

Wood, Valerie F., Halman, L., Wheeler-Sutton, A., Kidde, J., & Castle, N. (2023). Restorative Approaches Implementation for School Equity in Vermont (RISE-VT): Final Report . Full report [available online](#) (.pdf).

You can also listen to an [audio version of this summary](#), read by Valerie F. Wood.

Abstract

Background: RISE-VT stands for Restorative approaches Implementation for School Equity in Vermont. Restorative approaches keep relationships at the center of community behavior, discipline, and goals. Restorative approaches are built on mutual respect, with individuals taking responsibility for their actions. Research shows restorative approaches can work well to create positive school communities. This project worked with schools in Vermont that are already doing restorative approaches to see:

- 1) how they can do them better, and
- 2) how to document and share what they're doing with other schools and organizations around Vermont.

Methods and Results: The project provided 12 months of support to three Vermont schools and one school district. These four sites were selected because they were already doing restorative approaches and their team was interested in doing more of it. The support consisted of six meetings as a group, team time with coaches trained in restorative approaches, producing a video for each school or district showing how they do restorative approaches, and surveys that measured whether each school or district felt the support was useful. In addition, the project created an online learning module on restorative approaches. The surveys helped the project understand how to do better next time.

Conclusions: The project encountered many challenges throughout the year, including a limited budget, short timeframe, unclear expectations for coaches, and limited inclusion of students. The project and the teams were also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, the

Findings

This project found that:

- It's important for schools to see how "messy" restorative approaches can be. In the videos, teams deliberately shared some of the more difficult aspects of this work in order to encourage other schools to keep at it, even when it gets difficult.
- It's important that schools have access to coaches that can meet teams where they are at, help them try new things, and move forward.
- It's also important that coaches have time set aside to talk to one another about how they are supporting their teams. Coaches need support in creating expectations for their work.
- It's really hard to support schools in starting a new thing while there's a pandemic going on.
- School staff have a lot of competing priorities, and not enough time and support to get to them all.

Summary

This project was funded by the Vermont Agency of Education, and the work was done through a group calle(k)-2(0 1 4

At the same time, the project team produced videos of how restorative approaches work at each school, and created an online learning module showing how each school works.

The project faced a lot of challenges in this work based on a global pandemic, school staff having competing priorities, and that the plan for creating videos for the project originally only covered three schools, not four.

Real-World Implications

As a result of this research project, the research team has five recommendations for other Vermont schools wanting to use restorative approaches:

1. Schools should look at how restorative approaches match up with other requirements from the Vermont Agency of Education.
2. School leaders should make sure staff have enough time and staffing coverage to fully participate.
3. School communities should think about how Vermont can provide long-term support for expanding restorative approaches to more schools.
4. Schools should complete the online learning module the project made and watch the videos the project created. This is regardless of whether you are in Vermont or not.