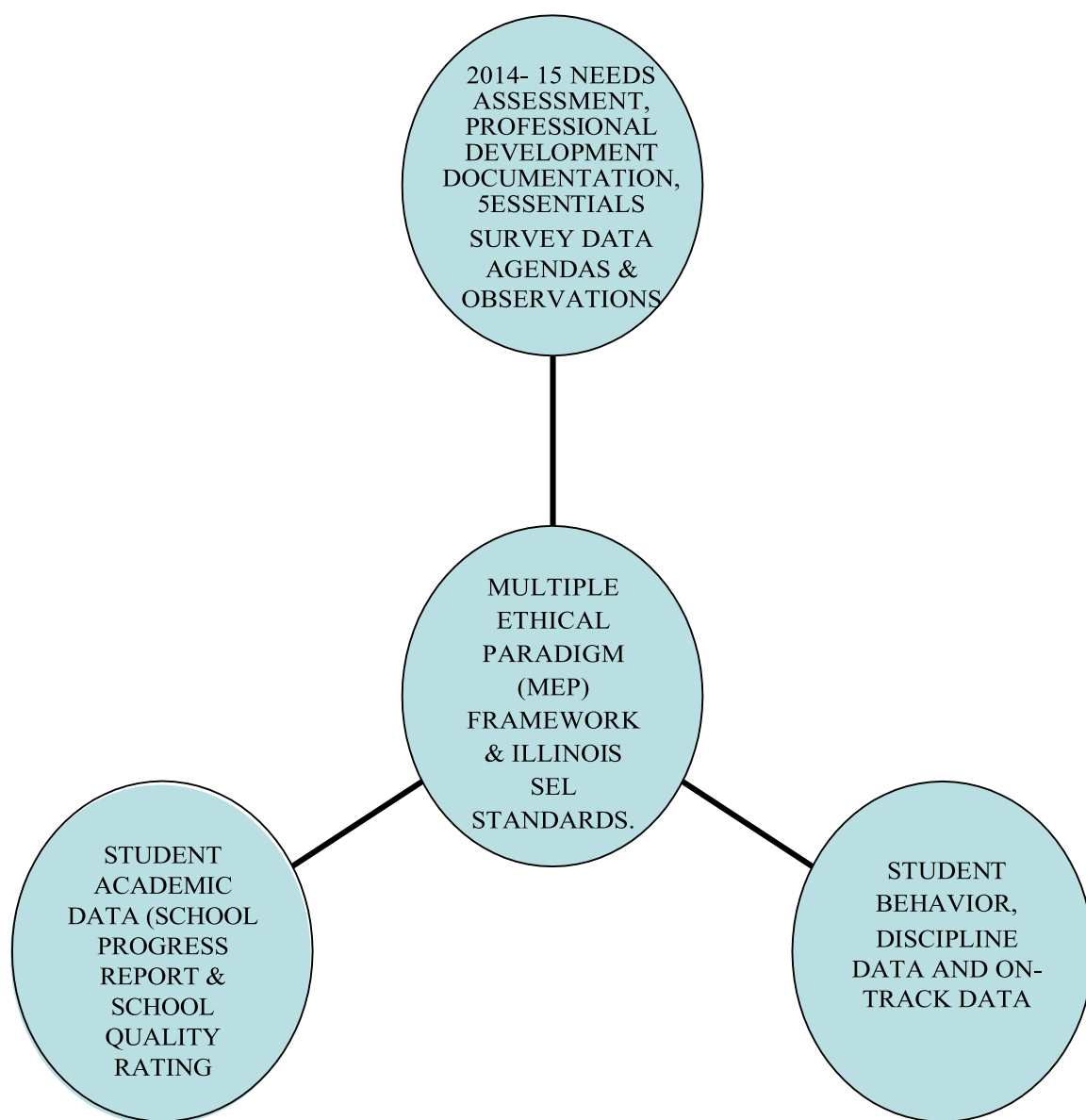Paradigm (MEP) framework (2011).



*Figure 7.* Triangulation of Data

According to Herr and Anderson (2005) in the field of education, action research has been successful due to strong cases of personal professional development and collaborative professional development. As the instructional leader of the self-study research school, I participated in professional development provided by the Office of Social and Emotional for the school district. I enrolled and participated in a two-day training for facilitating Peace Circles on August 20-21, 2015 sponsored by Chicago Public Schools Social and Emotional Department. This training was utilized to assist me with implementing the Peace Circle train-the-trainer process by training the participating teachers at the school throughout the school year. As of this school year, the Chicago Public Schools have newly created positions in the Office of Social and Emotional Learning. The position is titled the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Specialists. In each network of the Chicago Public Schools District, an (SEL) Specialist was hired. According to CPS, the SEL Specialist in each network will serve as lead in evidence-based strategies to support a coordinated and effective school climate, classroom management, social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and behavioral interventions process at schools. The CPS Career jobsite (2016) listed the SEL Specialist position with the following description:

- Leading the development of positive school climate and culture throughout the network (3-4 days weekly providing direct support to school teams).

- Providing prioritized support to a cohort of high need Network schools.

- Ensuring that schools and other network staff can integrate the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students into instructional design, school management, and MTSS processes.

- Participating in a bi-weekly professional learning community led by the Office of Social and Emotional Learning to build their capacity and facilitate learning across networks.

Losen (2015) noted the trainings were developed by restorative justice coordinators and emphasized an individualized approach to restorative practices for school communities. The Network 12 SEL Specialist, Tracy Wesson, manages monthly meetings to meet with the designated social and emotional representative from all 36 schools in the network. I participate in all monthly meetings to stay abreast of all restorative justice practices and updates.

As interviews with teachers revealed, there was a high demand for restorative justice trainings specifically for teachers to promote positive academic experiences and behaviors (Losen, 2015, p. 163). This summer I invited Tracy Wesson to conduct on-site professional development training with my staff on Restorative Conversations. The teachers were actively engaged in the half-day professional development. Many of the teachers were excited to start the beginning of the school year with some of the newly acquired social and emotional skills. Most of the teachers were not in agreement with the structure of restorative practices and the expected conversations from the Restorative Conversations.

Teacher highlights in regards to Restorative Justice, "So I am supposed to welcome a student right back in my classroom after they cursed me out. I don't know about that." "So if I kick a student out for being disrespectful, she can just return back without being suspended (Shaking her head)?"

"They just disrespected me and they fought in my classroom. Now I am supposed to sit down with them and have a conversation" (Teacher emphasized on the word, conversation referring to Restorative Practices). From this point, the SEL specialist had to intervene and manage the professional development. This was a segue for her to introduce restorative language and distribute the Restorative Handout to the teachers. This particular Restorative Language handout was subtitled *Communication Stoppers versus Restorative Language*. My journal entries included the following:

| Communication Stoppers | Restorative Questions |
|---|---|
| What did you do? | What happened? |
| Why would you do that? | What were you thinking and feeling at the time? |
| You never listen, do you? | Who do you think has been affected? |
| You know what happens next? | What do you think you need to do to make things right? |

At this point of the professional development training, the SEL Specialist wanted the school representatives to see the difference between the choices of words

for prompting a conversation without being judgmental towards a student who may have broken a school rule. These types of restorative conversation cues can encourage positive conversations and provide students the opportunity to open up during the discussion of their misconduct without feeling pressure. The communication stoppers are all judgmental questions while the restorative questions are non-judgmental and provide students the opportunity to learn and problem solve. After role-playing, some of the scenarios the SEL specialist provided, the teachers were more open to the restorative conversations. After closing the *Restorative Practices in the Classroom* professional development, some of the comments by the participating teachers follow:

"Are you coming back to follow-up with our progress?"

"Yeah, we want to make sure we are doing it right?

"Can we keep this Restorative Language handout?"

"I can't wait to try this out with my students."

"I hope this works!"

At our monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting for the month of January, we viewed a video entitled Why We Need Restorative Discipline (justice). The video shared some insight on why schools need Restorative Justice. The video opened with a quote that read, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.", but the author was not listed. Immediately, I googled the quote, discovered the author and said to myself, "Fredrick Douglas. Hmm. This is a deep and powerful message that correlates to Restorative Justice practices." The more I

thought about this quote, the more I understood the message.  If we start preparing

our students early as children, build their minds and provide them with the proper

tools for conflict-resolution skills, our children will become lifelong social and

emotional learners equipped to resolve and repair any social and emotional challenge

they may face as adults.  I think the goal of this video was to change your mindset

about Restorative Justice.  During this video, different children were shown

throughout a school building, but a caption displayed the struggle the student is

experiencing.  In most cases, most teachers are not aware of the student's

background or what they are experiencing.

This particular video shared the following captions on the screen next to each

student:

"Parents argued last night Dad say he is leaving" (Still frame shot of a young

White female student).

"Working two part-time jobs to help family with rent and food money" (Still

frame shot of Young Latino male student).

"Mother in the hospital with a serious illness, no one else at home" (Still

frame shot of a young Black female student).

"Works nights at fast food restaurant keeps falling asleep in class" (Still frame

shot of a young White male student).

"No food at home, can't wait to arrive at eat school breakfast" (Still frame

shot of a young Black male student).

"Girlfriend is pregnant. He is considering dropping out" (Still frame shot of

Young Latino male student).

"Tore ACL in practice, Universities withdrawing scholarship offers" (Still frame shot of a young Black male student).

"Staying in house with no water or electricity" (Still frame shot of a young Black female student).

"Father was drunk again…never attends his games" (Still frame shot of a young White male student with a black eye).

Many of our students are experiencing situations we are not aware of and sometimes could not imagine. If we were able to read a caption above every student's head detailing what they are experiencing, would we respond differently to our students? Would we change our mindset and push for restorative practices?

Herr and Anderson (2005) concluded that a capstone research project forces action researchers to think not only about what knowledge they have generated that can be fed back into the setting (local knowledge), but also what knowledge they have generated that is transferable to other settings (public knowledge). With the said, this action research self-study will be conducted with a purpose of sharing my experiences and self-reflections with other school leaders from other Chicago Public Schools interested in restorative practices as a mean to possibly help our students academically, socially and emotionally by providing alternate solutions to out-of-school suspensions. By documenting reflections in my reflective journal, I will have the opportunity to reflect on and develop my leadership skills and practices.

I can recall the first official Peace Circle with an eighth-grade all-male group.

It occurred during the eighth period right after their lunch period. I have been observing this group experiencing verbal conflicts. The teachers have reported that they have been off-task and not achieving their full potential in the classroom. This was a great opportunity to introduce this group to Peace Circles.

As I explained the rules of the Peace Circle. I used a mathematical definition to describe a circle as a closed shape. I knew the students understood math and shapes. This helped me bridge and introduce Rule #1, what we talk about and discuss in the Peace Circle stays in the Peace Circle. I explained that a circle is a closed shape. I transitioned to the opening ceremony component of the Peace Circle. I prepared my IPhone and Bluetooth speaker to play *Alright* by Kendrick Lamar. The hook of this song,

“We gon’ be alright. We gon’ be alright

Do you hear me? Do you feel me?

We gon’ be alright. We gon’ be alright

Do you hear me? Do you feel me?”

This was to let them know whatever situations they were experiencing; it is going to be alright. From this point, I continued to share the structure of the Peace Circle. I explained the purpose of the microphone was to represent the talking piece. When I pulled out the real microphone, you can see their eyes light up with the up and down head nods in agreement. I said, “This microphone is powerful. If you are not holding this microphone, you do not speak, and that goes for me too.” I shared that we only pass the microphone to the left-hand side, “Your heart is on the left side

of your body. We will speak from the heart in the Peace Circle." One student

responded, "Cool, I like that!" I also shared to the student that they do not have to

speak until they feel comfortable and they can pass the microphone to the individual

on their left side.

I initiated with an ice breaker regarding weather and their present feeling. I

shared, "My temperature reading for today is sunny and cool. I feel sunny and cool

because I feel good and warm like the sun and I feel cool because I'm always cool."

You can hear the laughter from the students. Surprisingly, every student participated

in the first round sharing their temperature reads. They were all excited. One

student shared, "I feel cloudy today because I'm not feeling good." Another student

shared, "I'm feeling like a thunderstorm because someone made me mad earlier

today but the sun is trying to shine." After loosening up the students, I began the

second round of talk with the question, why is school important? The students

totally understood this question. They knew their purpose for attending school. This

group of young men did not respond with the typical, "to learn" answer. The

students responded with such replies, "I attend school to have a better life when I get

older." "So, I can drive a Cadillac like yours." "I want to be rich and famous." One

response stood out,

> "I go to school to better my education and do my best because we made a deal
>
> when I was in 7th grade to get on the honor roll. I didn't think you believed in
>
> me. I want to prove to you because I look up to you. Guess what, Mr. Estes,
>
> I'm on the B Honor Roll. Remember that? Now, do you believe in me?"

I quickly responded, "Yes sir!" And of course, the students responded with a "Yes sir!" (With laughter) along with me. Knowing that is one of my trademark responses, I had to join in with the laughter.

After a while, we were already over our time. It was time for the students to transition to their homeroom class. So, I closed the Peace Circle with a song titled, *Three Little Birds* by Bob Marley. The first verse of this song is very powerful, and the words were in relation to their issues and the message I was trying to get across to the students. The lyrics are as follows:

"Don't worry about a thing

'Cause every little thing gonna be alright

Singing' don't worry about a thing

'Cause every little thing gonna be alright."

After the students had exited the Peace Room dancing to *Three Little Birds* by Bob Marley, their teacher shook my hand and stated, "This was good. Can we have Peace Circles on a weekly basis? I think they need more Restorative Justice around here."

I conducted a Peace Circle with a fifth-grade classroom who was experiencing social and emotional issues. This was brought to my attention by their homeroom teacher. The conflicts were interrupting his classroom instruction. A week later after the Peace Circle was conducted, one student privately approached me and stated, "I think we need a Peace Circle." I responded, "Why? I just spoke to your class." She replied, "I know it's not for the whole class. It's just the girls. Not all of us. It's just

a group of us. Can you come today before something happens? I think we really need it." Of course, I scheduled an emergency Peace Circle to get down to the bottom of the drama situation before this problem escalated. This Peace Circle was very emotional. Some of the students were crying and hugging each other. Besides the unexpected emotional breakdowns from the students, the Peace Circle was a success, and we never revisited the conflict between this group of female students again. After the Peace Circle session, the young lady who recognized the potential disaster of the conflict stated, "I like the Peace Circle. Thank you."

No later than a week after experiencing the first Peace Circle, I was approached by three students from the first Peace Circle. One of the students stated, "I think we need a Peace Circle. We got girl issues." I was shocked but at the same time proud of the students for recognizing the appropriate time for a Peace Circle to resolve a conflict they were experiencing.

## Limitations

Calabrese (2012) noted the limitations could identify any potential weakness of a research that may influence the methods and findings. Based on the design of the research, a few limitations were naturally created. Furthermore, there is not a lot of research evidence to support the impact of Restorative Practices. This action research self- study was limited to the main campus building of approximately 330 students possibly experiencing social and emotional issues. Stringer (2014) noted,

> Unlike traditional quantitative or experimental studies that enable the outcome
> of research to be generalized to contexts and groups other than those involved

in the research, action research outcomes apply only to the particular people or

places that were part of the study. (pp. 93-94)

Due to the small sample size, the findings of this action result may not be generalized

beyond the walls of main building campus of 13 classrooms of Black students in an

urban public school represented in this study.

**Biases**

According to Herr and Anderson (2005), action research is criticized due to

groups being favored over the individual being compared and studied.  Herr and Anderson

further stated some psychologists view action research for as an opportunity for

researchers and participants and further as an advantage rather than a threat to validity.

The primary aim of researchers has been to be as unobtrusive as possible in order not

to influence the outcomes of their investigations and finding however, action

research requires researchers to actively participate in the process, "not as an expert

who *does* research *on* people but as a resource person" (Stringer, 2014, p. 20).  Based

on me conducting and analyzing the action research self-study increases the

possibility of biased findings.

Herr and Anderson (2005) noted it is difficult to separate the self- study

practice from the study of the outcomes of actions initiated in the research

environment.  Herr and Anderson, "So while bias and subjectivity are natural and

acceptable in action research as long as they are critically examined rather than

ignored" (p. 60). The thought of me acting as an inside researcher in collaboration

with instructional teachers acting as inside researchers from within the building to

conduct an action research self-study in my own school building tends to open the door for some biases. This same advantage in action research self-study can be viewed as an opportunity for me to balance the findings discovered from the research. Herr and Anderson stated that "…one way to deal with bias is to acknowledge one's presence in the study and build in self-reflection" (p. 35). I will reflectively journal every encounter with all participants, data analysis, and professional development. Harper and Coles (2012) noted, "Member checking is primarily used in qualitative inquiry methodology and is defined as a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview" (p. 510). I will utilize member checking by sharing all results and findings with all participants to critically analyze before final publication. Ortlipp (2008) stated reflective journals engage the researcher with a notion of creating transparency in the research process and the exploring the impact of critical self-reflection in the research design. To address the bias in this action research self-study, my reflection journal, member checks, critical note-taking from the meetings and the collaboration of the participating teachers may balance the bias.

## Summary

The need to address the social and emotional issues in an urban public elementary school that young adolescent students may be experiencing is very vital to the positive learning experiences of the students. As the researcher and the assistant principal, it's my duty and responsibility to improve the social issues of the affected students.

This chapter highlighted the research design, methods and data collection methods of this action research self-study. The significance of this self-study is the potential for more public schools to try restorative practices as an alternative to out of school suspensions and improve social and emotional learning while implementing Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues through the examination of the following research questions:

1) What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2) What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3) How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4) How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

**Organization of Results**

Chapter IV unveils the results of this action research self-study.  My results are unveiled in different sections.  The aim of this analysis is to evaluate the current situation regarding the implementation of Peace Circles in the main building campus classrooms.  The first section contains information about the number of misconduct behaviors from the CPS Dashboard program based on 2015-16 School Year.  The second section contains the summarization of the implementation process of the Peace Circles Restorative Justice practices.  The third section contains the sharing of the journal writing and leadership experiences with Peace Circle implementation.

Porter (2007) noted changing from a punitive to a restorative mindset represents a paradigm shift that is critical.  The purpose of conducting this action research self-study was to investigate and search for a possible solution to address the social and emotional issues in main building campus classrooms. Schumacher (2014) suggests *Circles* might be a restorative option for building positive peer relationship and supporting social-emotional competency in schools.  With the proper action plan in effect, the students in the main building classrooms were provided an opportunity to resolve conflict issues and increase academic performance.  Stringer (2014) stated the underlying problem in action research is to establish the nature of

the issue or problem and how it might be stated.  The social and emotional problems experienced by the students led me to the following research questions to answer in the action research self-study:

1)  What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

2)  What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

3)  How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice?

4)  How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

**Methodology Summary**

There has been a huge debate about school discipline reform.  "We stand today in the middle of an important debate on the role, function, and practice of school discipline" (Skiba & Losen, 2015, p. 4).  In the past, critics of public school education have sided with suspensions and zero-tolerance programs.  Today, many of the same critics are now shifting to more conservative practices of Restorative Justice.  Weingarten (2015) noted many people have called for reevaluations for many of these policies.  She further stated, "These policies were promoted by people, including me, who hoped they would standardize discipline procedures and free students from the disruptions of misbehaving peers; it was analogous to the broken windows theory of policing. We were wrong" (p. 1).

The methodology for this action research project was a self-study. Stringer (2014) explains that action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives. The main objective for me is to be an effective instructional school leader. To improve social and emotional issues and increase student achievement, my decisions resolved around the students and the instructional classroom teachers. My experiences and reflections from Peace Circles may benefit educational institutions facing social and emotional issues and/or experiencing a high percentage of out-of-school suspensions. As the building, assistant principal studying two of the most important stakeholders; students and teachers, my goal was to attempt and utilize these individuals to assist in gathering the necessary data to address the social and emotional issues in the main building campus classrooms. Stringer stated the primary objective is to gather information that enables researchers to extend their understanding of the experience and perspectives of stakeholders- mainly those affected by having an influence on the issue investigated. Based on professional development documentation, professional development observations, and classrooms observations, this self-study reflected on my self-reflections and my personal experiences throughout the implementation of the Peace Circles and the effectiveness to improve social and emotional issues of students.

In addition to the 2014-2015 needs assessment, student discipline and behavior data, student academic data, professional development documentation, professional development observations, and 5Essentials Survey Data from the years 2014-

2016, I collected these data to cross-examine the relevancy of the social and emotional issues of the main building campus classrooms.

## Population, Sample, and Participation

Based upon the 5Essentials Survey Data, this self-study analysis reflects and indicates the results from the student section of the data. The analysis compares the 5Essential Survey data from the previous 2014-2015 SY to the most current, 2015-16 SY. These data compared a before and after comparison analysis of the implementation of Peace Circles as a Restorative Practice. I was attempting to improve social and emotional issues throughout the school environment of an urban elementary school focusing on third through eighth-grade students.

This self-study reflected on one urban public elementary school, specifically, the main campus building consisting of 330 elementary school students ranging from grade levels of third through eighth. All teachers were engaged in Peace Circle professional development administered by the assistant principal as the instructional leader and other restorative practice coaches provided by the school's network office. As the building assistant principal reflecting on Restorative Justice professional development, I was reflecting on the social and emotional issues being addressed through Peace Circle training.

Participants were not truly chosen, as this Restorative Justice practice initiative only occurred in the main building campus classrooms. Participants are part of this initiative as part of their work assignment as teachers in the main building campus classrooms.

**Results**

**Student Discipline**

Research has overwhelmingly shown that zero-tolerance "*get tough*" policies are ineffective and increase the risk for negative social and academic outcomes especially for children from historically disadvantaged groups (Skiba & Losen, 2015, p. 4). According to Porter (2007), "The most significant find qualitative finding to date, said Dr. Paul McCold, researcher and founding faculty member of the International Institute for Restorative Practices graduate school, is that restorative practices transform school's academic and social culture" (Restorative Practices in Schools: Research Reveals Power of Restorative Approach, Part I, para. 4). The behavioral improvement was expected for the students to develop interpersonal skills to handle frustration and resolve the conflict. Many of the discipline and misconduct reports dealt with classroom interruptions, disrespectful behaviors, inappropriate language, physical horseplay and fighting. The results from the misconduct behaviors reported in the CPS Dashboard program based on the 2015-16 School Year suggested that Peace Circles as a restorative practice positively impacted the behavior in the main building campus classrooms. Most of the improvement directly related to conflict and resolution. The SCC violations that significantly displayed improvement correlated with social and emotional related issues with main building campus classrooms. Skiba and Losen (2015) noted the good news is that several universal, school-wide productive interventions that improved school disciplinary issues potentially reduced racial discipline disparities. During the 2014-15 School

Year, there were 333 student misconducts reported in the main building campus

classrooms compared to only 126 reported during the 2015-16 School Year. Table 2

displays the breakdown of the number of misconduct behaviors from the CPS

Dashboard program based on 2015-16 School Year. The chart includes the Student

Code of Conduct infraction coded by the group code of the actual violation based on

the degree of disruption of the learning environment. The number of student

misconducts reported in the main building campus classrooms drastically decreased

from 94 to 35 student misconducts in the 2015-16 School Year from the previous

2014-2105 School Year.  In the main building campus classrooms, there was a 62%

decrease in the number of student misconducts reported in the main building campus

classrooms.

According to Weingarten (2015), the discipline policies of the past that

emphasized punishment over developing positive behaviors are not working.  Since

the implementation of Peace Circles as a restorative practice in the 2015-16 School

Year, the specific type of misconducts relating to social and emotional behaviors

were reduced in comparison to the 2014-15 School Year.  For example, during the

2014-15 School Year, there were 23 student misconducts for the Student Code of

Conduct (SCC) *4-6 Fighting, more than 2 people or injury* for the main building

campus classrooms.  For the same SCC in the 2015-16 School Year, there were only

five student misconducts reported.  The 2014-2015 School Year reported 16 student

misconducts for the *SCC 3-3 Fighting 2 people, no injuries* but again in the 2015-16

School Year; there were not any student misconducts reported for the same SCC for

the main building campus classrooms.  As far as classroom interruptions, there were

15 student misconduct cases reported in the 2014-2015 School Year, but in the

school year 2015-16 there was only one single case reported in the CPS Verify

system for the same SCC for the main building campus classrooms.  There were two

cases of cyber bullying reported during the 2014-15 School Year in the CPS verify

system as opposed to not one *SCC 5-14 Using the computer to threaten/bully;*

*Hacking* being reported in violation by any individuals from the main building

campus classrooms.  The highest level of SCC reported in the school year of 2014-15

was *SCC 6-1 Using/possessing a firearm or weapon*.  There were four cases reported

in the 2014-15 School Year in comparison to the 2015-16 School Year to which there

was not a single case reported for the same 6-1 *SCC 6-1 Using/possessing a firearm*

*or weapon* for the main building campus classrooms.  Overall, the 94 misconducts

reported in 2014-15 decreased dramatically to a total of 35 infractions reported in

CPS Verify for the 2015-16 School Year.

Table 2

*Total Number of Misconducts Comparing SY 2014-15 to SY 2015-16*

| THE NUMBER OF MISCONDUCTS BY YEAR | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CPS SCC MISCONDUCT | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | CHANGE +/ - |
| 1-2 Leaving classroom without permission | 3 | 0 | -3 |
| 1-3 Disrupting Classroom Instruction | 15 | 1 | -14 |
| 2-2 Leaving school without permission | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 2-4 Unacceptable minor physical actions | 12 | 6 | -6 |
| 2-5 Failing to abide by school rules | 8 | 15 | +7 |
| 2-6 Offensive materials/language/gestures | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 2-8 Disregard for instruction of school peers | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 3-3 Fighting 2 people, no injuries | 16 | 0 | -16 |
| 3-4 Offensive Language/ Behavior Harassment | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 3-5 Persistent Group 1-3 Inappropriate Behaviors | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4-3 Assault | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 4-4 Vandalism less than $500 | 1 | 0 | -1 |
| 4-6 Fighting, more than 2 people or injury | 23 | 5 | -18 |
| 4-13 Possessing dangerous object, 1st offense | 4 | 1 | -3 |
| 5-14 Using computer to threaten/bully; Hacking | 2 | 1 | -1 |
| 6-1 Using/Possessing a firearm or weapon | 4 | 0 | -4 |
| TOTAL | 94 | 35 | -53 |

According to Alternatives, Inc. (2011) implementing Restorative Justice in a school requires careful planning.  Skiba and Losen (2015) noted that a successful

transition toward a positive school climate would require strong support and training for both teachers and administration. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has created and designed strategic efforts to reduce suspensions by teaming up with different vendors to support restorative practices and implement Peace Circles in many of their schools. Last summer, I participated as the administrator representative from my school in one of the Restorative Practice initiative sessions as a train-the-trainer model. I also participated in a two-day training session becoming a certified Peace Circle Keeper and engaged in Peace Circle professional development in restorative practices. Since the beginning of the school year, I have participated in Restorative Justice professional development every month except for the month November due to the birth of my first child, Essiah. I recently registered to enroll for the month of March Social and Emotional Network Meeting organized by the Social and Emotional Network Specialist to stay abreast on Restorative Justice ideas and strategies.

Fronius, Persson, Gukenburg, and Petrosino (2016) indicated restorative practices require staff members to perform duties outside their traditional job description at the school, such as attending professional development, conducting Peace Circles during instruction time, and spending time conducting restorative conversations with students. Initial Peace Circle implementation consisted of training the teachers specifically in the main building campus classrooms. Before the actual implementation, the restorative practice initiative was shared and discussed with all teachers during their department meeting. Some of the teachers were not in

favor of the new wave of restoring justice. There was still a belief in exclusionary

discipline.  After explaining in depth and sharing the focus of reducing suspensions

and initiating restorative practices such as Peace Circles.

Furthermore, I shared the news that CPS plans to reduce suspensions, end the

school-to-prison pipeline and improve the social and emotional issues restoratively.

Fronius et al. (2016) indicated administrators and educators need to be equipped with

the proper tools and resources necessary to successfully implement their Restorative

Justice program.  I forgot to mention; we had a resident principal along with myself

conducting Peace Circles within the same main building campus classrooms during

the 2013- 2014 School Year.  This particular individual was not a trained Peace

Circle Keeper nor was I at the time.  We read some peace circle literature because he

was conducting a project for his resident principal program and I was curious and at

the same time wanted to show my support.  Table 3 displays the breakdown of the

number of misconduct behaviors from the CPS Dashboard program based on 2013-

14 School Year.  After reviewing the results from the previous school year, I did

notice a slight decrease for the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) 2-8 Disregard for the

instruction of school peers from two cases reported during the 2013-14 and one case

reported during the 2014-15 School Year.  Student Code of Conduct (SCC) 3-3

Fighting 2 people, no injuries was the only category displaying a significant

decrease. This particular category displayed a decrease, but there were increases in

the same concentrated social and emotionally related misconduct categories.  For

example, during the 2013-14 School Year, there were five student misconducts for

the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) 4-6 Fighting, more than two people or injury for the main building campus classrooms. For the same SCC in the 2014-15 School Year, there was a drastic increase with 23 reported student misconducts. There were two cases of cyber bullying reported during the 2013-14 and two cases of cyber bullying reported during the 2014-15 School Year in the CPS verify system of the SCC 5-14 Using computer to threaten/bully; Hacking being reported in violation two individuals from the main building campus classrooms verifying no change from the previous in this particular category but there was only one case of cyber bullying reported during the 2015-16 School Year. During the 2013-14 School Year, there were two student misconducts for the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) 4-13 Possessing dangerous object, first offense. The same SCC in the 2014-15 School Year doubled to four reported student misconducts for the year. Similar to the 2013-14 School Year when I also discovered there was only one student misconduct for the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) Aggravated assault for the main building campus classrooms. For the same SCC in the 2014-15 School Year, there were two more misconducts reported for Aggravated assault for the students.

Table 3

*Total Number of Misconducts Comparing SY 2013-14 to SY 2014-15*

| THE NUMBER OF MISCONDUCTS BY YEAR | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CPS SCC MISCONDUCT | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | CHANGE +/- |
| 1-1 Running or excessive noise in the hall/ building | 3 | 0 | -3 |
| 1-2 Leaving classroom without permission | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 1-3 Disrupting Classroom Instruction | 13 | 15 | +1 |
| 2-2 Leaving school without permission | 1 | 2 | +2 |
| 2-4 Unacceptable minor physical actions | 8 | 12 | +4 |
| 2-5 Failing to abide by school rules | 7 | 8 | +1 |
| 2-6 Offensive materials/language/gestures | 0 | 1 | +1 |
| 2-8 Disregard for instruction of school peers | 2 | 1 | -1 |
| 3-3 Fighting 2 people, no injuries | 46 | 16 | -30 |
| 3-4 Offensive Language/ Behavior Harassment | 15 | 1 | -14 |
| 3-5 Persistent Group 1-3 Inappropriate Behaviors | 17 | 0 | -17 |
| 4-3 Assault | 3 | 1 | -2 |
| 4-4 Vandalism less than $500 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 4-6 Fighting, more than 2 people or injury | 5 | 23 | +17 |
| 4-13 Possessing dangerous object, 1st offense | 2 | 4 | +2 |
| 5-14 Using computer to threaten/bully; Hacking | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 6-1 Using/Possessing a firearm or weapon | 1 | 4 | +3 |
| TOTAL | 147 | 94 | -8 |

Restorative justice is not a "one-size-fits-all" process and thus should be

implemented as part of a comprehensive multileveled response to behavior and

conflict (Losen, 2015, p. 157). The Peace Circle Initiative Program process has to be designed for the specific school not just from reading some literature about Restorative Justice and peace circles. Losen noted school districts must approach implementation through a model that can be adapted to individual communities. Each school is unique in regards to the culture of the school's discipline system.

International studies have proven success with positive outcomes in restorative practices. Fronius et al. (2016) indicated U.S. educators have been experimenting with restorative practices as an alternative to exclusionary disciplinary actions. Losen (2015) noted in 2008, a longitudinal study on the impact of Restorative Justice in Denver Public Schools (DPS) is considered to be the first conducted in an urban school district in the United States. Losen shared Restorative Justice has benefitted at the individual school level from having dedicated principals, deans, school resource officers, teachers and parents who are committed to alternative responses to misbehavior and conflict. With the involvement of the stakeholders at the school determines the success of implementation and predicts the outcome of the program. I can assume this is one of the contributing factors to the success of the Peace Circles. Initially, the teachers did not buy-in with the Restorative Justice approach. It was a challenge to shift their mindset from the traditional exclusionary discipline approach.

**Student Achievement**

A year before Peace Circles was implemented, we implemented a reading and math intervention program designed to improve student growth and attainment that

possibly impacted the increase in student achievement.  Students in the main campus

building also utilized interactive computer on-line test preparation programs such as

Study Island and Stride Academy designed to improve students' performance that

could have possibly been a factor attributing to the increase in student achievement.

Although Fronius et al. (2016) indicated there is limited and mixed evidence

indicating if Restorative Justice practices can positively impact achievement and

academic progress, the results from myself- study concluded that Peace Circles as a

restorative practice could address social and emotional issues and increase student

achievement.

The 2016 School Progress Report (see Figure 8) revealed some positive

outcomes. In the Student Growth category, the school received a *Far Above Average*

label which means the change in the NWEA score between Spring 2015 and Spring

2016 was much greater at my school than at other schools nationally with the same

pretest score.  Specifically, mathematics increased from the 77th Percentile to the 96th

Percentile displaying a 19% increase.  Reading decreased from the 97th Percentile to

the 96th Percentile.  Mathematics increased from the 77th Percentile to the 96th

Percentile.  In the Student Attainment category, the school received an *Above*

*Average* label which means student attainment at this school was above average,

which means the NWEA test scores in Spring 2016 were higher than the national

average score.  Specifically, mathematics increased from the 76th percentile to the

78th percentile revealing a 2% increase.  Reading increased from the 80th percentile to

the 83rd percentile revealing a 3% increase.

**Level 1+**
Level 1
Level 2+
Level 2
Level 3
Not Enough Data

## School Quality Rating
This school recieved a Level 1+ rating based on the CPS School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP). More information about what this rating means and how it is calculated is available at cps.edu/sqrp.
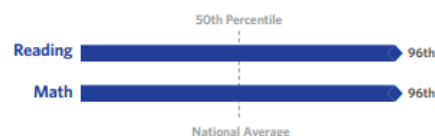
## Accountability Status: Good Standing
This school is in Good Standing, based on this and last year's SQRP ratings. This means that the Local School Council (LSC) will oversee this school's funding allocations and Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP). More information is available at cps.edu/LSC.

## Student Growth

**FAR ABOVE AVERAGE**

Student Growth at this school was far above average, which means the change in NWEA test scores between Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 was much greater at this school than at other schools nationally with the same pretest score.

50th Percentile
Reading — 96th
Math — 96th
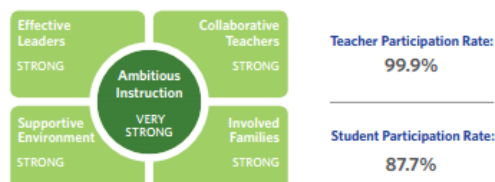National Average

## Student Attainment

**ABOVE AVERAGE**

Student Attainment at this school was above average, which means NWEA test scores in Spring 2016 were higher than the national average score.

50th Percentile
Reading — 78th
Math — 80th
National Average
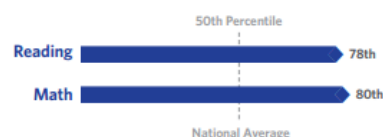
## School Culture & Climate

**WELL ORGANIZED**

This school is "Well-Organized for Improvement" which means that the school has a very strong culture and climate, suggesting the school is set up for success. Results are based on student and teacher responses to the My Voice, My School 5Essentials survey. For more information on this survey and additional measures of school culture and climate, visit cps.5-essentials.org.

Effective Leaders STRONG
Collaborative Teachers STRONG
Ambitious Instruction
Supportive Environment STRONG
VERY STRONG
Involved Families STRONG

**Teacher Participation Rate:** 99.9%

**Student Participation Rate:** 87.7%

## Early Education Award
This school's preschool program has earned a Gold Circle of Quality award from the statewide quality rating system, meeting and exceeding the highest quality of standards for early learning programs. For more information, visit excelerateillinois.com.

## Healthy Schools
Students learn better at healthy schools! This school is working towards achieving Healthy CPS. Schools must earn four badges to become Healthy CPS. Learn more by visiting cps.edu/healthycps.

HEALTHY CPS STATUS: NOT ACHIEVED

## Creative Schools
This school is Emerging in the arts. It rarely meets the goals and priorities outlined in the CPS Arts Education Plan including Staffing & Instruction, Partnerships, Community & Culture, and Budget & Planning. To learn more, visit cpsarts.org/creative-schools-certification.

## Supportive Schools
This school did not submit an application for the Supportive School Certification.

*Figure 8.* 2016 School Progress Report
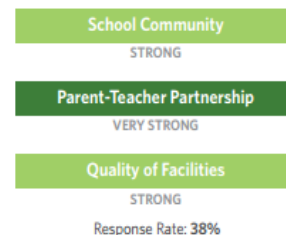
On-track data is the percentage of students in grades three through eight who have an attendance rate of 95% or greater, no more than three misconducts and earned a C or higher in reading and mathematics. For my school, the On-Track percentage in 2015 was 52.5% (see Figure 9). There was a 9.2% increase in the 2016 School Year to 61.7% of the 3rd through 8th graders in the main building campus.

## School Quality Rating

Level 1+
Level 1
Level 2+
Level 2
Level 3
Not Enough Data

This school recieved a Level 1+ rating based on the CPS School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP). More information about what this rating means and how it is calculated is available at cps.edu/sqrp.

## Accountability Status: Good Standing

This school is in Good Standing, based on this and last year's SQRP ratings. This means that the Local School Council (LSC) will oversee this school's funding allocations, Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) and principal evaluations. More information is available at cps.edu/LSC

## Student Growth

**FAR ABOVE AVERAGE**

Student Growth at this school was far above average, which means the change in NWEA test scores between Spring 2014 and Spring 2015 was much greater at this school than at other schools nationally with the same pretest score.

50th Percentile
Reading — 97th
Math — 77th
National Average

## Student Attainment

**ABOVE AVERAGE**

Student Attainment at this school was above average, which means NWEA test scores in Spring 2015 were higher than the national average score.

50th Percentile
Reading — 76th
Math — 83rd
National Average
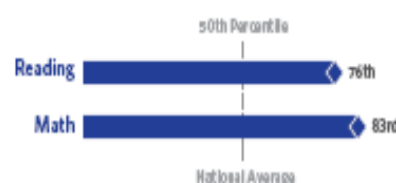
## School Culture & Climate

**ORGANIZED**

This school is "Organized for Improvement" which means that the school has a strong culture and climate with only a few areas for improvement. Results are based on student and teacher responses to the My Voice, My School 5Essentials survey. For more information on this survey and additional measures of school culture and climate, visit cps.5-essentials.org/2015.

Effective Leaders STRONG
Collaborative Teachers NEUTRAL
Ambitious Instruction
Supportive Environment WEAK
STRONG
Involved Families NEUTRAL

Teacher Participation: 96.8%

Student Participation: 99.5%

## Early Education Award

This school's preschool program has earned a Gold Circle of Quality award from the statewide quality rating system, meeting and exceeding the highest quality of standards for early learning programs. For more information, visit excellerateillinois.com.

## Creative Schools

This school is Emerging in the arts. It rarely meets the goals and priorities outlined in the CPS Arts Education Plan including Staffing & Instruction, Partnerships, Community & Culture, and Budget & Planning. To learn more, visit cpsarts.org/creative-schools-certification.

## Healthy Schools

**NOT CERTIFIED**

This school has not achieved Healthy School Certified Status. Moving forward, the district will no longer use the HealthierUS School Challenge to determine a school's status. To better measure a school's commitment to a safe and healthy learning environment, schools must earn four badges to become Healthy CPS beginning SY16-17. Learn more by emailing oshw@cps.edu.

## Supportive Schools

This school is in the process of being reviewed for its implementation of supports for social and emotional learning (SEL) and will receive a rating next year. For information about this new certification, visit www.cps.edu/sel.
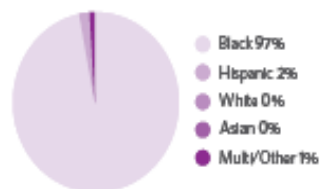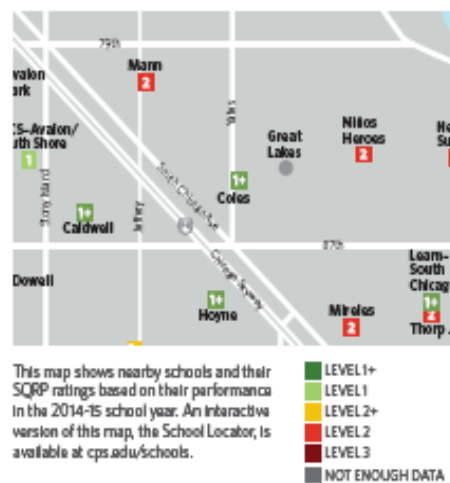
## School Stats

**School Type:** Neighborhood

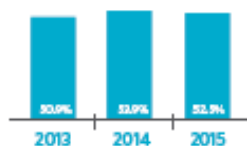**Enrollment:** 548

**Grades Served:** PE-8

## Demographics



- Black 97%
- Hispanic 2%
- White 0%
- Asian 0%
- Multi/Other 1%

96% English Learners / Economically Disadvantaged

9.5% Diverse Learners

## Neighborhood Map



This map shows nearby schools and their SQRP ratings based on their performance in the 2014-15 school year. An interactive version of this map, the School Locator, is available at cps.edu/schools.

- LEVEL 1+
- LEVEL 1
- LEVEL 2+
- LEVEL 2
- LEVEL 3
- NOT ENOUGH DATA

## Attendance



92% 2013 / 93.8% 2014 / 93.5% 2015

## Grades 3-8 On Track



50.9% 2013 / 53.9% 2014 / 52.9% 2015

## Parent Survey

**School Community** NEUTRAL

**Parent-Teacher Partnership** NEUTRAL

**Quality of Facilities** NEUTRAL

Response Rate: 63%

## School Connectedness

Students' reported sense of membership in the school community on the 5Essentials survey

STRONG — THIS YEAR

NEUTRAL — LAST YEAR

## English Learners

The percent of students meeting annual growth targets

THIS YEAR / LAST YEAR

## Teachers

3.1% Teachers that are National Board Certified

96.8% Teachers that are returning from last year

95.2% Teacher attendance

## Classroom Rigor

Students' perception of rigor in the classroom

STRONG — THIS YEAR

STRONG — LAST YEAR

## Suspension Practices

The percent of students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions

7% THIS YEAR

15.8% LAST YEAR
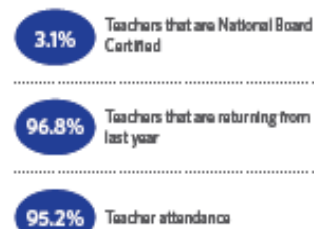
You can find more detailed information about school progress and the measures used in this report at cps.edu/findaschool.

pg. 2

*Figure 9.* 2015 School Progress Report

**Student Attendance**

Losen (2015) pointed out that the most important point those contemplating

policy and intervention remedies should consider is that behavioral and disciplinary

issues affect students in several complex and interconnected ways.  Not only did the

discipline and student achievement increase but attendance also increased.  Fronius et

al. (2016) stated studies have indicated school attendance tended to improve after

restorative practice implementation.  Even though attendance was not the focus of

my study, there was a positive impact revealing a 1.8% increase from 2015 to the

2016 School Year.  Out of 36 schools in our school's network, we had the highest

increase in overall attendance.  Fronius et al. further stated restorative practices

implementation positively impacts student truancy and absenteeism. The Peace

Circles had a positive effect on the students' attendance.  I observed that the fewer

students receive out-of-school suspensions, the more instructional minutes and time

they spend in school.

**5Essentials Data**

Before the Peace Circle Initiation, the 2015 5Essential Survey Data revealed a

*WEAK* performance status in the Supportive Environment category for this school.

The overall rating also reflected an *ORGANIZED* status.  Now, I can finally state the

school is *WELL-ORGANIZED FOR IMPROVEMENT* which means my school has a

very strong culture and climate, suggesting the school is set up for success.  These

results are based on student and teacher responses to the My Voice, My School

5Essentials survey.  The student responses are mainly reflected in the Supportive

Environment category.  The Supportive Environment on the 5Essential Survey Data

revealed a *STRONG* performance status in this category for my school.

Triangulation was examined and established through the examination of the

Peace Circle observations, 5essentials survey data, professional development

observations, and school progress reports.

## Research Question Findings

As analyzing this data, observing the Peace Circle implementation process and

reflecting back to my main purpose of conducting this self-study, the results of my

leadership experiences reveal positive outcomes throughout the engagement and

implementation of the Peace Circles. These experiences have provided support to answer

my proposed research questions:

What are my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new

initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study?

My leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative

in an elementary school building as a self-study has been a roller coaster experience.

There were many ups and downs throughout the Peace Circle implementation.  As I

previous shared about initially implementing Peace Circles, the teachers were

reluctant to initiate the Restorative Justice practice.  After the Restorative

Conversations professional development, more teachers were willing to try the new

initiative.  Throughout the process, there were some teachers complaining about the

consequences the students were receiving if any in their eyes, opposed to the

traditional exclusionary discipline consequences.  After experiencing and witnessing

the students appreciate and understand the purpose of the Peace Circles, I was beginning to enjoy this particular part of the implementation. I identified the students not being prepared to handle conflict and resolution situations as one of their social and emotional problems they were experiencing, but now they are capable of resolving. This portion made the rollercoaster experience very exciting!

What are my experiences from Peace Circles?

My experiences from Peace Circles have been one of the best experiences in my 22 years in education. I strive for student growth. I love to see my students grow. It is remarkable to observe students transition from dependent to independent stages of responsibility as young adolescents. Throughout the implementation of the Peace Circle, I did not include the parents in this process, but somehow they were somewhat aware of the Peace Circles in the school. For example, an irate parent approached me in the hallway with an issue regarding her fifth-grade student. She approached me and stated,

"I don't know what to do. I spoke to the principal. I feel he didn't do anything. The girls still come to school, and nothing has happened to them. It wasn't enough. My daughter is still being bullied by the same girls. Now I am coming to you. I need for you to do something before I go beyond. I heard you meet with students and a circle thingy."

(I am observing another parent down the hall observe us. With this particular parent, I had a successful Peace Circle with her daughter). I responded, "Yes, I conduct Peace Circles to resolve conflict with the students." She replied,

"Well, can you do something with my daughter?  She comes home crying

almost every day and complaining about not coming to school.  This is not

right.  She should not have to feel like that.  Can you talk to them before I go

to jail?"

I responded, "That is not necessary.  I will hold Peace Circles with them during their

lunch period.  This will take some time, so be patient."  I was thinking to myself,

"Will a Peace Circle work for this situation?  How will I conduct this Peace Circle

successfully to resolve the conflict with the female students and at the same time

accommodate and satisfy this parent?"  Within a couple of days, the parent

approached me after school in the hallway with a smile on her face, "I don't know

how but whatever you did, it worked.  My daughter came home and told me

everything.  She said you ate lunch with them.  Thank you!"

How did I come to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative

practice?

I chose to implement Peace Circles at my school as a restorative practice mainly

because during this particular Restorative Justice practice; the student is directly

involved.  With this process, you can work with students and attempt to improve

their behavior immediately even while they are inside the school building.

According to CPS (2005), the Suspension and Expulsion Reduction Plan (SERP)'s

was to simplify and clarify the language of the policy to help guide schools on how

to implement Restorative Practices and address misconduct while keeping students in

the classroom.  In the past, I have selected and experienced other alternative practices

such as CHAMPS and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) being implemented and not being effective. Schumacher (2014) suggests *Circles* might be a restorative option for building positive peer relationship and supporting social-emotional competency in schools. I was left with the option of selecting Peace Circles as a restorative practice to address the social and emotional issues being experienced within the classrooms on the main building campus of my school.

How has my leadership changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework?

My leadership has not changed as understood through the conceptual framework of Multiple Ethical Frameworks (MEF) and the Social and Emotional Learning Standards Framework mainly because both frameworks believe students are the first priority. The best interests of the students are at the center of the Multiple Ethical Paradigm Framework. Stefkovich (2014) noted these frameworks provide educators with an advanced set of tools to make decisions as educational leaders. Before and throughout the Peace Circle implementation, all of my decisions were well thought with the students in mind. With the Multiple Ethical Paradigm Framework, the ethics of the framework are governed by the voice of the students. "Through the study of ethics, educational leaders of tomorrow will be better prepared to recognize, reflect on, and appreciate differences." (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 4). My Leadership Experiences with Peace Circles as a Restorative Practice self-study is a blueprint for the Multiple Ethical Paradigm Frameworks. As an

educational leader, my decisions were through multiple ethics of justice, care, critique, and profession.

*Justice*

For justice, the Peace Circle restorative practice was selected based on the "*greater good*" of addressing the social and emotional issues of the main building campus classrooms.

*Care*

For care, the participating stakeholders were investing their time and displaying their "*duty of care*" for the students.

*Critique*

For critique, within the process of the Peace Circles, the Black student voice was provided an opportunity to be heard.

*Profession*

For profession, throughout the self-study process, the stakeholders were provided the necessary professional development training to be successful in the implementation of Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues of all classrooms.

My students were the reason for the implementation and the selection of the Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues they were experiencing in the school setting. I continued to use my wise ethical decisions ensuring students interests were best.

Not only did I use the Multiple Ethical Paradigm Frameworks, but I also

reviewed the Illinois Social and Emotional (SEL) Learning Standards. I think the foundation for implementing a solid SEL program lies within the guidelines of the standards. Gordon et al. (2011) noted schools that implement programs to improve students' social and emotional competencies could positively affect an array of academic and social-behavioral outcomes. In order for me to effectively implement the Peace Circles Program, I had to apply the Illinois SEL Learning Standards as my guide and foundation for successfully implementing the Peace Circles with hopes of addressing the social and emotional issues of the students.

Peace Circles greatly impacted the culture of the school. Not only did Peace Circle positively affect our social and emotional issue, but also, our overall student achievement increased for third through eighth- grade students. Student growth, student attainment, and the school's culture and climate displayed positive outcomes. Attendance was not a focus of this self-study, and there was a significant increase in our overall attendance. The 3rd- 8th On-Track Data represented an impactful increase of the student academic, attendance and behavior data.

My experience confirmed Peace Circles could change the culture of the school and impact student learning. My heart is not shaped like a circle, but my heart was deeply embedded in this mission to save my children who were experiencing social and emotional issues.

My leadership experiences and self-study findings will expose the potential success for more public schools and other educational institutions to experiment with Restorative Justice, specifically, Peace Circles as an alternative to out of school

suspensions for the improvement in the areas of student achievement, student attendance, and social and emotional learning.  Educational leaders reviewing this self-study will be less skeptical about implementing Restorative Justice Practices.   I will further share and discuss in Chapter V my understanding and interpretations of my findings including the implications and my recommendations.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Overview**

Calabrese (2012) noted Chapter V provides the reader with an interpretation of the findings. The researcher summarizes the findings identified in Chapter IV. Chapter V consists of the highlights of this self-study consisting of discussions, implications, and recommendations. This chapter will also include my personal reflections and a review of the limitations of my study. The implications of my self-study findings were:

1. Peace Circles can improve student behavior.

2. Peace Circles can increase student achievement.

3. Peace Circles can improve student attendance.

**Implications for Peace Circle Implementation as a Restorative Practice**

The purpose of the self-study was to examine the implementation of Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues being experienced by students attending an urban public elementary school. My goal was to focus on finding the most successful solution to address the social and emotional problems of the students and possibly improve their academic achievement. As the leader of the school, I had the opportunity to share my leadership experiences. Most Restorative Justice studies were conducted by an outsider conducting the research. With this self-study, I am

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sharing my actual experiences as an insider conducting the research with actual hands-on experiences throughout the Peace Circle implementation process. What makes this self-study unique is the study was centered on the actual work of my everyday schedule. This self-study enabled me to deeply reflect on the practice and at the same time self-reflect on my leadership experiences. After reviewing my journal, I was able to reflect and closely monitor the changes as they were unfolding right before my eyes. The reflecting portion of this self-study also allowed me to make necessary adjustments to ensure the Peace Circle process was successful. From this study, I was able to observe and experience the culture of the school shift from exclusionary discipline to accepting Peace Circles as a restorative practice.

As the administrator handling most of the discipline, I observed students particularly in grades, third through eighth, experiencing social and emotional issues. Within this particular group of students, there were some issues impeding student achievement. The most common issue between all classrooms was the social interactions. The social conflict issues were so disturbing that teachers had to address the issues before they were able to instruct the students. If the issues were not resolved within the classroom, the instructor would contact me to support and address the social and emotional related issues affecting the classroom and school environment. The findings of this self-study had three implications.

*Peace Circles can improve student behavior.* The findings of my self-study indicate Peace Circles as a restorative practice can positively impact student behavior. I strongly recommend educational institutions experiencing social, and

emotional related behavioral issues implement Peace Circles in their school's curriculum. At the same time, Peace Circles must be properly planned and implemented successfully to ensure positive outcomes. During the stages of implementing Peace Circles, educational leaders have to concentrate on shifting the mindset of their staff to understand out-of-school suspensions is not the only recourse for disciplining students regarding behavior issues.

Other findings also support the review of literature indicating the positive behavioral outcomes from implementing Peace Circles. Gordon et al. (2011) noted schools that implement programs that improve students' social and emotional competencies could positively affect social, behavioral outcomes. Due to fewer classroom disruptions, students were able to focus on instruction which enabled their peers to stay on-task. There were fewer fights throughout the main campus building mainly due to students being able to resolve their own conflict before escalating. Fewer classroom disruptions, fewer arguments, less fighting, no reports of cyber bullying, fewer cases of physical playing in the halls, no cases of students walking out of the classrooms, and no cases of possessing dangerous items were all factors that contributed to the implementation of the Peace Circles supporting the students to become successful.

ISBE noted SEL competencies improve students' social/emotional development, readiness to learn, classroom behavior, and academic performance. Journal entries indicated students were realizing and recognizing their social behavior issues and knew when restorative justice assistance was necessary. My

personal experiences highlight the students maturing through the Peace Circle process. Experiencing the students showing signs of understanding the purpose of the Peace Circle was the climax of the implementation process. Some of the students were experiencing the satisfaction of the Peace Circles; they were able to recognize and request an adult to schedule a Peace Circle session when they felt a need to resolve the conflict.

The following are three goals of the Illinois SEL standards:

➢ Goal 1 - Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success;

➢ Goal 2 - Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and

➢ Goal 3 - Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. (ISBE, 2013)

My students were meeting the goals of the Illinois SEL standards prematurely (speaking positively) in the beginning stages of the Peace Circle implementation. This type of social behavior was not expected this early in the implementation process but was greatly appreciated. This standard of behavioral skill is beneficial to preparing students to become life-long learners who are part of the school's vision statement, ". . . stakeholders contribute to our students becoming life-long learners" (CIWP, 2014). As educators, we know exclusionary discipline alone does not equip our students with the social skill tools to act accordingly as they become adults. Students experiencing and learning to appreciate this social skill will become

equipped socially and able to resolve conflict with a choice of positive solutions.  It is clear Peace Circles can improve student behavior and improve their social skills.

*Peace Circles can increase student achievement.* The findings of this self-study strongly support Peace Circles as a restorative practice increasing student achievement.  It was clear and evident from the results of the *School Progress Report* indicated growth in all such areas as *Student Growth* (reading and math), *Student Attainment* (reading and math), *School Culture & Climate (Supportive Environment)*, and *Grades 3-8 On Track*, Peace Circles had a tremendous impact on student achievement.  As I reflected on student achievement in relation to the Peace Circles, the students were more focused in class and not concerned about distracting social issues that were previously keeping them off-task in the classrooms.  There were fewer classroom disruptions which provided students the opportunity to become successful.

Some students get off-track or fall behind academically during exclusionary discipline time periods.  In the past, when students were suspended, their assigned work was usually attached to their suspension paperwork.  In most cases, the assigned work was either returned incomplete or completed incorrectly.  In most of our student's homes, they are unable to get any support with the assignments, projects, and homework.  With restorative justice practices, the students are given opportunities to correctly and successfully complete their work with the assistance of the classroom teacher due to their physical presence in school even after they violated a school code of conduct.  My findings indicate Peace Circles can impact

student achievement.

*Peace Circles can improve student attendance.* My self-study findings indicate a unique correlation of Peace Circles to student attendance.  Losen (2015) pointed out suspending students for disciplinary reasons are directly related to lowering school attendance rates.  When students are excluded from school for disciplinary reasons, not only do they fall behind academically, their attendance rate suffers and decreases.  Peace Circles as an alternative to out-of-school suspensions gives students the option to remain in the school building and maintain a good attendance status.  The purpose of conducting my self-study was to examine my leadership experiences while engaging in Peace Circles at the main building campus at my school.  I chose Peace Circles to address the social and emotional issues the students were experiencing.  At the same time, I wanted to provide the students in the main building campus classrooms an opportunity to resolve conflict issues and increase their academic performance.  Increasing student attendance was neither a priority nor a focus of my self-study, but attendance was greatly impacted.  My findings definitely indicate Peace Circles as a Restorative Practice can increase student attendance.

## Recommendations for Future Investigations

The present study focused on my leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a new initiative in an elementary school building as a self-study.  My leadership experiences from Peace Circles has created a path for other educational school leaders to walk down and experience positive outcomes with restorative

justice as an alternative to exclusionary discipline.  Fronius et al. (2016) suggest the research community consider other research approaches to study the impact of restorative practice in schools. To measure the impact or restorative practices, other types of research such the traditional qualitative research studies may also provide more evidence as it relates to addressing social and emotional issues.  Using similar techniques of research to conduct more self-studies for further research to investigate the implementation of Peace Circles as a restorative practice could expose the idea for more elementary educational institutions to reconsider restorative justice. Throughout this study, my shared leadership experiences from implementing Peace Circles as a restorative practice provides support and positive implications for educational leaders to consider restorative practices.

Fronius et al. (2016) mentioned there are positive outcomes with Restorative Justice practices in schools.  My findings in Chapter IV indicate based on my leadership experiences chronicled throughout my self-study has reflected positive outcomes.  From my journal entries, self-reflections, personal observations, student discipline and behavior data, student academic data, student attendance data, professional development documentation, and 5Essentials Survey Data, it is clear that Peace Circles had a powerful impact on the main building campus. Not only did the data reflect positive ramifications, but the voices of the teachers, parents and especially the student voices alarmed me as well with great satisfaction that Peace Circles impacted the culture of the school.  The same classroom and school disruptions such as verbal disagreements, bullying, cyber bullying, and fighting that

we were once experiencing the year prior to the Peace Circle implementation had either declined or diminished. As the leader reflecting, I will definitely continue to use Peace Circles as a restorative practice to address social and emotional issues.

### Summary

Losen (2015) noted some policy and practice alternatives, such as professional development to improve classroom management, social and emotional learning and Restorative Justice practices, target reductions in suspensions but also are part of broader efforts to improve student engagement and achievement. Even though there is a lack of strong support and evidence to confirm restorative practice specifically Peace Circles produce positive outcomes in schools, the small findings, however, do suggest some positive outcomes.

Even though through implementation, I taught my students that Rule #1 *Everything Said in the Peace Circle Stays in the Peace Circle*, I have to bend that rule a little and share my Peace Circle leadership experiences and findings that Peace Circles as a restorative practice does have positive outcomes in relationship to improving student social and emotional behavior, increasing student achievement and improving student attendance.

APPENDIX A

PEACE CIRCLE OBSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

**PEACE CIRCLE**



**OBSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST**

| PEACE CIRCLE COMPONENT | PRESENT | NOT PRESENT |
|---|---|---|
| WELCOMING | ☐ | ☐ |
| OPENING RITUAL/ CEREMONY | ☐ | ☐ |
| INTRODUCTION | ☐ | ☐ |
| TALKING PIECE | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ PURPOSE/ EXPLANATION | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ PARTICIPATION | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ ROTATION | ☐ | ☐ |
| CIRCLE KEEPER | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ ROLE IS EXPLAINED | ☐ | ☐ |
| OVERVIEW OF PEACE CIRCLE PROCESS | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ CHAIRS IN A CIRCLE | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ CENTER PIECE | ☐ | ☐ |
| ➢ GUIDED QUESTIONS | ☐ | ☐ |
| NEXT STEPS/ DECISION-MAKING/ AGREEMENT | ☐ | ☐ |
| CLOSING CEREMONY | ☐ | ☐ |

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VITA

El-Roy Estes is the son of Esther Estes and Charles Edward Bey.  He was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 10, 1972.  He currently resides in the South Loop of Chicago with his wife and one son.  El-Roy Estes attended Chicago Public Schools for both elementary and high school.  He graduated from Shaw University in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems.  In 1999, El-Roy Estes earned a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education from Chicago State University.  In 2006, he also earned a Master of Arts degree in Education Supervision and Administration from Saint Xavier University.  He also earned a Type 75 Certificate from Saint Xavier University in 2006.  El-Roy Estes has worked in the field of education for the Chicago Public School system for the past 20 years. He began his education career as an educator educating a class of fourth grade students.  He was later promoted to Technology Coordinator at Harold Washington Elementary.  While educating students in the classroom, El-Roy Estes was also educating students on the football field as the defensive coordinator at his high school alma mater, Percy Lavon Julian High School.  For the past 10 years, he has worked as the assistant principal of Coles Academy.  El-Roy Estes is an active member of his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

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