A RESTORATIVE APPROACH TO GROUP COUNSELING WITH THE LGBTQ POPULATION

A Project

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by

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

A RESTORATIVE APPROACH TO GROUP COUNSELING WITH THE LGBTQ POPULATION

by

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Jesse Valenzuela

The majority of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) feel ostracized in their community and experience a hostile school climate, which in turn negatively impacts their future outcomes. The purpose of this project is to provide school psychologists, school counselors, administrators, and teachers with current research and resources useful in empowering staff to work with LGBTQ students and help build resiliency in these students.

This purpose of this project is two-fold. Firstly, this project encompasses a handout that outlines an in-service training for staff that provides information about LGBTQ students including: background factors, identifying students at risk for suicide and depression, how to support this population, and how to use restorative practices in the classroom. Those who attend the in-service professional training are expected to gain insight on how to refer students to the group counseling curriculum and how they can obtain more resources to work more effectively with the LGBTQ population. Secondly, there is a group counseling curriculum that will teach LGBTQ students coping skills,
understand their strengths, how to use a restorative approach when attempting to problem-solve, and develop resiliency. When the restorative approach is used to solve conflicts and problem-solve, it is expected that the school climate will become more cohesive and positive.

The prepared project is an in-service training and group curriculum designed for school psychologists and school counselors to implement. The in-service training is meant as professional development for other school staff including administrators and teachers. Materials are provided as a support to the in-service training and group curriculum.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Melissa Holland, Ph.D.

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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Collaboration

The authors of this project, Jesse Valenzuela and Rachael Massey, who are graduate students in the School Psychology Program at California State University, Sacramento, collaborated on all aspects of this project. The responsibilities of the project included: reading and incorporating research; writing; editing; sharing ideas; and creating a group curriculum.

Background

As educators, it is our responsibility to advocate for the safety of all students and to help create inclusive environments. Schools are meant to include social and emotional learning for our students. Studies have shown that approximately 9% of youth identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) population (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.). Over half of LGBTQ youth reported to have experienced discriminatory school policies. Additionally, 85% of this student population reported to have been verbally harassed to such a degree that they purposefully missed at least one day of school in the past month due to feeling unsafe and marginalized (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2014). The vast majority of school staff have not received any training or education in supporting the LGBTQ student population, leading to perceptions of a negative school climate (Guasp, 2009). The results of such negative school perceptions have been lowered academic performance and
negative outcomes for these youth. When teachers receive training on interventions to use when LGBTQ harassment occurs it promotes safety and well-being for students (Russell, Kosciw, Horn, & Saewyc, 2010).

Sexual minority youth are at an increased risk for emotional distress and need to develop appropriate coping strategies. Currently, research in the area of restorative justice has shown to mitigate the effects of conflict and lead to a more positive school climate (Coates, Umbreit, & Vos, 2003). Restorative justice within the school setting helps to diminish peer conflicts by preventing situations before they occur as well as mediating conflicts before intensifying. By repairing harm that may have occurred, reducing the risk of future incidents, and fostering a more cohesive atmosphere, restorative justice within the school environment has the potential to provide needed support for the LGBTQ student population while creating a better school climate for all (Pavelka, 2013).

**Purpose of the Project**

The goals of this project are to develop a new group curriculum designed for LGBTQ youth and to educate teachers and staff on how to best support the high school aged LGBTQ population. This curriculum incorporates a restorative justice approach to address issues faced by LGBTQ youth, such as bullying, and aims to foster an accepting school community is included, along with guidelines, slides, and a handout for an in-service to educate teachers and staff on this important topic, namely the use of restorative practices with LGBTQ youth. The curriculum will encompass coping strategies and will
use a restorative justice approach as well as materials to use for professionals in their work with this population in the schools. LGBTQ students often perceive school as an unwelcoming and inhospitable environment and have increased feelings of school disconnectedness, which negatively impacts their academic success. This curriculum is designed to use restorative justice to increase inclusiveness, acceptance, and support.

The curriculum presented may be used for professional development trainings to support at-risk populations, specifically LGBTQ students. The main objective in implementing lessons from the curricula will be to decrease sexual minority victimization and help to create a safe and cohesive campus in a positive and meaningful way.

**Defining Critical Terms**

Before examining the review of literature, the key terms of “restorative justice” and “sexual minority youth” are defined.

**Restorative Justice**

Restorative justice is an intervention that involves primary stakeholders in determining how to repair harm done by an offense. It is a process that addresses wrongdoing and rehabilitates offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large with the purpose of building positive relationships (Wachtel, 2013b).

**Sexual Minority Youth**

Sexual minority youth is defined as:
those who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or who have sexual contact with persons of the same or both sexes, are part of every community and come from all walks of life. They are diverse, representing all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and parts of the country. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015, para. 1)

**Limitations**

The authors recognize there are limitations of this project. The authors will not implement this curriculum; therefore, the practicality and effectiveness of the materials are unknown at this time. Consequently, it can only be anticipated that participants will benefit from this curriculum. There is limited pre-existing data for this approach with the LGBTQ population. Additionally, depending on the school climate it may be difficult to get students who identify as members of the LGBTQ population to participate in this group curriculum due to stigma and fears around being identified as a part of this population.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School Climate

A positive school climate is characterized by school connectedness, relationships with teachers and educational staff, opportunities for meaningful participation, low violence victimization, and perceptions of physical and emotional safety. When students have the perception of a school with a positive climate, they tend to reduce their risk-taking or negative behaviors. These negative behaviors can include poor coping skills such as drinking, drug-use, and self-harm. Conversely, as the negative behaviors are decreased, positive behaviors such as academic performance and appropriate social relationships are increased (O’Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015).

American public schools are meant to be safe places for all students to receive a free and appropriate education. Schools are a place where students spend most of their time learning and socializing, and school personnel are expected to address academics, behavior, and social-emotional learning. Therefore, the environment wherein a student learns should ideally be peaceful and secure. Without establishing this positive environment, students do not have the opportunity to learn to their full potential (O’Malley et al., 2015). One obstacle in creating a positive school environment is bullying behaviors. Due to increased awareness of the negative impacts of an unsafe learning environment, many states have elected anti-bullying laws which keep school officials accountable for school safety and encourage a positive school climate (Bethel,
The climate of a school has a large impact on students’ academic performance, behavior, and social-emotional outcomes (O’Malley et al., 2015). Addressing and helping to ensure a positive school climate is included in the daily practice of school psychologists. Best practices include prevention strategies for bullying and other anti-social behaviors such as school-wide policies and multi-tiered positive behavioral supports (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2012).

Victimization or discrimination in a school leads to a negative school climate which affects students’ academic achievement and mental health (GLSEN, 2014). Unfortunately for a number of students, such as those who self-identify as part of the LGBTQ population, feeling safe is not a reality for them as they are regularly ostracized in a hostile learning environment (Davis, Saltzburg, & Locke, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). Variations of the LGBTQ acronym are used throughout this literature review to reflect this population; many studies consider lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, yet do not include those who are questioning.

According to Youth Suicide Prevention Program (n.d.), approximately 9% of youth identify as part of the LGBTQ population. This number may be underestimated due to self-reporting issues as many youths fear rejection or retaliation from coming out. The LGBTQ population is often overlooked and is an at-risk group for bullying and marginalization. Over half of LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation, while 37.8% of LGBTQ students reported these unsafe feelings as a result of their gender expression. A large number of the LGBTQ student population
purposely misses school and extracurricular activities because they feel unsafe. Students that choose not to participate in extracurricular activities due to a hostile environment feel less connected to their school community, which often affects their future trajectories (GLSEN, 2014). An example of the type of intimidation these students often face include verbal and physical harassment, such as having their personal belongings taken or damaged by their peers (NASP, 2012). The result of this victimization is unequal access to education, which lowers academic achievement and aspirations. This is reflected in students’ grade point averages (GPAs) as well as lower rates of students pursuing a college education (Kosciw et al., 2012). In addition to poorer educational outcomes, sexual minority students in a hostile learning environment often experience emotional distress (GLSEN, 2014). LGBTQ youth, therefore, have an increased need for an emotionally safe, adult-mediated environment in which to develop resiliency and explore identity (Graybill, Varjas, Meyers, & Watson, 2009).

**School Climate for LGBTQ Youth**

Sexual orientation begins to strongly emerge during the time of early adolescence. Individuals with emerging identities that are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning face unique challenges, particularly when surrounded by generally harsh climates (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009). Many of these adolescents are aware that in many secondary schools words such as “fag” and “dyke” are terms used to belittle and disrespect others. This language strengthens the association between anyone who is openly part of the LGBTQ community and psychological persecution (Bagley &
D’Augelli, 2000). Some youth who use the word “gay” to signify that something or someone is undesirable may not necessarily be motivated by homophobia or intolerance and could be unaware that using this language is hurtful. Regardless of their intent when using these expressions, it contributes to a more adverse school climate for LGBTQ students (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). These verbal expressions increase social exclusion for LGBTQ students. Additionally, many sexual minority adolescents experience feelings of rejection and hear derogatory terms associated with the LGBTQ population from within their own families, which may further exacerbate feelings of loneliness (Bagley & D’Augelli, 2000). Awareness of the negative impact language can have should be explicitly taught in schools to increase inclusiveness.

According to the 2013 National School Climate Survey by the GLSEN, 74.1% of LGBTQ students were verbally harassed or threatened due to sexual orientation, while 55.2% experienced harassment as a result of their gender expression. While verbal harassment is reported most often with sexual minority bullying, almost half of LGBTQ students reported experiencing electronic harassment. Electronic harassment is another form of bullying that the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2012) defines as “any type of bullying that is carried out via an electronic medium such as text messaging, cell phone calls, pictures or video clips via mobile phone cameras, email, chat-rooms, social networking sites, and other websites” (p. 1). The danger of this type of bullying is that it can take place in unsupervised forums. School-wide anti-bullying policies need to address electronic forms of bullying (NASP, 2012).
Sexual minority victimization includes physical harassment and assault. According to NASP (2012), LGBTQ youth experienced more physical violence and injury at school than their heterosexual peers. Types of physical violence reported by LGBTQ youth include kicking, punching, and being spit at. The lack of intervention by staff and bystanders witnessing these acts of physical violence create an increasingly negative and intimidating school environment.

In addition to victimization from their peers, the 2013 GLSEN survey reports that over half of students heard homophobic remarks from their teachers and school staff. Additionally, many schools cultivate a climate of homophobia and may offer no assistance to combat it. For example, the state of Utah had a previously implemented a piece of legislation that eliminated all after school clubs that supported LGBTQ youths. This left limited access to resources and information to support this group and increased feelings of despair, which further contributed to a poor climate (Bagley & D’Augelli, 2000).

**Considerations When Working with Sexual Minority Youth**

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Prevention (2015) reported that 8% of high school students in the U.S. attempted suicide in 2013. Studies show that LGBTQ students are more likely to have emotional distress such as anxiety and depression, as well as a greater risk for suicidal ideation/attempts than their heterosexual peers (Almeida et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2012; McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010). According to a study conducted by Russell, Ryan, Toomey,
Diaz, and Sanchez (2011), LGBTQ young adults who experienced high victimization during adolescence were 5.6 times more likely to report having attempted suicide at least once compared to their LGBTQ peers who experienced low victimization. With the high risk of suicide attempts, it is imperative schools have preventative mental health interventions in place, including anti-bullying policies.

During their childhood years, sexual minority youth reported experiencing higher levels of bully victimization and more associated mental health problems. Additionally, males reported significantly more victimization (D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006). This population is at-risk for mental health issues due to marginalization with their peers and adults. Post-traumatic stress disorder was found in 9% of LGBTQ youth and was associated with past physical victimization (D’Augelli et al., 2006). To cope with mental health challenges, some LGBTQ students engage in risk taking behaviors such as drinking, drug abuse, smoking, and sexual promiscuity (Kosciw et al., 2012). It is the school’s responsibility to explicitly teach resiliency and positive coping skills with students engaging in these risk-taking behaviors (NASP, 2011).

The marginalization LGBTQ youth face in schools and home puts some youth at risk in unstable living conditions. There are over 500,000 middle and high school students in the United States who are homeless or live in unstable housing. Recent research shows LGBTQ youth are at disproportionate risk for homelessness due to many parents rejecting their children after they come out (GLSEN, 2014). School staff, as advocates for all students, need to include practices such as the federal McKinney-Vento
Homeless Assistance Act. This Act requires states to give supports to homeless youth and ensure they receive an education (GLSEN, 2014).

**Professional Development**

School psychologists have the opportunity to not only help students who identify as LGBTQ, but also to educate and train teachers, staff, and other personnel to support this population of students. These stakeholders have a large impact on students’ experiences in school and the school climate. Teachers in particular get to know their students well and have an important role in mental health in the schools by identifying those who are at-risk. Additionally, they are an important resource for students to be able to talk to when feeling marginalized (NASP, 2011). Teachers do not have the mental health training that school psychologists receive. Therefore, it is important for school psychologists to build awareness of best practices when working with the LGBTQ population.

According to the GLSEN’s 2013 School Climate Survey (2014), “Only 18.5% of LGBT students were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history, or events in their schools” (p. 19). It is important to have these conversations with our teachers to build awareness about our sexual minority students’ perceptions of school. Teaching about LGBTQ people in history is one way to give sexual minority students a feeling of school connectedness and increase positive school climate (GLSEN, 2014). As the experts in school curriculum, it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure they are
utilizing curriculums that include a diverse group of people including the LGBTQ population.

In addition to building school connectedness through curriculum, teachers are also a responsible stakeholder for school safety. While approximately half of LGBTQ students did not report harassment or assaults to the school in fear of making it worse, 61.6% of the students who made a report to their school said that their staff did nothing in response (GLSEN, 2014). Often times, the school staff does not know how to intervene in LGBTQ bullying. Guasp (2009) reports, “nine in ten teachers and non-teaching staff have never received any specific training preventing and responding to homophobic bullying” (p. 3). When teachers receive training on interventions to use when LGBTQ harassment occurs, it promotes safety and well-being for their students (Russell et al., 2010). Furthermore, when teachers, school psychologists, administration, and other school personnel are informed and educated on appropriate interventions to best support the LGBTQ student population it helps to build a positive and inclusive school climate for all students and staff as they get to work together in unison to support the school.

The NASP (2011) position statement notes:

School psychologists are ethically obligated to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity for the development and expression of their personal identity in a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons and free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse. To achieve this goal, education and advocacy must be used to reduce discrimination and harassment against
LGBTQ youth by students and staff and promote positive social–emotional and educational development. (p. 1)

In a practical sense, one way to achieve this is to consult with teachers and other school stakeholders in creating social skills interventions that incorporate peaceful and inclusive ways to solve conflicts in the school setting (NASP, 2012).

**Restorative Justice Approach**

A safe, adult-mediated environment for sexual minority students aids in building resiliency (Graybill et al., 2009). Restorative justice is one approach for addressing bullying and promoting a positive climate in schools. Restorative justice is a philosophy based on a set of principles that guide the response to conflict and harm. According to the President and Founder of International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP; n.d.), Ted Wachtel, the purpose of using restorative practices aids in the following ways: reducing crime, violence, and bullying; improving human behavior; strengthening civil society, providing effective leadership; repairing harm; and restoring relationships. In Western societies the idea of restorative justice has been practiced beginning in the early 1970s; however, the concept pulls from influences with long histories, such as peacemaking circles of various indigenous peoples, community justice, biblical interpretations of justice, mediation, and African village moots (Reimer, 2011).

Restorative justice is a process involving primary stakeholders in determining how to best repair the harm done by an offense. Wachtel (2013) notes the primary hypothesis that underlies restorative practices is that “human beings are happier, more
cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them” (para. 2). This hypothesis supports a participatory and engaging mode of learning rather than the authoritarian approach.

According to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (n.d.), the three primary stakeholders in restorative justice are victims, offenders, and their communities of care. The respective needs of these primary stakeholders are obtaining reparation, taking responsibility, and achieving reconciliation. The extent to which all three stakeholders are involved in participating in meaningful communication and decision making is the degree to which any form of social discipline moves toward being fully restorative.

The three primary stakeholders are represented in Figure 1 by the three overlapping circles. The process of interacting is crucial to meeting the stakeholder’s emotional needs. This communication of emotional exchange is necessary for meeting the needs of everyone directly affected and cannot occur with only one set of stakeholders participating. The most restorative processes involve the active participation of all three primary stakeholders (McCold & Wachtel, 2003). When practices involve only one group of primary stakeholders, as in the case of services tailored to assist victims or community service work assigned to offenders, the process can only be called partly restorative. When a process such as victim-offender mediation includes two primary stakeholders but excludes their communities of care, the process is
mostly restorative. It is only when all three sets of primary stakeholders are actively involved, such as in peace circles, is the process fully restorative (McCold & Wachtel, 2003).

![Diagram of restorative justice levels]


*Figure 1.* Examples of restorative justice levels.

Restorative justice in the school environment can help schools prevent or intervene in conflict before it escalates. It is an intervention that addresses wrongdoing and rehabilitates offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. It can be considered both a tertiary tier intervention by addressing problems after they occur as well as a primary tier intervention by introducing this practice before a
problem occurs with the intention of prevention (International Institute for Restorative Practices, n.d.). The restorative approach is not based on punishment, but rather wrongdoings are viewed as a violation of human rights and the focus is on how to repair harm (Hopkins, 2002). This intervention introduces school personnel to new tools that can reduce the need for school exclusion and juvenile justice system involvement in school misconduct and offers ways to enhance the school environment to prevent conflict and restore relationships after conflict arises (Ashley & Burke, n.d.).

According to Pavelka (2013), the core principles of restorative justice include repairing harm, reducing risk, and empowering the community. Some of the key components included in a restorative justice system include: maximizing learning opportunity, purpose-driven responses, emphasizing making things right, empowering, individualization, respect, and creating/fostering relationships (Ashworth et al., 2008). In order to implement restorative justice within the schools a systems level change will be needed, requiring buy-in and professional development trainings for educators, staff, and service-related professionals. Additionally, this implementation will need community-based relationship building, which involves understanding the community culture, norms, and values (Teasley, 2014). A school community includes all stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, and students working together for a common goal. This goal should include giving students an education in an environment where everyone feels safe and has a sense of belonging (NASP, 2012).
Currently in many schools throughout the United States the use of zero tolerance policies are being utilized as a means of cracking down on school discipline. Such policies gained momentum in the 1990s and were further exacerbated in response to No Child Left Behind where penalties in the form of school suspension, expulsion, alternative schooling, and juvenile justice referrals became the norm for a variety of student behaviors (Teasley, 2014). However, strict zero tolerance policies in schools have been shown to have various negative effects on student behaviors and are likely to increase the chances that students will participate in future disciplinary problems, such as school disengagement, noncompliance, tardiness, absence, truancy, and disrespect for authority figures in school (Teasley, 2014). Research has shown that schools that have begun to implement restorative justice practices have decreased the numbers of expulsions, misconduct, and violent behaviors on campus, in addition to increasing academic achievement and school engagement and reducing teacher turnover rates (Armour, 2013). The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue found that within the first year of adopting a restorative justice program there was an 84% drop in off-campus suspensions (Armour, 2013). Providing restorative justice training for teachers and staff allows for the campus to be more cohesive and includes benefits such as students learning how to build, maintain, and use conflict resolution skills to heal relationships.

A useful restorative justice practice involves a conferencing format known as a circle. In this format the offender, victim, and their communities of care sit together in a
circle formation and express their points of view. Using circles in restorative justice practice is a strategy that allows students to communicate with one another and develop trusting relationships with those around them (Wachtel, 2013). Circles give students an opportunity to feel like equals and give them a safe atmosphere to share their feelings and support. Restorative justice circles are beneficial for conflict resolution, decision making, support, and relationship development (Wachtel, 2013). There are several circle formats used in restorative practice.

The sequential circle emphasizes the opportunity for individuals to speak without any back-and-forth argument or interruptions. Participants are allowed to speak one at a time moving around the circle. The goal of this circle is for participants to listen more and speak less. The sequential circles do not always need a facilitator, allowing stakeholders to become part of the restorative justice circle without relying on a hierarchical position (Wachtel, 2013). The non-sequential circles are similar, however the speakers are not in a fixed order.

Problem-solving circles give opportunities for groups to focus around an issue. The circle’s facilitator asks each participant a set of questions. The speakers are in order of the offender, victim, the victim’s supporter, and the offender supporter. After the set of questions is finished, the more open discussion of how to solve the problem is discussed (Wachtel, 2013). This circle allows everyone to speak while maintaining a solution-focused approach.
The fishbowl circle is a format that has an inner circle of participants and an outer circle of observers. This allows larger groups, such as classrooms, to participate in restorative circles. If one wishes to include their outer circle, an empty chair can be put in the inner circle to allow them to participate in a more limited way (Wachtel, 2013). While the outer circle participants are not as directly involved in the circle as the inner circle participants, the observation of this process can be very beneficial to students when learning how to problem solve.

The format of the restorative justice circle helps students build relationships, reconcile wrongdoings, and is an efficient way of allowing all parties to respectfully express themselves. Additionally, this format is may be useful in a group counseling approach due to its solution-focused techniques.

**Group Counseling**

Students receive approximately 75% of their mental health assistance in schools, which is often times delivered by group counseling (Grossman & Yiu, 2014). Groups are an effective way of serving several students at a time and helps increase self-esteem and grade point averages. A counseling group is more successful when there is collaboration between teachers, administrators, and students (Grossman & Yiu, 2014). This staff collaboration can also provide opportunity for consultation between the psychologist and teacher when working with sexual minority students. While school psychologists typically have training in running therapeutic groups, teachers are often more aware of which students may be at-risk and an appropriate candidate for group counseling.
Although Cooley (2009) advises against a counseling group for LGBTQ youth, while promoting Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) as an alternative, group counseling may provide support in ways that current GSAs do not. Cooley’s position against group counseling for this population may have been to prevent pathologizing LGBTQ youth for their sexuality or gender identity. Instead it should be recognized that this population faces a unique set of challenges in the school environment, requiring resources tailored to support them. GSA clubs often focus solely on social activities and activism not exclusive to LGBTQ youth (Gay-Straight Alliance Network, 2009). In-group counseling members are chosen who may be struggling with a similar presenting concern, such as bullying or self-esteem. Group counseling is more adult-mediated with evidence based strategies or curriculum. The structure of a counseling group rather than a GSA allows for more in-depth preventive strategies aimed for at-risk students. Additionally, NASP (2012) believes school psychologists should provide counseling for students who are victims of bullying to prevent negative internalization and help build coping methods.

The group curriculum these authors are proposing emphasizes restorative justice circles, building student strengths, and collaborative activities to explore topics common to all: beliefs, support systems, role models, and coping strategies. These topics are all intended to help build resiliency for this population. Support systems, such as those found in a group counseling setting, can provide students with assistance, compassion, and care from others and can reduce negative effects of bullying (Kiperman, Varjas, Meyers, & Howard, 2014). A large amount of LGBTQ students do not have a support
system at home and may even experience rejection and isolation from their family. Approximately 40% of homeless youth identify with the LGBTQ population. Of those, 43% reported that their homelessness was the cause of being forced out of their homes by their parents due to family rejection (Ford, 2012). Group counseling provides a format for students to build support systems at school to provide a buffer and protective factors during stressful or negative events (Kiperman et al., 2014). Furthermore, the ability to talk with a group of peers about similar experiences in a safe environment serves as both a positive support and a coping strategy (Johnson, Sikorski, Savage, & Woitaszewski, 2014).

Identifying positive role models is an extremely powerful motivator to help LGBTQ youth realize they are not alone and help them to visualize themselves as happy, successful adults. Role models can encourage healthy behaviors and motivate youth to never give up and to strive for success (Diversity Role Models, 2014). This is an important area for school personnel to be aware of as positive LGBTQ representations and history are commonly overlooked in the schools (GLSEN, 2014).

There is limited research on the effectiveness of a group approach for LGBTQ students because it is a challenge for students who are under 18 years old to be involved with research if they are not comfortable coming out to their parents (Kiperman et al., 2014). However, participation in the group process offers numerous benefits to adolescents who often feel isolated from peers. Social support is created in-group settings and can be a variable that helps promote resiliency (Kiperman et al., 2014). The
group curricula proposed by these authors also includes training for teachers and staff to help support this population.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the LGBTQ student population is one that faces distinct challenges within the school setting and as such may benefit from interventions tailored to provide support. With increased risk for bullying, verbal and physical harassment, and social isolation, studies have shown that this group is at an increased risk of experiencing feelings of loneliness and despair that may lead to suicidal ideation and attempts and decreased academic performance (Bagley & D’Augelli, 2000). Building a sense of community among secondary level LGBTQ students through the use of group counseling may increase internal resiliency within group members.

The use of restorative justice practices within the school setting has shown promising results in terms of increasing school connectedness and fostering a positive school climate in which all members of the student body can feel safe (Ashley & Burke, n.d.). The use of restorative justice circles allows for wrongdoings to be viewed in a way for the wrongdoer to reconcile with the victim. Everyone has a chance to be heard and provides a chance for wrongs to be made right, and allows the wrongdoer to not be punished for what they did, but instead allows for a deeper understanding of why what he/she did was harmful so that learning opportunities are created for all. In this way students will learn to become more comfortable with conflict resolution skills, which leads to a more cohesive and successive school climate for all (Wachtel, 2013).
According to Guasp (2009), many educators and school staff members have not been trained on how to appropriately support students who identify as members of the LGBTQ community. Therefore, it is essential that faculty and staff undergo professional development trainings, such as the proper use and associated benefits of restorative justice practices. Furthermore, school personnel need to understand that the use of homophobic terms, such as “that’s so gay,” is not acceptable and may be extremely harmful to a student’s emerging identity. The school environment is meant to be a safe and positive place wherein all students feel that they belong.

Based on the lack of research on the LGBTQ youth population in schools, there are not many evidence-based practices specific for these youth. Through the use and implementation of a restorative justice focused group-counseling curriculum, it is hoped that schools will in fact become a cohesive learning environment.

The authors propose a new strengths-based group curriculum incorporating restorative practices, along with social support, use of positive role models, and problem solving, to help address the needs of the LGBTQ community in the school setting. Within this curriculum, LGBTQ students are supported to overcome the unique challenges they face and to instill a sense of greater community within the school. As part of the curriculum presented, teacher education is addressed. It includes information on how to hold a professional development training to support at-risk populations, specifically LGBTQ students. It should be noted that although professional development trainings can be very effective, ongoing consultation with teachers is important when
achieving environmental change (Caplan, Caplan, & Erchul, 1994). Therefore teacher consultative practice will be emphasized in this curriculum. The primary objective in implementing lessons from the curricula will be to decrease sexual minority victimization to help to create a safe and cohesive campus in a positive and meaningful way.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research

The authors utilized various techniques for the purpose of researching this project and developing this curriculum. Research from organizations such as GLSEN and IIRP were examined to gain relevant information about the LGBTQ population and restorative justice practices. Two primary search engines used to find peer-reviewed journal articles include PsycINFO and EBSCO host databases. Searches on these databases included key words such as: “LGBTQ,” “bullying,” “restorative practices,” and “restorative circles.” The research process involved the further examination of cited articles within larger text. The NASP website and position statements were examined to gain knowledge on current best practices and the school psychologist’s role regarding the LGBTQ student population and school climate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the IIRP website were used to define critical terms.

Development of the Curriculum

This curriculum was developed to support LGBTQ students in secondary schools incorporating a restorative justice approach. This group counseling approach may be utilized as a Tier-2 intervention. Research from the literature review guided in the development of topics addressed in weekly sessions. An in-service professional training begins this curriculum. This professional training includes a handout on the topics of restorative practices, facilitating circles, and supporting the LGBTQ student population.
and should last approximately one hour. It is designed for the school psychologist to be able to print an informative handout for their staff (see Appendix, Section 3) and there is a separate handout for the facilitator with an optional script (see Appendix, Section 2). The curriculum was developed to be completed in eight weeks through the use of group sessions. Each session was designed to be 50 minutes in length, held once a week in the school setting during lunchtime. The referral process for this group counseling may involve teachers, school staff, parents, and students recommending potential members. The staff referral form is provided for the facilitator and should be passed out to the staff after the in-service training and is located in the Appendix of the curriculum. Each student referred will be interviewed by the group facilitator to ensure that they are an appropriate candidate. An appropriate candidate is a student who is willing to be a part of the process, who identifies as a part of the LGBTQ population. The primary goals of this group are to: establish coping skills, identify students’ strengths, build resiliency, foster a supportive school community, and learn a restorative approach to problem solving. Feedback on this project was received through consultation with fellow school psychology graduate students and faculty members. The appendices include all materials needed to facilitate this curriculum.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Information and resources gathered from the literature review process were utilized to create a group-counseling curriculum aimed at supporting secondary LGBTQ student, incorporating a restorative justice approach. This curriculum may be implemented as a Tier 2 intervention within the school setting. The curriculum begins with an in-service professional training, which includes handouts about restorative practices, supporting the LGBTQ student population, and facilitating the in-service training. The eight weekly group sessions for the students are designed to be 50 minutes in length and may be facilitated by the school psychologist or school counselor. The appendices include all curriculum materials contained in this research project.

Curriculum Objectives

This curriculum was created with the purpose of decreasing sexual minority victimization while increasing a positive school climate through the use of restorative justice. Additionally, teachers and staff will be educated on how to best support high school level LGBTQ students through an in-service training that incorporates an informational handout and lecture by a trained facilitator. During the group counseling sessions the students will be engaged in eight, 50-minute meetings that will include icebreakers, interactive activities, group discussions, and restorative justice circles.

The group curriculum and in-service professional development materials may be found in the Appendix.
**Discussion**

There is a limited amount of research on the efficacy of a group counseling approach for secondary LGBTQ students as well as a restorative justice approach targeted for this population. In addition, there are no other curriculums that were found through the process of this research that support sexual minority students though such methods. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted on the use of group curriculums and restorative justice practices in supporting LGBTQ high school students with the aim of reducing victimization and creating a more positive school climate. It is projected that the authors of this curriculum will add to the available research base on restorative justice supports for the LGBTQ student population by implementing this curriculum, facilitating the in-service training, and collecting data.

**Recommendations**

Educational professionals who are interested in supporting sexual minority youth overcome the unique obstacles they face, such as increased risk for bully victimization and isolation, will be provided with a comprehensive curriculum that includes interventions to use with this population. Facilitators will increase their knowledge and skills for supporting this group of students and learn fundamental skills related to restorative justice practices. Prior to facilitating this group curriculum, time should be taken to review weekly sessions in order to adequately prepare for each session. The facilitator should plan accordingly for the in-service professional development and ensure that all necessary materials are available to be provided to participants. Additionally, the
Collaboration with additional professionals who are experienced and knowledgeable in supporting LGBTQ students and the use of restorative justice within the school setting is recommended. Although this group curriculum is designed to be comprehensive, the facilitator may wish to modify certain components or activities to fit the diverse and unique needs for particular school sites or groups of students participating in this group.

**Conclusion**

Given the increased risk factors that LGBTQ students face in schools today there is an essential need for interventions targeted at increasing support and providing education to those in a position to help. Schools are responsible for ensuring a safe environment in which all students are able to receive a free and appropriate education, but for many LGBTQ students this is not a reality. However, with Tier 2 interventions such as those introduced in this curriculum it is hoped that this population of students will be less likely to suffer from challenges such as bully victimization, and that teachers and staff will be better prepared in supporting their needs and helping them becoming successful adults.
APPENDIX

United Academy Curriculum
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Section 1

Curriculum Guidelines

Professional Development:
The school psychologist or school counselor will provide teachers with a short in-service professional development that will last approximately one hour and should be implemented before the group sessions begin to aid in the referral process. There are two forms for the professional development presentation. The first form (Section 2) is for the facilitator with an optional written script written in light blue. The second form (Section 3) is for the facilitator to print and hand out to the staff. Allow approximately one hour to present the professional development. Hand out the referral forms at the end of the presentation.

Participants:
The teacher referral forms (see Appendix) are provided to identify students who could benefit from this group. The group is designed for high school aged students who identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning community who may exhibit at-risk or depressive symptoms. The group should have no more than eight participants. The group can consist of both males and females.

Format:
The curriculum is designed to be implemented for eight-weeks with an optional in-service professional development. The participation in the group sessions will be voluntary. The group of students will meet once a week for 50 minutes. The day of the week and time of the sessions will be arranged to minimize the amount of missed class time. Rapport building is important for the group to help create a safe and positive climate. Each session will consist of a meeting objective, materials list, icebreaker, activity, discussion, and closing ritual.
Screening:
The process of referral will include a combination of teacher, administration, and counselor referrals, and will be given referral forms (see Appendix). This will be followed by individual interviews with the potential group members to explain the purpose of the group and group member expectations. Individual screening allows the facilitator to determine if the student is interested in participating, and if the student would benefit from a group counseling setting.

Parent/Guardian Permission:
Parent/Guardian letters (see Appendix) and permission forms (see Appendix) will be sent home with the students after individual participant screening. The permission form explains the purpose of the group, general topics, and confidentiality. The facilitator should go over the form with the individual student before sending them home with it.
**Session 1: Welcome to United Academy**

**Meeting Objective:** Getting to know and building rapport among group members, setting rules, and setting preliminary goals.

**Materials:**
- Human Bingo card (see Appendix) (1 copy per student)
- Participation Agreement Form (see Appendix)
- Pens or pencils and markers

**Ice Breaker: Human Bingo (adapted from Knox)**

*10 Minutes*

1. Give each student a copy of the bingo card and a marker.
2. Students should circulate and talk to each other in order to find one person who has the characteristic in each box on the bingo card. They should write that person's name in the box. For larger groups, consider making a rule that each person's name can only appear once or twice on the card, to encourage interaction with all group members. For smaller groups, consider stating that no name can be in two boxes that are next to each other.
3. The first student to complete a line (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) of boxes on his/her bingo card should yell "Bingo!"
4. Bring the students back together, and have the student who got the “bingo” share the names in each box. Ask other students to share whose names they wrote in other boxes.

**Activity: Same & Different**

*15 minutes*

1. Pair students up (or let them choose themselves).
2. Instruct pairs to find one similarity and one difference between them (i.e. both have a dog, same favorite subject, both dislike the same food, etc.).

3. Reconvene group and have participants share what they learned about their partner. Ask students if they were surprised by any of the commonalities or differences discovered.

**Discussion:**

20 minutes

1. Facilitate a discussion on the purpose of participating in this group and how over the next eight weeks members will discover personal strengths and support systems, while learning the benefits of restorative justice. Additionally, ask participants to start thinking about goals they want to make for themselves during this group.

2. Recommend that group members begin to think about which strengths and supports they already have in order to share in future meetings.

3. Ask participants for their suggestions on a list of positively stated rules for the group (limit to 4 or 5). Add confidentiality to the list of rules if students do not. Other suggestions could include rules about attendance, turn-taking, and respectful behavior.

4. Ask students to write the agreed-upon rules on their own Participation Agreement Form, which they can keep. Have all of them sign one group copy, for the leader to keep.

5. If time allows, provide additional opportunities for group to learn more about one another through guided conversation.

**Closing: 1 Good Thing**

5 minutes

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 2: Getting to Know You

Meeting Objective: Continuing the process of getting to know group members, addressing concerns about group participation, and finalizing individual goals for group participation.

Materials:

- Colored tape or duct tape
- List of personal strengths (perhaps on an index card, see activity)
- Student Goal-Setting Form (see Appendix)

Ice Breaker: Interview (adapted from Knox)

10 minutes

1. Divide the young people into pairs.
2. Ask them to take three minutes to interview each other. Each interviewer is to find 3 interesting facts about their partner (i.e. hidden talents, hobbies, future goals, etc.).
3. Bring everyone back to together and ask everyone to present the 3 facts about their partner to the rest of the group.

Activity: Step to the Line (adapted from Business Training Works, 2013)

15 minutes

1. Use colored tape to make a line on the floor in the center of the room.
2. Split the group and have half stand on each side of the line.
3. Talk to the group about the importance of acknowledging our own strengths, and of recognizing that we all have both strengths and weaknesses. Model self-acceptance and openness by telling the group what you think some of your own strengths and weaknesses are (i.e., I’m trustworthy, I’m a dependable friend, I struggle with taking on too many responsibilities at once, etc.). Assure them that
recognizing and accepting our strengths is not the same as bragging. Be brief in this section and return to these concepts during the discussion.

4. Give the instructions for the activity: "I will name a personal quality or strength. If you have that strength, or would like to develop it, step forward to the line."

5. Read the strengths from the prepared index cards one at a time. Examples include:
   - I'm athletic.
   - I'm smart.
   - I'm artistic.
   - I'm a good friend.
   - I'm funny.
   - I'm thoughtful.

**Discussion:**

20 minutes

1. Use the Step to the Line activity to guide discussion.

2. Explore what strengths group members currently possess and which they would like to develop.

3. The following questions may help to build discussion:
   - *Why is it hard to recognize and acknowledge our own strengths?*
   - *Do we have to accept our strengths and weaknesses, or is it worthwhile to try to change them?*

4. Lead students in a discussion about making changes through goal setting, and talk about how goals may be achieved by taking one small step at a time. Give participants the Student Goal-Setting Form and ask them to create one realistic and positive goal for their remaining time in group.
Closing: 1 Good Thing

5 minutes
Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 3: Coping Strategies

Meeting Objective: Participants will identify positive activities that may be used to help cope with stressful situations.

Materials:
- Paper
- Pens/pencils, colored markers

Ice Breaker: Two Truths and a Lie (adapted from Neill, 2005)
10 minutes
1. Participants write three school appropriate statements about themselves on a paper. Two statements should be true, and one should be a lie. The group leader should participate and read his/her truths and lie before the students start the activity. Examples may include: I’ve lived in another country, I have a car, and I’ve been on TV.
2. Participants will take turns reading their truths and lie, and other members will guess which is the lie. Practice doing this with the leader’s truths and lie first.
3. After all participants have had a chance to read their truths and lie the group may have a brief discussion about the activity. The facilitator may ask questions such as, “did any of the truths surprise you?”

Activity: Leisure Brochure (adapted from Jones, 1998)
20 minutes
1. Pass out paper/art materials and ask the group to create their own “leisure brochures” that advertise all of the things they enjoy doing in their spare time. The brochure should include a statement about what the author enjoys and what is great about this activity.
2. After the brochures are complete, allow time for sharing to get the participants to think about fun things they used to enjoy and new ideas for leisure activities.

Discussion:

15 minutes

1. Introduce the concept of using leisure activities as potential coping strategies to help students deal with stress.

2. Ask the group if they or anyone they know use coping strategies that are unhealthy or potentially dangerous. After acknowledging the reality of unhealthy coping strategies in a non-judgmental way, lead the discussion into a consideration of the possible negative consequences of these coping strategies.

3. Guide the students to brainstorm the positive consequences of replacing unhealthy coping strategies with the leisure activities they outlined in their brochures.

4. The following questions may help to build discussion:
   - *Are there any activities that you thought of that you haven’t done in awhile but would like to do again? Why don’t you?*
   - *Do you already use some of these activities as coping strategies? Why or why not?*
   - *Were there any ideas someone else listed that you liked? If so, can you pursue any of these?*
   - *What may get in the way of you pursuing these activities? What can you do to overcome these obstacles?*

Closing: 1 Good Thing

5 minutes

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
**Session 4: Empowering Community**

**Meeting Objective:** Participants will identify positive coping strategies when facing adversity.

**Materials:**

- Inflated beach ball with questions written on it with a permanent marker. (E.g. *What is your favorite television show? If you could meet anyone, who would it be and why? If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?*)
- Acting scenarios (see Appendix)

**Ice Breaker:**

10 minutes

1. The leader starts the activity by answering a question on the beach ball. Next, the leader throws the beach ball to someone in the circle.
2. When the person catches the ball they must say his/her name and answer the question his/her right thumb is touching.
3. After answering the question (s)he must throw it to another group member.
4. Continue until everyone has had an opportunity to share.

**Activity: Acting Scenarios**

20 minutes

1. Split participants into two groups. Give each group a scenario describing an event or situation (see Appendix) where someone is made to feel belittled or isolated. These events are focused on LGBTQ identity.
2. Participants will discuss and perform the given scenario for the other group members. The larger group will discuss how to respond appropriately in the scenario and how they would feel or react to this event.
Discussion:

15 minutes

1. Ask students what kinds of self-talk or feelings they have when feeling isolated or belittled in school, home, or the community.
2. Discuss how they can respond to adverse situations in their school community.
3. Ask students how they can support each other when these situations happen?
4. Have the group examine times they may have witnessed these events. Ask, what is their role is as an ally of the LGBTQ community?
5. Encourage the group to create a personal “mantra” to use when they find themselves in situations that make them feel isolated or belittled. Examples may include: “I am a strong person,” or “When I see someone being bullied I will do something.”

Closing: 1 Good Thing

5 minutes

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 5: Restorative Circle 1

Meeting Objective: Introduce participants to the restorative circle process.

Materials:
- Talking piece, e.g. ruler, book, etc. (The talking piece may be any object the group chooses)
- Poster paper
- Pen or pencil

Ice Breaker: Have you Ever? (adapted from Villanova University, Office of Service Learning)

10 minutes

1. Arrange chairs in a circle, with one fewer chairs than group members (including facilitator).
2. Group members start the activity sitting, with the facilitator standing in the center of the circle.
3. The facilitator says something s/he has done, but suspects some of the other members of the group may not have done (i.e. "I've been to Mexico").
4. Everyone in the group who hasn’t done whatever the leader says s/he has done (i.e. everyone who has not been to Mexico), must get up and move to a different chair.
5. One person will not get a chair, and that person is the next to stand in the center and say "Have you ever….I've ..."
Activity: Restorative Circle

25 minutes

1. Have students sit in a circle. Review the group’s rules from session one, and explain that while participating in the restorative circles it is very important to follow these rules.

2. Briefly explain what restorative circles are by saying, “restorative circles are a way to respond to conflicts. The techniques we will learn today can help create a safer and more cohesive school community.” Introduce the talking piece by stating that whoever is holding it is the only group member allowed to speak, and it will only be used during restorative circle activities.

3. Ask, “without using names, what is an example of a time when someone did something that affected the feelings of others around them?” Pass the talking piece around the circle.

4. When everyone has shared, say “A ripple is what happens when you drop a pebble into a pond of water. Long after the pebble has settled to the bottom, it still sends out a series of rings that reach to the edges of the pond. Every action we take also sends out ripples into our lives. People are affected in different ways, depending upon what type of ripple we are sending out. What are some examples?”

5. Write down the list of examples that students share on a large poster paper. When the participants are finished sharing, ask them to help you divide the list into ripple effects that are positive and negative.

6. Let group members know that they will be working with this list in the next circle in order to discuss how they might be affected by some of the behaviors, if the effects are painful or harmful, and to work toward making things better.
Discussion:

10 minutes

1. Ask for group members to share two or three thoughts about today’s circle experience.
2. Ask the group to share some ways restorative circles may help create a more positive school community.
3. Facilitate a discussion about how today’s experience can help them make progress towards their goals.

Closing: 1 Good Thing

5 minutes
Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 6: Restorative Circle 2

Meeting Objective: Group members will engage in using restorative questions and work in circles to discuss and begin to resolve conflicts and problems.

Materials:
- Mandala handouts (see Appendix) (1 copy for each group member)
- Papers pre-cut into circles (about the size of a plate)
- Art supplies (colored pencils, markers)
- Poster paper from Session 5
- Restorative Dialogue Questions Poster (see Appendix)

Ice Breaker: Mandala

10 minutes

1. Pass out circular papers and Mandala Handout, which the facilitator will read to the group.
2. Instruct participants to draw a symbol in the center of the circle that represents themselves, and write their names somewhere on the page.
3. Each person should pass their mandala to their neighbor on their right.
4. On their neighbor's mandala, which they just received, participants should write a compliment or affirmation for their neighbor, or draw a symbol of something positive they associate with that person.
5. After everyone has had time to write or draw (about 30 seconds), alert the group that everyone should pass the mandalas to their next neighbor on their right. In this way, everyone will write a compliment or draw a symbol on each of the participants’ mandalas.
6. Repeat until every participant has had a chance to contribute to every other participant's mandala.
7. When everyone has their own mandala back, give them a chance to read them. Then lead a brief discussion about whether they were surprised to see what strengths and positive qualities the other group members identified in them. Ask group members how it feels to read these strengths that others identified.

**Activity: Restorative Circle**

25 minutes

1. Have students sit in a circle. Review the group’s rules from session one, and explain that while participating in the restorative circles it is very important to follow these rules.

2. Remind group members that only the person with the talking piece may speak during the restorative circle activity.

3. Read from the posted list of issues from Session 5, asking about each issue, “how many students are bothered by this?”

4. Choose one of the issues that solicited the most responses, and ask participants to think of a specific event or circumstance that illustrates how they have been affected by this issue. Ask them to raise their hands when they have thought of something.

5. Ask for two volunteers who are willing to tell their stories of when and how they were affected by the selected issue, without using names.

6. Explain, “each of you will get a chance to answer the restorative questions that you see on the poster, to tell about the incident or situation you have in mind. You will have the opportunity to ask the group for ideas if you wish.”

7. Ask the restorative questions in order from the poster, exactly as they appear, and add prompts if necessary. Continue to watch for opportunities to involve the other students in the group.

8. After the volunteer has responded to all the questions ask, “do you feel complete for now?” If their answer is no ask, “what do you need to feel complete?”
9. Repeat this process for the second volunteer.

**Discussion:**

*10 minutes*

1. Ask for group members to share two or three thoughts about today’s circle experience.

2. Facilitate a discussion on how today’s restorative circle experience, combined with coping strategies learned in past sessions, may help members continue to make progress toward goals.

3. Facilitator should notify participants that the group will only be meeting for two more sessions.

**Closing: 1 Good Thing**

*5 minutes*

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 7: Restorative Circle 3

Meeting Objective: Group members will engage in using restorative questions and work in circles to discuss and begin to resolve conflicts and problems.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Poster paper from Session 5
- Restorative Dialogue Questions Poster (see Appendix)

Ice Breaker: Possible Predictions

15 minutes

1. Provide members with a piece of paper and have them write their name on the bottom.
2. Above their name, have members write the following categories: five years, ten years, and twenty years with lines going up to the top of the page separating the categories.
3. Have everyone place their papers in a pile in the middle of the group so that everyone can reach them.
4. Instruct the group to take one paper at a time and on the top of the page write a prediction about what they think that person will be doing in the future, with one prediction for each category. Predictions should be positive and reflect the positive attributes of each person.
5. After each person has made a prediction for all members they should get back their original paper to review. Facilitator may ask if anyone is surprised about the types of predictions that were made for him or her.
**Activity: Restorative Circle**

**25 minutes**

1. Have students sit in a circle. Review the group’s rules from session one, and explain that while participating in the restorative circles it is very important to follow these rules.

2. Remind group members that only the person with the talking piece may speak during the restorative circle activity.

3. Read from the posted list of issues from Session 5.

4. Choose one of the issues that solicited the most responses from Session 6 and that is different from the previous week. Then ask for two new volunteers who are willing to tell their stories of when and how they were affected by the selected issue, without using names.

5. Explain, “each of you will get a chance to answer the restorative questions that you see on the poster, to tell about the incident or situation you have in mind. You will have the opportunity to ask the group for ideas if you wish.”

6. Ask the restorative questions in order from the poster, exactly as they appear, and add prompts if necessary. Continue to watch for opportunities to involve the other students in the group.

7. After the volunteer has responded to all the questions asked, “do you feel complete for now?” If their answer is no ask, “what do you need to feel complete?”

8. Repeat this process for the second volunteer.

**Discussion:**

**10 minutes**

1. Ask for group members to share two or three thoughts about today’s circle experience.

2. Facilitate a discussion on participants’ feelings about group ending next week and progress on their goals.
Closing: *1 Good Thing*

*5 minutes*

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Session 8: Celebration of Progress & Goodbyes

Meeting Objective: To celebrate progress on goals during this group and give students closure.

Materials:

- Snacks *(follow your school's policy regarding outside foods and allergies)*
- Poster boards
- Magazines
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Markers
- Student's Goal-Setting Forms (from Session 2)

Ice Breaker: *Group Recap*

10 minutes

1. Pass out snacks and allow students to eat.
2. Have an open discussion about their group experiences over the last 8 weeks.
3. Ask the participants about any roadblocks they may experience in their future endeavors, and what they can do to overcome those challenges.

Activity: *Vision Boards*

20 minutes

1. In this activity participants will create collages of images (cut out of the magazines) that represent their most positive and hopeful vision of their own future.
2. Allow students at least 15 minutes to create their vision boards using the materials provided. If they don't have time to finish, consider letting them take some of the magazines home to continue the project.
Discussion:

15 minutes

1. Give students an opportunity to share their vision boards, if they would like.
2. Hand out student's Goal-Setting forms, and ask them to reassess their mastery of the goals they selected in session two. Students can now take these forms home.
3. If time allows, guide students in a discussion about building on the growth and changes they've seen while participating in this group.

Closing: 1 Good Thing

5 minutes

Participants share one good thing that has happened to them, either today or within the last week.
Section 2

Professional Development Handout for the Facilitator

A Restorative Approach to Creating a More Inclusive School Climate for the LGBTQ Population

“Today we have the opportunity to learn about a population that is often neglected in our schools. As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and well being of our students and to help create a more cohesive school climate. To reach this goal, we will be discussing implementing a restorative approach to working with this population and helping create a more positive school culture. Let’s first define who our LGBTQ youth are.”

I. Defining LGBTQ

a. Youth who identify as lesbian are homosexual women.

b. Youth who identify as gay are homosexual men.

c. Youth identifying as bi-sexual are men or women who are sexually attracted to both men and women.

d. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.) defines transgender as, “people whose gender identity does not conform to a binary classification of gender based on biological sex, external genitalia, or their sex assigned at birth. It includes gender-nonconforming people with identities beyond the gender binary who self-identify as: male-to-female or transgender women; female-to-male or transgender men; two-spirit; and people who self-identify simply as women or men.”

e. Questioning youth refers to people who are questioning either their gender identity or their sexual orientation.

“Next, we are going to go over what this population often goes through, however it is important to note that you should never assume that students who identify as part of the
LGBTQ community are in crisis or have the same experiences. This portion of our discussion is meant to build awareness of the struggles that many of our LGBTQ youth go through."

2. Learning About the LGBTQ Youth in Our Schools

   a. Studies have shown that approximately 9% of youth identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) population (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.).

   b. Sexual orientation begins to strongly emerge during the time of early adolescence (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009).

   c. 85% of this student population reported to have been verbally harassed to such a degree that they purposefully missed at least one day of school in the past month due to feeling unsafe and marginalized (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2014).

   d. The vast majority of school staff have not received any training or education in supporting the LGBTQ student population, leading to perceptions of a negative school climate (Guasp, 2009).

   e. During their childhood years, sexual minority youth reported experiencing higher levels of bully victimization and more associated mental health problems. Additionally, males reported significantly more victimization (D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006). The results of such negative school perceptions have been lowered academic performance and negative outcomes for these youth such as emotional distress.

   f. To cope with mental health challenges, some LGBTQ students engage in risk taking behaviors such as drinking, drug abuse, smoking, and sexual promiscuity (Kosciw et al., 2012). It is the school’s responsibility to explicitly teach resiliency and positive coping skills with students engaging in these risk-taking behaviors (NASP, 2011).
g. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) reported that 8% of high school students in the U.S. attempted suicide in 2013. According to a study conducted by Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez (2011), LGBTQ young adults who experienced high victimization during adolescence were 5.6 times more likely to report having attempted suicide at least once compared to their LGBTQ peers who experienced low victimization.

h. Approximately 40% of homeless youth identify with the LGBTQ population. Of those, 43% reported that their homelessness was the cause of being forced out of their homes by their parents due to family rejection (Ford, 2012).

“With the negative outcomes that this population may face, we need to learn about how to identify students in crisis and symptoms of depression in our youth. These signs of depression and suicidal ideation are universal to all of our youth and it is important to consult with your administrators, school counselors, and/or school psychologists if you have noticed any of these signs. When it comes to depression and suicidal ideation, it is better to over-report than under-report to help our students stay safe.”

3. How to Identify Depression and Suicidal Ideation in our Youth
   a. Change in: appearance, personality, interests, motivation, school performance (Brock, n.d.)
   b. Increased: risk taking, alcohol, drug use, irritability, hopelessness, withdrawal, talk of death or suicide (Brock, n.d.)
   c. Giving away prized possessions or dark art or poems (Brock, n.d.)

“There are specific factors that may increase the risk for a student to commit suicide or have feelings of depression. Along with the symptoms we just discussed, it is important to keep these risk factors in mind when identifying at-risk youth.”
4. Risk Factors for Depression and Suicidal Ideation
   a. Recent death or suicide of friend or family
   b. Impulsiveness
   c. Lack of support
   d. Recent conflicts with peers or family
   e. Recent media coverage of other suicides by young people in the same community

“When you identify symptoms and risk factors for your students, take the following steps.”

5. What to do If You See Warning Signs
   a. Show you care
   b. Help student identify supports at home and at school
   c. Report students who are exhibiting depressive symptoms to administrator on campus

“Now that we’ve discussed how to identify at-risk students, let’s talk about preventative measures. More inclusive and positive school climates will help the LGBTQ youth’s outcomes and feelings of support and self-worth.”

6. How to Create a More Inclusive School Climate for the LGBTQ Population
   a. Teach positive representations about LGBTQ people in history.
      According to the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network’s 2013 School Climate Survey, “Only 18.5% of LGBT students were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history, or events in their schools.” Teaching about LGBTQ people in history is one way to give sexual minority students a feeling of school connectedness and increase positive school climate (GLSEN, 2014). Identifying positive role models is an extremely powerful motivator to help LGBTQ youth realize they are
not alone and help them to visualize themselves as happy, successful adults. Role models can encourage healthy behaviors and motivate youth to never give up and to strive for success (Diversity Role Models, 2014).

b. Intervene when you hear derogatory terms associated with the LGBTQ population. The use of homophobic terms, such as “that’s so gay,” is not acceptable and may be extremely harmful to a student’s emerging identity.

c. Awareness of the negative impact language can have should be explicitly taught in schools to increase inclusiveness. Some youth who use the word “gay” to signify that something or someone is undesirable may not necessarily be motivated by homophobia or intolerance and could be unaware that using this language is hurtful.

d. Intervene when you witness any verbal, electronic, or physical bullying. Intervention by staff and bystanders witnessing acts of bullying create an increasingly positive school environment that promotes perceptions of safety.

e. Use restorative justice approach when intervening.

“Using restorative justice is one approach to creating a more positive school climate that we will explore now.”

7. What is Restorative Justice?

a. Restorative Justice is a philosophy based on a set of principles that guide the response to conflict and harm. It involves primary stakeholders in determining how to best repair the harm done by an offense.

b. The three primary stakeholders in restorative justice are victims, offenders, and their communities of care such as friends or family. The respective needs of these primary stakeholders are obtaining reparation, taking responsibility and achieving reconciliation.
c. Restorative justice in the school environment can help schools prevent or intervene in conflict before it escalates. It is an intervention that addresses wrongdoing and rehabilitates offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large rather than using punishment.

d. It can be considered both a tertiary tier intervention by addressing problems after they occur as well as a primary tier intervention by introducing this practice before a problem occurs with the intention of prevention (Wachtel, 2013).

“Restorative justice creates many benefits in the schools. As we go over these benefits, think about our school’s policies and students you believe may benefit from this type of intervention.”

8. Benefits of Restorative Justice

a. Strict zero tolerance policies in schools have been shown to have various negative effects on student behaviors and are likely to increase the chances that students will participate in future disciplinary problems, such as school disengagement, noncompliance, tardiness, absence, truancy, and disrespect for authority figures in school (Teasley, 2014).

b. Research has shown that schools that have begun to implement restorative justice practices have decreased the numbers of expulsions, misconduct, and violent behaviors on campus, in addition to increasing academic achievement and school engagement and reducing teacher turnover rates (Armour, 2013).

c. The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue found that within the first year of adopting a restorative justice program there was an 84% drop in off-campus suspensions (Armour, 2013).

d. Providing restorative justice training for teachers and staff allows for the campus to be more cohesive and includes benefits such as students
learning how to build, maintain, and use conflict resolution skills to heal relationships. Healing relationships helps create more positive school climate and prevents further wrongdoings.

e. Some of the key components included in a restorative justice system include: maximizing learning opportunity, purpose-driven responses, emphasizing making things right, empowering, individualization, respect, and creating/fostering relationships (Ashworth et al., 2008).

f. Introduce and show video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sE8TDzlR2tg

“Now that we will have learned what restorative justice is and the benefits of this approach in our schools we will go over how we can use this approach in a more a practical sense.”

9. How to Use a Restorative Approach when Intervening
   a. A useful restorative justice practice involves a conferencing format known as a circle.
   b. In this format the offender, victim, and their communities of care (friends or supportive adult) sit together in a circle formation and express their points of view.
   c. Using circles in restorative justice practice is a strategy that allows students to communicate with one another and develop trusting relationships with those around them (Wachtel, 2013).
   d. Circles give students an opportunity to feel like equals and give them a safe atmosphere to share their feelings and support. Restorative justice circles are beneficial for conflict resolution, decision-making, support, and relationship development (Wachtel, 2013).

“There are several circle formats used in restorative practice. We will go over which circles are most appropriate for different situations. For classrooms, a fishbowl circle layout is most appropriate. We will go in more depth on the fishbowl circle layout.”
10. Circle Formats

a. Sequential Circle and Non-sequential Circle

i. The sequential circle emphasizes the opportunity for individuals to speak without any back-and-forth argument or interruptions.

ii. Participants are allowed to speak one at a time moving around the circle. The goal of this circle is for participants to listen more and speak less.

iii. The sequential circles do not always need a facilitator, allowing stakeholders to become part of the restorative justice circle without relying on a hierarchical position (Wachtel, 2013). The non-sequential circles are similar, however the speakers are not in a fixed order.

b. Problem-solving Circle

i. Problem-solving circles give opportunities for groups to focus around an issue.

ii. The circle’s facilitator asks each participant a set of questions.

iii. The speakers are in order of the offender, victim, the victim’s supporter, and the offender supporter. After the set of questions is finished, the more open discussion of how to solve the problem is discussed (Wachtel, 2013).

iv. This circle allows everyone to speak while maintaining a solution-focused approach.

c. Fishbowl Circle

i. The fishbowl circle is a format that has an inner circle of participants and an outer circle of observers.

ii. This allows larger groups, such as classrooms, to participate in restorative circles.
iii. If one wishes to include their outer circle, an empty chair can be put in the inner circle to allow them to participate in a more limited way (Wachtel, 2013).

iv. While the outer circle participants are not as directly involved in the circle as the inner circle participants, the observation of this process can be very beneficial to students when learning how to problem solve.

“The image below is to help you picture what the fishbowl circle format looks like:”

“The image below is to help you picture what the fishbowl circle format looks like:”

“As you facilitate these circles, there are specific questions to ask the “offender” and the “victim”. Using these questions help the process run smoothly and effectively. I recommend hanging these questions up in your room, to help your students know which questions will be asked and to give them the opportunity to ask these questions as well.”

11. Questions to Ask While Facilitating Restorative Circles
   a. Questions for Offenders
      i. What happened?
      ii. What were you thinking at the time?
iii. What have you thought about since?
iv. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
v. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

b. Questions for victim who has been harmed
i. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
ii. What impact has the incident had on you and others?
iii. What has been the hardest thing for you?
iv. What do you think needs to happen to make things right again?

12. Introduce and show video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdKhcQrLDIw

“We are going to watch this quick video on what a restorative circle process looks like.”

After the video:

“Now I would like to “circle up” to practice using this approach in our own group. Today we will be practicing the fishbowl circle to solve a problem. Can I please have a volunteer for someone to discuss a difficult problem or an example of a past problem?”

After the process ask your staff members the following questions:

• “How was that for you?”
• “Have there been any situations you may have been able to use this in the past?”
• “How will you implement this in the classroom, and how do you think it will benefit your students?”
• “Are there any questions you have about this process?”

“Now that we have learned how to support the LGBTQ population in our schools through restorative justice, what else can we do to promote safety and a positive school experience for this youth?”

13. How Else Can We Support this Population?
a. Promote Gay-Straight Alliance
b. Help your school counselor or school psychologist identify students who may benefit from group counseling to encourage resilience.
c. Place a “safe-space sticker” in your classroom window to notify students that you are available to talk.
d. If a student “comes out” to you:
   i. Offer your support but do not make assumptions that they are in crisis or need help.
   ii. Appreciate the student’s courage
   iii. Listen
   iv. Assure confidentiality
   v. Ask questions in a compassionate manner such as:
      1. Do you feel safe at home and school?
      2. Have you been able to come out to others? (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network, n.d.)

“The end of your handout has free resources for you to use to help support the restorative process in your school and to help support the LGBTQ youth.”

14. Free Resources
      “This site has a link to a free manual, and has lessons you can use in your class.”
   b. http://www.iirp.edu/
      “The Institute for Restorative Practices has free webinars and more professional development.”
“The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network is a great way to learn more about the LGBTQ population to help support your students. You can register your GSA, and get helpful resources for more professional development and policy changes. I will be sending out a teacher referral form for you to fill out if you believe you know any students who may identify in the LGBTQ community and may benefit from group counseling with a restorative approach. In this group we will be working on self-esteem, our support system, and problem solving, which all helps build resilience. Thank you all for your time today.”
Section 3

Professional Development

A Restorative Approach to Creating a More Inclusive School Climate for the LGBTQ Population

1. Defining LGBTQ
   a. Youth who identify as lesbian are homosexual women.
   b. Youth who identify as gay are homosexual men.
   c. Youth identifying as bi-sexual are men or women who are sexually attracted to both men and women.
   d. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.) defines transgender as, “people whose gender identity does not conform to a binary classification of gender based on biological sex, external genitalia, or their sex assigned at birth. It includes gender-nonconforming people with identities beyond the gender binary who self-identify as: male-to-female or transgender women; female-to-male or transgender men; two-spirit; and people who self-identify simply as women or men.”
   e. Questioning youth refers to people who are questioning either their gender identity or their sexual orientation.

2. Learning About the LGBTQ Youth in Our Schools
   a. Studies have shown that approximately 9% of youth identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) population (Youth Suicide Prevention Program, n.d.).
   b. Sexual orientation begins to strongly emerge during the time of early adolescence (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009).
   c. 85% of this student population reported to have been verbally harassed to such a degree that they purposefully missed at least one day of school in
the past month due to feeling unsafe and marginalized (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2014).

d. The vast majority of school staff have not received any training or education in supporting the LGBTQ student population, leading to perceptions of a negative school climate (Guasp, 2009).

e. During their childhood years, sexual minority youth reported experiencing higher levels of bully victimization and more associated mental health problems. Additionally, males reported significantly more victimization (D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006). The results of such negative school perceptions have been lowered academic performance and negative outcomes for these youth such as emotional distress.

f. To cope with mental health challenges, some LGBTQ students engage in risk taking behaviors such as drinking, drug abuse, smoking, and sexual promiscuity (Kosciw et al., 2012). It is the school’s responsibility to explicitly teach resiliency and positive coping skills with students engaging in these risk-taking behaviors (NASP, 2011).

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   a. Recent death or suicide of friend or family
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adults. Role models can encourage healthy behaviors and motivate youth to never give up and to strive for success (Diversity Role Models, 2014).

b. Intervene when you hear derogatory terms associated with the LGBTQ population. The use of homophobic terms, such as “that’s so gay,” is not acceptable and may be extremely harmful to a student’s emerging identity.

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   a. Sequential Circle and Non-sequential Circle
      i. The sequential circle emphasizes the opportunity for individuals to speak without any back-and-forth argument or interruptions.
      ii. Participants are allowed to speak one at a time moving around the circle. The goal of this circle is for participants to listen more and speak less.
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      v. What do you think you need to do to make things right?
   b. Questions for victim who has been harmed
      i. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
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   i. Offer your support but do not make assumptions that they are in crisis or need help.
   ii. Appreciate the student’s courage
   iii. Listen
   iv. Assure confidentiality
   v. Ask questions in a compassionate manner such as:
      1. Do you feel safe at home and school?
      2. Have you been able to come out to others? (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network, n.d.)

14. Free Resources
   b. http://www.iirp.edu/
References


Curriculum Appendix

Sample: Parent Permission Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians of ______________________,

Your teen has indicated that s/he would like to join an on-campus support group for students who would like to discuss topics related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community. This group is designed to help students identify their strengths and support systems, set goals, foster coping skills, explore values and beliefs, and build their friendships at school. Participants will also learn about restorative justice practices and the associated benefits. They will learn about the “circle process” and how people’s actions can cause a “ripple effect” in others’ lives. I encourage you to facilitate conversations about these circles and provide opportunities for your teen to practice these skills. Groups provide a chance for students to talk, listen, and support each other in a safe setting where they can learn from one other.

Our goal is to help students improve their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. This group is run by a school staff member who has been specially trained as a group facilitator. It will meet once a week for eight weeks during the lunch period, so no time is lost from their academic classes.

Participation in this group is voluntary and confidential. We require that all students and staff honor this policy by not repeating what is said in group. However, your son or daughter is welcome to share with you what he or she said and did in group. Please note the exceptions to the confidentiality policy include if a student shares information about being hurt or hurting himself/herself or another person. In these cases, we have an ethical responsibility to limit confidentiality to ensure the child’s safety. This support group is not intended to take the place of professional counseling or therapy. As facilitators, we do not make any diagnosis, or treat conditions.

If you are willing to have your child participate in support group, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the office as soon as possible. If you have any questions about group, please contact our school psychologist, _____________, through the main office at ___________________.

Thank you!

__________________________  __________________________
School Psychologist                  Principal
Parent/ Guardian Permission Slip

I am the legal parent or guardian of ____________________________

By signing this form I give my permission for this student to participate in the group counseling program known as United Academy, and I state that I have read the parent information letter attached to this form.

Name of parent/guardian (please print):

______________________________________________________________________

Signature of parent/guardian_____________________

Date ____________

Please print student's first & last name
Teacher Referral Form

Student Name:________________________________________

Teacher:________________________________

Grade: __________________________

Date:___________________________

1. Why do you think this student will benefit from participating in a LGBTQ restorative justice group?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

2. What strengths do you see in this student? What would you like to see them develop?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. Anything else I should know about this student?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
# Attendance Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Name</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
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<th>Week 6</th>
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Notes for Follow-up:
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<tr>
<td>born in the same month as you</td>
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<td>favorite season is winter</td>
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<tr>
<td>favorite food is something other than pizza</td>
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<tr>
<td>read 2 or more books this summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was born in a different city, state, or country</td>
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<tr>
<td>gets up before 6:00 a.m. on school days</td>
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<tr>
<td>has a job</td>
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<tr>
<td>has a brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>speaks a language other than English</td>
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<tr>
<td>went to the same elementary or middle school as you</td>
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<tr>
<td>has the same favorite school subject as you</td>
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<tr>
<td>has a sister</td>
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<tr>
<td>FREE!</td>
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<td>has the same hobby or interest as you</td>
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<td>has the same eye color as you</td>
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<td>has more than 1 pet</td>
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<tr>
<td>lives close enough to the school to walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>plays a sport</td>
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<td>favorite season is spring</td>
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<td>plays an instrument</td>
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<td>has the same future career as you</td>
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<tr>
<td>took Driver's Ed</td>
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<tr>
<td>likes the same movie as you</td>
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<td>brought a lunch from home today</td>
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<td>has the same number of siblings as you</td>
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Participation Agreement Form

I agree to participate in United Academy according to these rules, which I helped to create.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________  ___________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

I also agree not to date or start a romantic relationship with any other students participating in United Academy for the 8 weeks that we are having group meetings.

Participant's name_________________________  ________________________________

Participant's signature  Date
Goal-Setting Form

Name: ___________________________  Date: ________________

What is a personal goal that United Academy might help you achieve?

Goals should be written in first person (start with "I"), and present tense ("I am" or "I have", not "I will be" or "I want to have").

Example: I am comfortable at school.

My Goal:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________  __________________________________

Please rate your current level of mastery or comfort with your goal:
1 = totally untrue (I can't do it; I've never tried; it's very hard; I am very uncomfortable with it)
10 = totally true (I know I can do it; I do it frequently; it's easy; I am very comfortable with it)

Date: __________________

Date: ________________

Date: ________________
Acting Scenarios

Scenario 1:
A group of 10th grade students in Ms. Howe’s Physical Education class are picking teams for dodge ball. The team captains are Johnny and Sally. There are two students left to be picked, Bob and Jane. Sally picks Jane and Johnny exclaims, “I don’t want Bob on my team, he plays like a girl.”

Scenario 2:
Tim is sitting in Mr. Turner’s 11th grade English class. Towards the end of the period, Mr. Turner announces a last minute pop quiz. A student sitting behind Tim mumbles, “I can’t believe we have another quiz, that’s so gay.”

Scenario 3:
Nadia is having a pool party this weekend and has invited all of her close friends. Mary recently confided in Nadia that she is attracted to females. Two days later, Nadia announced in front of their friends that Mary was uninvited to her party. She said, “I don’t want you checking us out in our bikini’s.”

Scenario 4:
Jerry is a 9th grader who has long hair past his shoulders. While carrying his lunch tray from the cafeteria line, two 12th grade students walk past him and knock his tray out of his hand. There are dozens of students staring at him and the two 12th graders say, “What... are you going to cry now, sissy?”
What is a Mandala?

Mandala is a term that comes from the Sanskrit words for circle and completion. A simple definition of the mandala is that it is a circular drawing using symbols made to represent the harmony and wholeness of life or the wholeness of a person. Over the past 2,000 years, mandalas have become a tool for displaying individual and cultural uniqueness the world over.

- These special drawings were first created in Tibet over 2,000 years ago.
- Traditionally, they displayed highly intricate illustrations of religious significance and were used for meditation.
- Since then, they have been made by people from various cultures.
  - In the Americas, Native Americans have created medicine wheels and sand mandalas.
  - The circular Aztec calendar was both a timekeeping device and a religious expression of ancient Aztecs.
  - In Asia, the Taoist “yinyang” symbol represents opposition as well as interdependence.

Tibetans used mandalas for calming themselves and for thinking about the meaning of life. The shape of a mandala is a circle because a circle is the most simple and universal shape found in the world. It is the form of the eye, the sun, and a snowflake. Also, since there is always a center to a circle, as you look at a mandala it exercises your mind and draws you into the center of yourself. Today, people often create mandalas to form a simple representation of who they are. To make a mandala, a person begins by thinking of symbols that represent him or her. These symbols might include a dove to represent peace, a heart to represent love, or an open hand to represent friendship. The symbols a person chooses are then carefully drawn in the mandala.
Restorative Dialogue Questions

For Offenders:

1. From your point of view, what happened?
2. What do you remember thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done?
   In what way?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

For Victims:

1. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
2. What impact has the incident had on you and others?
3. What has been the hardest thing for you?
4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right again?
REFERENCES


