

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE EDUCATION
IN
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR SCHOOLS—
AN OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT**



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**Relationships First: Restorative Justice in Education
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Image: Author's personal photo of rug hooked in the design of Vladimir Kandinsky

RJE in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools— an overview of engagement

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RJE in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools— an overview of engagement

1.0 Executive Summary

In August 2012, 17 classroom teachers from nine Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) schools participated in a full-time two-week professional learning experience that introduced them to Restorative Justice Education (RJE). The project was designed and facilitated by Dr. Dorothy Vaandering and funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The grassroots approach intentionally began with educators with the hope that in time their work would come to the attention of the NL Department of Education and the directors/administrators of schools and districts. This unique ground-up approach is supported by research indicating teacher initiative can grow into a whole-school adoption that includes all stakeholders.

To determine traction of RJE in NL since its inception, a brief survey was distributed to all NL schools in May 2020 (271 in total). The data collected that informs this report provides an understanding of how RJE is perceived and practiced by educators and schools. More importantly, it addresses the larger question: Can sustainable implementation of RJE be initiated from the ground up? The online questionnaire was designed using the Qualtrics platform, and participants were recruited via email that saw a 23% percentage response rate. The data was analyzed using thematic and descriptive analysis.

The findings revealed that of the 63 schools that responded to the survey, 57 indicated engagement with RJE in some form. Eleven of these schools described their engagement as a whole-school approach, while 48 of them described their engagement as primarily educators working independently. Also, 41 schools reported that they had been engaged in RJE for less than four years, five have been involved for 5-9 years, and ten schools indicated that they were not sure of the length of time. Based on the overall findings, the evidence revealed approximately 21% of schools in NL engage with RJE. Considering that RJE was introduced nine years ago to a small group of classroom educators in the province, it can be concluded that there is a significant impact based on the percentage of schools engaged and their understanding that restorative justice is a way of being. The findings shed light on the fact that engagement with and growth of RJE have potential for being sustainable when initiated from the ground up.

With this strong foundation and high interest for engagement, the following recommendations are suggested to solidify the work that has been done so far. There is a need for: (1) policies to be developed and resources provided by the Department of Education, (2) intentional time and guidelines for implementation by districts/schools, (3) graduate and undergraduate course development at the Faculty of Education, (4) collaboration and consultation with Indigenous leadership in encouraging schools to nurture relational cultures.

2.0 Introduction and Study Background:

2.1 The global context

Restorative justice in education (RJE) is a holistic educational approach meant to ensure that everyone connected to a school community feels that they belong, they have a voice, and they have a process for dealing with conflict and harm in a constructive manner. As such, it seeks to ensure adults in education establish and model for children, youth, colleagues, families, and community, just and equitable learning/living environments.

RJE's 25-year history began in Australia in the early 1990s. Shortly thereafter, individual educators and schools, as well as a few school districts in Canada, began to engage. In its early stages, RJE was seen predominantly as an approach to address the behavior of students so that escalating office referrals as well as suspension and expulsion rates could be curbed. Through research, this limited focus of using RJE to address behaviour was seen to be detrimental for students, which has led to a much more robust approach that seeks to encourage educational institutions to develop responsive, relationship-based cultures rather than reactive, rule-based cultures. This includes acknowledging the Indigenous roots and contemporary ways of being from which RJE has emerged, as well as the various cultures, philosophies, and religions that uphold relationship as "understanding each other through each other," i.e., ubuntu, sawbona, shalom (Llewellyn, 2012). As such, most recently, in NL, as well as other parts of Canada, RJE is being considered as being instrumental in addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Report's recommendations.

Across the globe, the grassroots development of RJE since the late 1990's, has made it difficult to discern how schools/educators are perceiving and engaging with it. This study contributes to an international collaboration of Dr. dorothy vaandering with Dr. Kristin Reimer (Monash University, Australia) and Dr. Brenda Morrison (Simon Fraser University, British Columbia). By examining what is happening in our particular regions and then comparing and contrasting these findings, we seek to deepen our understanding of patterns and points of (dis)connection within and amongst the various local, regional, and/or national studies.

2.2 The local context

RJE has been gaining traction in NL since August 2012, when 17 educators were introduced to this way of being in a 2-week immersive full-time institute funded by SSHRC. From its inception, because of the holistic, relational principles that characterize RJE, implementation was intended to grow through a grassroots approach initiated by educators in classrooms. This is unique in that neither the Department of Education nor school district directors were included in this introduction.

The project was initiated by Dr. dorothy vaandering, a then recently employed tenure-track professor at the Faculty of Education. Her Ph.D. research conclusions recommended that such a

grassroots approach was necessary to address some of the concerns arising out of early iterations of RJE implementation in Ontario public schools. These concerns included (a) a lack of engagement by classroom teachers who had three days of training and were initially supportive of the approach; (b) an over emphasis by district directors on addressing student behaviour with an expressed intent of reducing suspensions and expulsions; (c) inability to sustain the change over time. Success was noted in classrooms and schools where educators whose personal philosophical framework aligned with the core beliefs and values of a robust understanding of restorative justice. After training, which involved becoming aware of the inclusion of restorative justice in district policy statements, these educators felt empowered to change the structure of their learning environments away from a focus on rules and standards to one with a focus on relationships with the support of their administrators. In these few classrooms, significant changes occurred, including increased student attendance, engagement, social interaction, and academic achievement.¹

In response to these findings, Dr. Vaandering designed a professional learning experience that employed activity-based engagement of participants with the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of RJE. It encouraged a re-examination of personal perspectives of the worth and interconnectedness of humanity and an explicit invitation to consider if/how this aligned with what they were learning about RJE. The hypothesis was that if the practices of RJE were introduced within an activity-based explicit context of beliefs, values, and framework of RJE, this would create a foundation for sustainable integration of RJE into the NL school system.² This sustainability would be evident in (1) the growth of RJE practices in the province's schools, (2) an increase in graduate student projects engaging with schools/educators engaged in RJE, as well as (3) engagement of educators with directors of education responsible for policy development and implementation.

Nine years after its introduction to these 17 NL educators from nine schools, it is time to examine just how much of an impact the introduction of RJE is having in the province. The majority of this report documents the findings of a brief survey distributed to every school in NL in May 2020 to identify growth. These findings are then augmented with several appendices:

- Appendix A: copy of the survey questions;
- Appendix B: copy of the email invitation to participate;
- Appendix C: the context of this study set in an anecdotal description of early history of RJE in NL.
- Appendix D: Theses, Projects, Reports, Publications arising from the NL experience:

¹ See: Vaandering, D. (2009). *Towards Effective Implementation and Sustainability of Restorative Justice in Ontario Public Schools: A Critical Case Study*, PhD Thesis, University of Western Ontario.

Vaandering, D. (2013). Implementing restorative justice in schools: What pedagogy reveals. *Journal of Peace Education*, 10 (3). DOI: 10.1080/17400201.2013.794335

² See Vaandering, D. (2014). Relational restorative justice pedagogy in educator professional development. *Special Issue: Curriculum Inquiry 44:4*. Editor: Kathy Bickmore.

2.3 The study:

The findings of the survey provide insight into the following question:

How significant is RJE traction in NL?

To understand the significance, the data collected identifies:

- *How many schools and educators are engaged with RJE?*
- *How are they understanding the essence of RJE?*
- *What needs are identified for stronger engagement?*
- *What is the interest for continuing?*

These findings were then used to create a list of recommendations and a plan for moving forward.

2.4 The researcher:

This study, like the initial 2012 project, has been initiated and carried out by Dr. vaandering. Beyond the importance of tracking the growth of RJE in NL, it was designed to address the larger questions—can sustainable implementation of RJE be initiated from the ground up? What can be learned about the implementation and sustainability of RJE from the NL experience? As such, the analysis of the data and the compilation of this report is impacted by the researcher’s direct interest in understanding the impact of their own work. To address bias in the study, the following steps were taken:

- The researcher has no previous experience with survey-based data collection requiring significant collaboration with researchers not engaged in the topic;
- The questions in the survey were designed collaboratively with a researcher whose expertise is in developing valid surveys. Also, education leaders in the NL education system were consulted informally about what type of information they would find helpful.
- The survey was sent to every school in the province with an invitation to participate regardless of their current engagement with RJE or the researcher’s work;
- No direct contact was had with any participant. Research assistants carried out the creation and distribution of the survey, as well as the collection and collating of the resulting data. Initial analysis was done by graduate research students and assistants.

3. Methodology

NLESD schools, schools in the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, Indigenous-governed schools, and independent schools in NL are central to the collection of data for this project, many of which have been involved to varying degrees with RJE. The specific procedures used in the study included:

1. recruitment via email sent via our office at the Faculty of Education or transmitted through the central offices of districts and schools as required by their policies (see Appendix B).
2. Administrators and/or lead teachers in each school received an invitation for the person most involved with RJE in the school to complete the on-line survey, which used the Qualtrics platform (see Appendix A). If applicable, this person completed the questionnaire in consultation with their colleagues to gain as comprehensive a response as possible to each question.
3. Consent was obtained prior to a participant starting the survey by means of an introduction to the survey when the participant clicked the link provided. By clicking a check-box at the end of the introduction, they indicated their consent to continue, and the survey followed. Participants were directed to contact dr. dorothy vaandering if they had questions about the study.
4. Data analysis was quantitative (descriptive analysis) and qualitative (thematic analysis).

In summary, the project involved a representative of each school completing a survey that collected data on the school or, if implementation was not schoolwide, then individual educators consciously engaging with RJE, the length of time the school/educators have been involved, the approach used, and how they have been prepared to engage with the principles and practices.

3.1 Survey Design

The questionnaire used for this survey of engagement of schools in NL with RJE was designed by the principal investigator in collaboration with a MUN researcher with expertise in developing survey research and the co-researcher with experience in using Qualtrics as a survey platform. In addition, three representatives from the Department of Education and the NL English School District were invited (1) to review the survey for the relevance of the questions based on their experience with RJE and (2) to suggest other questions that would provide insight into things they felt would be helpful for further engagement. The feedback was used to refine the survey to ensure that the topics addressed were appropriate and achieved the goals of the study.

Ethics approval was sought and received from Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). With this approval, permission was sought and received from NLESD to distribute the survey. Inquiry was made via email and phone calls requesting formal permission from The Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et- Labrador, Indigenous-governed schools, and independent schools. Verbal permissions for distributing were granted. Email invitations with a link to the Qualtrics survey were sent to every administrator in K-12 and alternative schools in NL.³

A graduate student with experience using Qualtrics formatted and prepared the survey for on-line completion. The first page of instructions included questions regarding approval for

³ Appendix A: Survey.

participation that participants accepted by clicking on the Continue option at the bottom of the page.

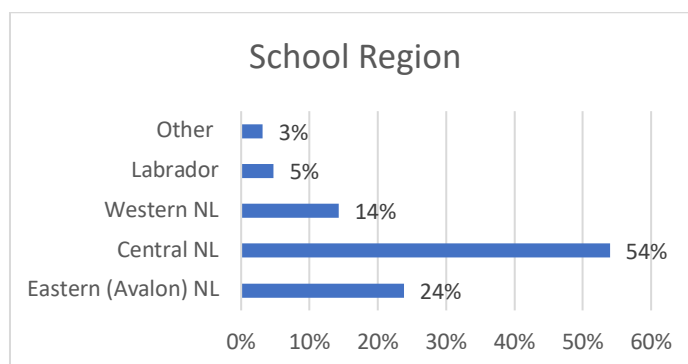
The survey comprised 26 questions--a variety of single response multiple-choice, one or more response multiple-choice, and short answers. After the questions indicating the demographics of the school, the survey allowed for a response indicating if they were involved in RJE. "Yes" or "maybe" responses prompted the completion of the rest of the survey; a "no" response immediately brought them to two brief questions asking if they had heard of or had previously engaged with RJE. This concluded the survey for these responders.

3.2 Survey administration, Completion Results, and Limitations

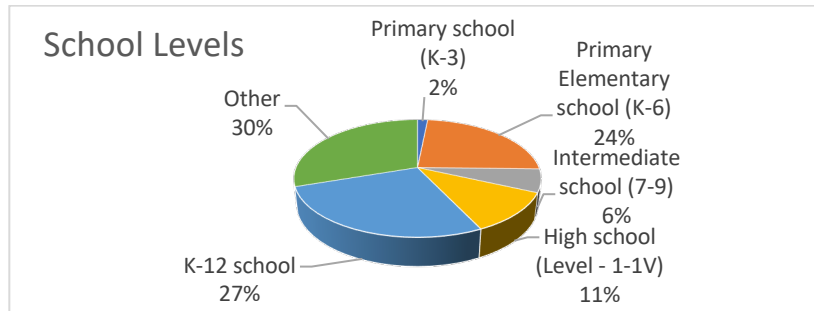
The survey was completed over a 3-week period, June 1-June 22, 2020, using the online platform only. A total of 271 invitations were sent out, with 63 surveys completed—a 23% return rate. The survey allowed for schools with little or no experience to complete it. Six responded in this manner; three indicated they had not ever been involved in RJE, two indicating some previous involvement, and one was not sure.

4. Participant School Profile

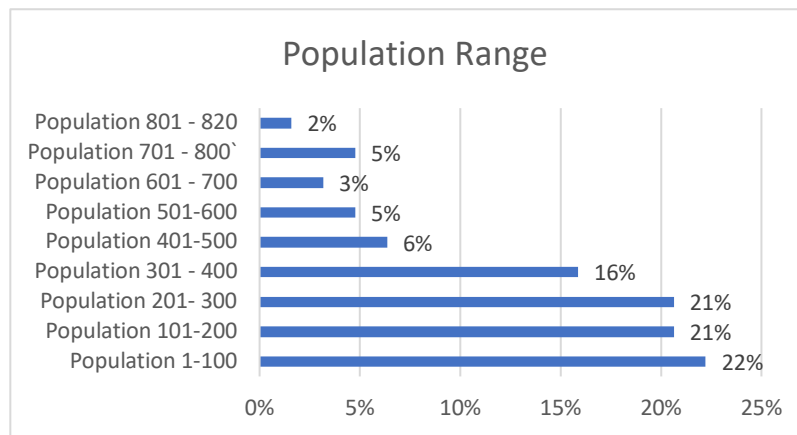
The school profile of the 63 responses can be characterized as follows. In terms of location, the divisions used to describe the areas are like those used by NLESD. Over half (32) came from Central NL, one-quarter (16) came from the Avalon area, nine from Western NL, and 3 from Labrador.



Grade levels were more difficult to describe given the variations in school design (i.e., 8-12; k-9; 5-12, k-4). When taking into account these variations as indicated in the "Other" category, approximately 24 schools responding were Primary-Elementary focused, 16 were Intermediate-Senior High schools, 18 were all grade levels, and two were adult education sites.



The majority of schools, 80 %, have a population of less than 400 students, with 13 being small schools of less than 100 students and 6 schools having more than 600 students.



Finally, the majority of schools (86%, 54) identified as NLESD schools, with representation from each of other categories of schools (1 or 2 schools) in the province (Indigenous, faith-based, Francophone, independent, and not-for-profit).

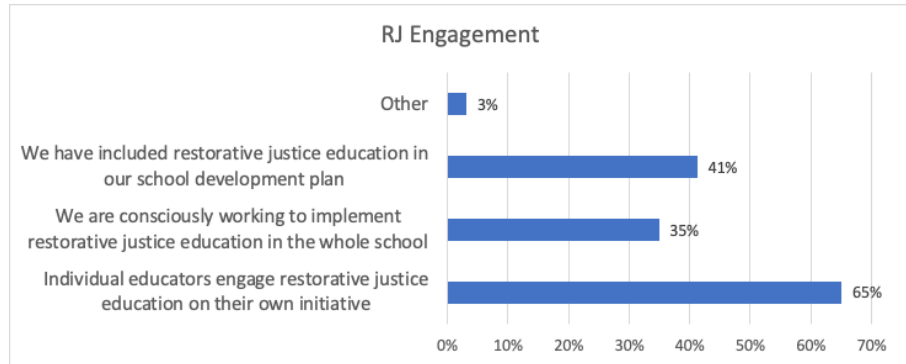
In summary, responses indicate that there are a small, but significant, number of schools throughout the province engaging with RJE, most notably in Central NL, followed by the East and West portions of the province with very limited engagement in Labrador. Also in these locations, there is engagement across various grade levels and in schools of all sizes. As such, it is encouraging to confirm it's presence in NL in all geographic areas and the evident applicability of RJE for all ages, school sizes, and locations.

5. Findings:

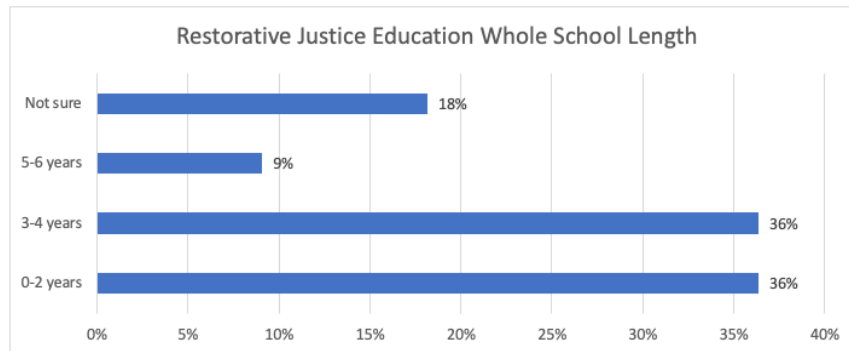
5.1 How many schools and educators are engaged with RJE?

A total of 57 responses indicated engagement with RJE in some form. Eleven schools describe their engagement as a whole-school approach, and 48 responses indicate that engagement has been primarily by educators working independently.

This individual initiative is not surprising, given the approach to implementation in the province. It is encouraging to see how that initiative has grown to include substantial whole school engagement and planning for more than a third of the responding schools.

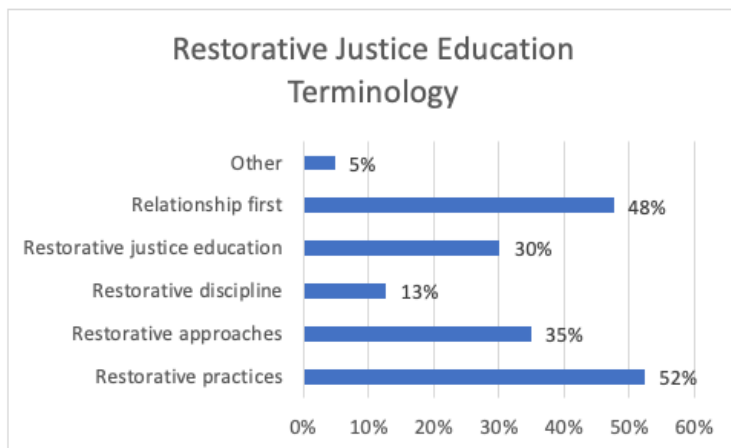


In terms of time spent with RJE, 72% or 41 schools have been engaged with RJE for less than 4 years, 5 have been involved for 5-9 years, and 10 responses indicate not being sure of the length of time engaged. As an initiative, the province is in very early stages.



5.2 How are participants understanding the essence of RJE?

The following insights were gleaned from questions where participants could select more than one response. This would allow for various and multiple perspectives from each location and/or group of educators.

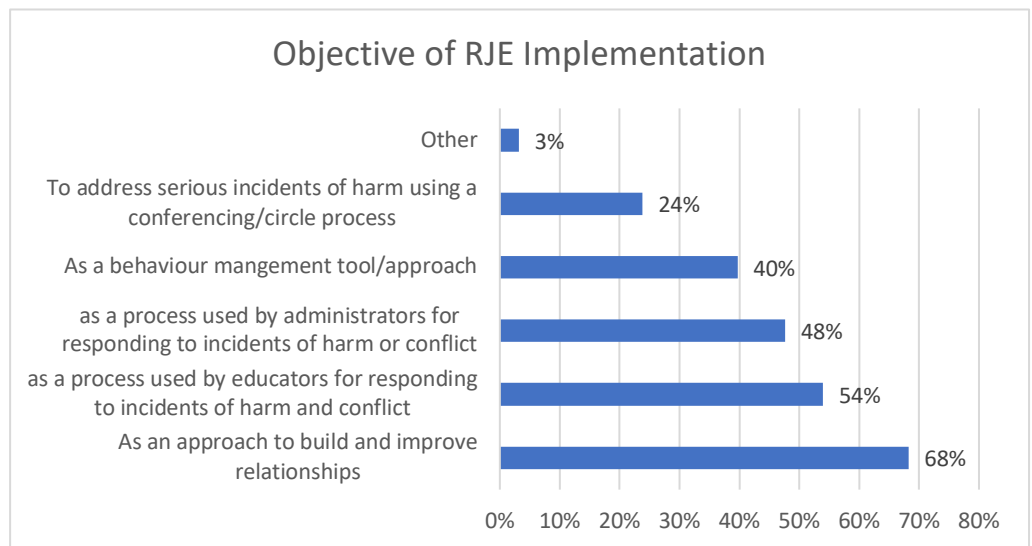


Terminology used by schools/educators give insight into how they are understanding the essence of RJE. Respondants primarily reference RJE as relational with impact on the culture/climate of the school. There is some connection to discipline and/or behavior, however, it is not clear if they may be including these concepts in some of the other

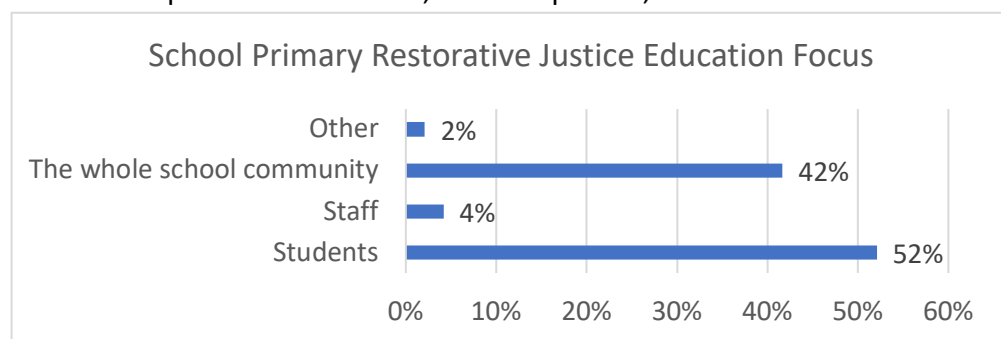
terms. The data below regarding objectives for implementation shows a heavier emphasis on behaviour, conflict and harm.

RJE as *a way of being* is further supported with responses that indicate a conscious effort to move it towards a whole school approach (35%) and is also being included in school development plans (41%). This focus may be pointing to a more comprehensive approach than simply zeroing in on RJE as a tool for addressing behaviour and discipline.

The improvement of relationships as an objective for engaging with RJE is significant with more than 2/3 highlighting this. Inherent in this, however, is the desire to address harm and conflict in effective ways—an aspect of healthy relationships.

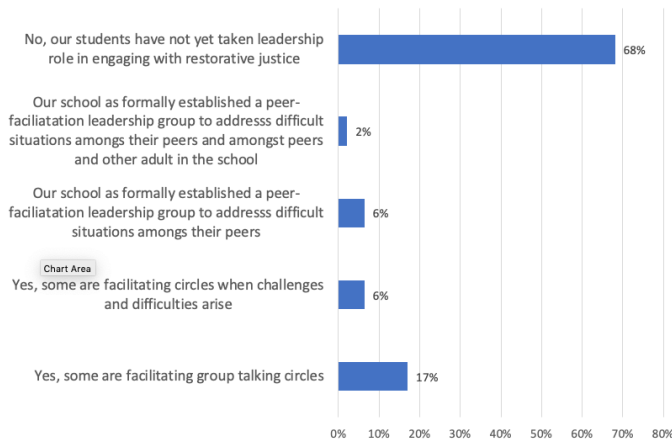


To further grasp how respondents are understanding the essence of RJE, who educators involve and how they involve them identifies aspects of relational pedagogy inherent in RJE. In a question where participants could choose *one* response to identify who their primary focus is, 25 say their focus is on students, 23 focus on the whole school, and two indicate their primary focus is on the staff. In terms of parent involvement, of 41 responses, 10 schools have intentionally informed parents about RJE, 16 have informed them incidentally, and 13 have not engaged with parents.



Finally, in terms of students being invited to take on a leadership role in terms of promoting RJE, 68% or 32 of the responses indicate there has been no effort to engage students as leaders in this capacity, and 8 have provided a limited opportunity to engage.

Leadership Role of Students in Restorative Justice Education



Combined, these responses show a significant awareness that developing relational cultures is a key outcome of RJE. With over half of responses selecting “whole school” as characteristic of RJE, the reciprocal nature of relationships in terms of care, concern, and responsibility is recognized (i.e. between and amongst adults--educators/administrators/parents and youth/children--students). However, this reciprocity is tenuous as the emphasis for over half of respondents remains on its impact on students as recipients of the approach, and more than half have not engaged parents actively or allowed students to take on a leadership role learning to facilitate circles and problem solve amongst themselves. As education has historically not been designed to be relational in this manner, but rather an opportunity for transmission of knowledge, this is not surprising. These results point to the need for more support and mentoring in aspects of RJE as a relational pedagogy that engages with transformative, engaged relationship amongst adults, children, and youth as well as with curriculum content (i.e. project-based, inquiry-based learning).

Educator comments about what RJE looks like in a school/classroom augment these findings regarding the essence of RJE. Nine comments were submitted. From these, three themes arise:

1. Circle processes are a key way for integrating RJE principles and practices into the regular school day. Comments indicate their effectiveness for developing stronger relationships that are kind, caring, and supportive amongst students as well as between students and the teacher. Circles are used broadly in classrooms for teaching curriculum, for checking in on students’ experiences at the beginning and end of the class period or day, and for class meetings and clarifying responsibilities as members of the group.
2. RJE is also seen to be a means for engaging in difficult situations, resolving conflict between two-three people or large groups, and addressing harm.
3. RJE is identified as informing and impacting adult-adult relationships amongst staff in three of the nine comments.

Other approaches/programs that participants identify as supporting or complementing RJE are predominantly centred around Social Emotional Learning (SEL) concepts. School-wide positive

behavior supports (SWPBS), a program promoted by the Department of Education and NLESD beginning in 2006, is mentioned only twice as being supported by RJE. As such, educators in NL appear to recognize the foundation of RJE as being different than SWPBS—relational and not behavioural.

In summary engagement with RJE in all of these responses, points to:

- an understanding that RJE encompasses a whole school culture and way of being, rather than only an approach or practice to curb and manage student inappropriate behavior.
- a beginning effort to implement RJE in schools beyond individual teacher initiative.
- an awareness that parents need to be involved in the initiative;
- a lack of awareness of the role students can take in leading their peers to a restorative justice way of being indicating educators are grappling with moving from a position of ‘social control’ to one of ‘social engagement’ where they are guides and co-learners with students.

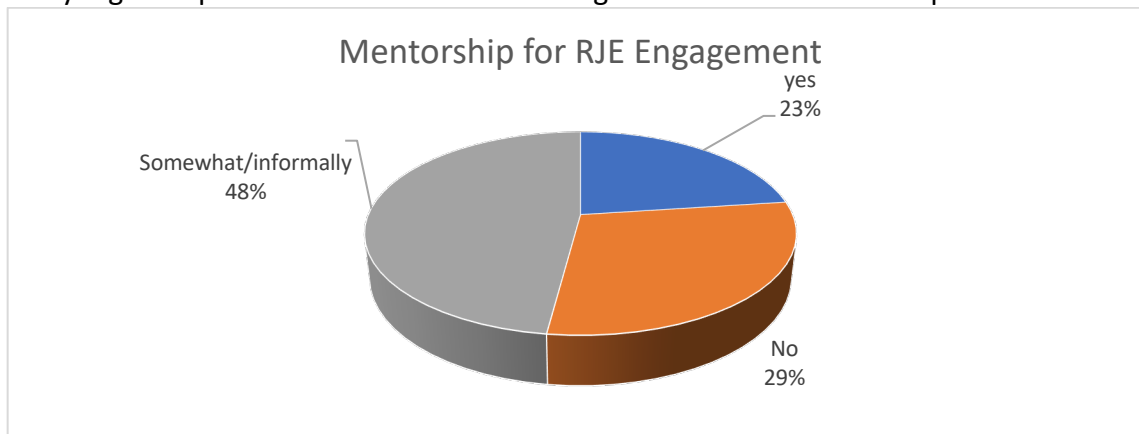
5.3 What needs are identified for stronger engagement?

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions that identified (1) barriers to more fully engaging with RJE and (2) needs for thriving. As expected, the responses are closely tied together. Twenty-eight comments submitted indicated barriers, twenty described needs.

Barriers to full engagement	Needs for thriving
<p>Five key themes emerged (listed in order of frequency mentioned):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited time to engage in comprehensive professional learning 2. Inconsistent or limited understanding of principles and practices of RJE; 3. Teacher lack of interest in and/or resistance to a deepening understanding of RJE; 4. Limited resources and cost of resources/funding for implementation; 5. Minimal parent/community involvement. 	<p>Four key themes emerged (listed in order of frequency mentioned):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time and resources for professional learning and engaging in new practices; 2. Fully understanding and consistent engagement with practices of all staff in a school; 3. Board and administrative commitment and support of RJE 4. Collaboration with other schools implementing rje, so examples of success are available;

One aspect of support for implementation that is encouraged, but not formalized through the various professional learning opportunities over the years, is mentorship. To gauge if participants had picked up on mentorship as a relational means for promoting RJE, one question was allocated for this, “Is mentorship a part of your schools’ plan for engaging more fully with RJE?”

Forty-eight responses indicate that there is significant awareness of its potential.



Comments augmenting these responses demonstrate that educators involved are eager to share with their peers what they know through sharing of resources and ideas, modeling, and demonstrating various practices.

5.4 What is the interest for continuing?

Interest for continuing is significant as evidenced in 15 comments received when invited to share any other details. Most describe positive experiences and an eagerness to continue:

“We look forward to continuing and expanding our practices.”

“It makes a huge positive difference in terms of the school climate and helps to keep behavior issues at a minimum. Students have such strong relationships with each other and staff members, and there is a lot of trusts.”

“We are learning and growing in this area... we believe it to be a worthwhile process and are working towards educating ourselves so we can implement it appropriately.”

“We have done very little; about three teachers have some engagement with it, it would be ideal to build this culture.”

“Our experiences with restorative justice practices have been very positive this year, and the classes selected at each grade level to start were very receptive.”

“Been extremely positive, with less conflict in the school and a great place to work.”

6. Summary and Recommendations

6.1 Summary

In summary, though a small percentage of NL schools (21%) participated in the study, it is encouraging in that this confirms RJE is present in NL in all geographic areas and is applicable for all ages, school sizes, and locations. This engagement has come about primarily through the advocacy of individual educators who engage with it in their own contexts and with the support of Safe and Inclusive Itinerants and Relationships First Consortium professional learning opportunities. Most schools have been engaging with RJE for less than 4 years and most highlight its importance for improving relationships. Nurturing healthy relational school and classroom cultures is the primary objective of educators who choose circle dialogue processes as a key practice; however, understanding the depth of mutual reciprocity in relationships seems limited. This is evident as addressing harm and inappropriate behaviour are also priorities for engaging with RJE and there is little initiative for students or parents to be involved as advocates and participants in leading the practices. Barriers and needs coalesce around the need for more opportunity and consistency of messaging and practice for healthy growth of the approach. Funding, time, and prioritizing RJE by district and department leaders are seen as ways to ensure these are provided. There is a definite desire for continuing to advance RJE amongst all respondents to the survey.

6.2 How significant is RJE traction in NL?

This survey set out to answer the question: *How significant is RJE traction in NL?* From the results, we can conclude that traction is evident. Though 2% of the respondents indicated they are not engaged, 21% of the 271 schools in the province indicate that they are informed and engaged with its principles and practices to the extent that they felt compelled to complete the survey when invited. In addition, responses indicate an understanding that RJE is known as a way of being, is beneficial when implemented as a whole school endeavor to enhance relational school culture rather than one ‘tool’ of many in their educator collection of practices to address student behavior—a common perspective in jurisdictions beyond NL.

The implementation and sustainability of new approaches in education are complex, with many efforts earning the title of “flavor of the month/year.” When change involves all aspects of the fabric of schooling as RJE does, complexity is multiplied, and adjustments are expected to be much slower. To ensure it did not become the next fad in education, the introduction of RJE in NL was grounded in research indicating that sustainability relies on:

- educators being invited to engage and lead in educational change rather than mandated to change;
- educators as “transformative intellectuals” (Giroux, 1988) having the capacity to consider, engage, and promote ways of being in the classroom/school that help them to engage in deep learning experiences.
- change that depends on (re)considering, (re)committing to or rejecting beliefs and values inherent in educator practices;
- directors and administrators encouraging and supporting educator autonomy (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

In terms of effective professional development, what this survey makes clear is that engagement and growth as initiated from the ground-up is effective and well-understood where it exists. ***Educators committed to its growth in their personal practice, their schools, and the province are to be highly commended for their advocacy and engagement with RJE.***

6.3 Recommendations:

The foundation is strong; the interest is high for engaging with RJE. Commitment to providing support and resources from the larger system is now identified by educators in NL as necessary to solidify the work that has been done. The time is right for implementation from the ground-up to connect with support from the directors, departments, and districts of education in the province. This can come in various forms:

1. Policies developed by and resources provided by the Department of Education;
 - A revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy that promotes a holistic relational, restorative justice ethos in schools with clear directives and expectations for engagement would encourage schools to engage explicitly.
 - Given the holistic nature of rje, effort to consider all other education policies within the framework of RJE will create and strengthen a more cohesive education vision, i.e., curriculum, Indigenous education, Comprehensive School Health, Social Emotional Learning, etc.
 - In regards to resources, much of the groundwork is already in place, and has resulted in significant educator and student engagement. As a result mentoring, and support for this approach along with funding for this project is not onerous compared to other initiatives. Outside expertise is not required or recommended other than for consultative support from time to time; resources, human resources are available within the province, the system, and the schools, and RJE is an approach that requires little in the way of physical resources;
 - The recent revised Education Ministers mandate indicates growing support from the Department of Education which has been formalized, as evidenced in the recent directive (April 15, 2021) the Premier has given to the Minister of Education in their mandate letter:

“I ask that you work with the expertise established at Memorial University to enhance teacher training in restorative justice principles and *work to implement these principles into all our province's schools*. These actions will help nurture healthy relationships built on foundational respect for all members of the school community and support the development of policies and practices that reinforce inclusive behavior.” (Italics added)

2. Intentional time and guidelines for implementation by districts/schools;
 - The cohort school model of implementation in the province, which is being used with small groups of schools, is available and ready to be launched for all interested schools when the appropriate resources of time and professional

learning become available. Educators and Itinerants are ready when schools and districts officially respond to the Dept of Ed mandate;

3. Graduate and undergraduate course development at the Faculty of Education.
 - Graduate students are requesting courses to follow the introductory course provided, ED 6463 Relationships First: Rethinking Educational Engagement. A certificate or diploma program would be well-received;
 - Undergraduate students are introduced to RJE informally through a few of their courses where their instructors are aware of its principles and practices. Now that there is significant awareness of and interest in RJE in the province's schools, an intentional course and/or approach is necessary for pre-service teachers.

6.4 A Final Important Recommendation:

Along with the findings reported on, there is one very important thing that has come to light in the nine years of this work, both locally and internationally: the lack of engagement and collaboration with Indigenous leadership that has taken place within the field. Though there has been an acknowledgment of the field's indebtedness to Indigenous knowledge and ethos, action beyond this in the form of collaboration and consultation has been limited. At this point in history, as more and more unmarked and mass graves of children are being identified on former residential school properties in Canada, non-Indigenous advocates for RJE must not journey alone in encouraging schools to nurture relational cultures. RJE, nor education & schooling itself will be sustainable in a western, liberal, individualistic framework that most North American schools are grounded in. NL RJE advocates are becoming more conscious of the connection to reconciliation and healing among the Nations (Saleh, 2020). To truly work within this spirit, however, any plans for moving forward in the province need to be steeped in collaboration with and guidance from Indigenous elders, educators, and community members. As such, the current materials being promoted and used in schools will need to be updated/revised:

- The Relationships First: Implementation Guide by D. Vaandering and D. Voelker;
- Circle Forward by Caroyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis (current books in circulation will need to acquire the supplement: *Moving toward racial equity in schools—starting with the adults.*)
- *Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* by K. Evans and D. Vaandering to be supplemented with *Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice* by Fania Davis.

7. Conclusion:

The introduction of RJE to NL came at a time when other jurisdictions across Canada, the US, and beyond had been working to implement this approach and/or way of being for approximately a decade. In response to those experiences which had been found to be somewhat effective but limited, the invitation for engaging with the holistic, ground up approach was extended to a small group of educators in NL to explore (a) if the sustainable

implementation of RJE could be initiated from the ground up and (b) what could be learned about the implementation and sustainability of RJE from the NL experience.

This report is significant in *beginning to answer* both of these questions. Time will tell if sustainability is possible when initiated in this manner. In regards to what can be learned from the NL experience, along with the details in this report, the next months and years will reveal how the engagement of educators in classrooms and schools and directors of education overseeing the institution come together to work towards educational transformation.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

RJE in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools --an overview of engagement Survey Questions

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete all the following questions that pertain to you/your school. Feel free to skip any questions you do not feel comfortable or able to complete.

NOTE: please substitute any terminology your school uses for “RJE” when reading each question. (i.e. restorative approach, restorative practice, restorative discipline, relationships first, etc.)

1. My school is located in:
Eastern/Avalon NL; Central NL; Western NL, Labrador; Other

2. My school is:
 - A. Rural (in a town/area of less than 50,000)
 - B. Urban (in a town/city of 50,000 or more)
3. My school is a:
 - A. Primary School (K-3 school);
 - B. Elementary School (4-6)
 - C. Primary Elementary School (K-6)
 - D. Intermediate School (7-9)
 - E. High School (Level I-Level IV)
 - F. K-12 School
 - G. Other _____
4. My school’s approximate population is: _____
5. My school is a(n):
 - A. Newfoundland and Labrador English School District School
 - B. Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador
 - C. Indigenous-governed School
 - D. Independent School
 - E. Faith-based School
 - F. Other (please specify) _____
6. In my school, we currently use RJE in some form:
 - A. Yes (go to #7)
 - B. Maybe/not sure (go to #7)
 - C. No (go to # 25)

7. In my school, we use the following terminology to describe our engagement with RJE (choose all that apply):

- A. Restorative practices;
- B. Restorative approaches;
- C. Restorative discipline;
- D. RJE;
- E. Relationships first;
- F. Other: _____

8. At my school:

- A. Individual educators engage with RJE on their own initiative; (go to #10)
- B. We are consciously working to implement RJE in the whole school. (go to #9)
- C. We have included RJE in our school development plan.
- D. Other: _____

9. My school has been engaged with RJE as a whole school for:

- A. 0-2 years
- B. 3-4 years
- C. 5-6 years
- D. 7-8 years
- E. 9 or more years.
- F. Not sure

10. Educators at my school have been working independently with RJE principles and practices for approximately:

- A. 0-2 years
- B. 3-4 years
- C. 5-6 years
- D. 7-8 years
- E. 9 or more years.
- F. Not sure

11. RJE is implemented in my school (choose all that apply):

- A. As an approach to build and improve relationships;
 - B. As a process used by educators for responding to incidents of harm or conflict
 - C. As a process used by administrators for responding to incidents of harm or conflict
 - D. As a behaviour management tool/approach;
 - E. To address serious incidents of harm using a conferencing/circle process;
 - F. Other (please explain)
-

12. RJE in my school focuses primarily on:

- A. Students
 - B. Staff
 - C. The whole school community
 - D. Other (please explain)
-
-

13. How was your school introduced to RJE (choose all that apply):

- A. Through school visits by a Program Itinerant for Safe and Inclusive Schools;
- B. Through 2 or more days of professional learning for 2 or more staff members;
- C. Through an individual teacher/administrator's encouragement and experience;
- D. Through an introductory professional learning session up to 1 day;
- E. Other: _____

14. Do educators at your school engage with RJE processes for reflecting on their own practice?

- A. Yes
- B. Not sure
- C. No

15. The parents in our community know about the school's engagement with RJE:

- A. They have all been formally informed through school announcements/communications;
 - B. They have been formally informed through face-to-face meetings;
 - C. Some have been informed and included when it pertains to their children;
 - D. They have not been informed;
 - E. Other (please explain):
-
-
-
-

16. Have students taken leadership roles in terms of engaging with RJE? (choose all that apply):

- A. Yes, some are facilitating group talking circles;
- B. Yes, some are facilitating circles when challenges & difficulties arise;
- C. Our school has formally established a peer-facilitation leadership group to address difficult situations amongst their peers;
- D. Our school has a formally established a peer-facilitation leadership group to address difficult situations amongst their peers and amongst peers and other adults in the school;
- E. Other (please explain):

17. Please briefly describe other details of how RJE is used in your school.

18. Name and/or describe any approaches/programs that your school uses that you feel support or complement your engagement with RJE.

19. Is mentorship a part of your school's plan for engaging more fully with RJE:

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Somewhat/informally

If a or c please describe briefly how this occurs: _____

20. What supports and professional learning does your school intentionally engage in to deepen understanding of RJE? Select all that apply.

- A. Whole school Workshops;
- B. Self-chosen participation in workshops outside of school;
- C. Individual growth plan using video/print resources;
- D. Team/staff meetings using video/print resources;
- E. On-line webinars; book clubs; etc.
- F. Graduate courses;
- G. Other: _____

21. What supports and professional learning would your school intentionally engage in if it was available to deepen understanding of RJE? Select all that apply.

- A. Whole school Workshops;
- B. Self-chosen participation in workshops outside of school;
- C. Individual growth plan using video/print resources;
- D. Team/staff meetings using video/print resources;
- E. On-line webinars; book clubs; etc.
- F. Graduate courses;
- G. Other: _____

22. List 3 key barriers for your school in engaging more fully with RJE?

23. For RJE to thrive in your setting, list 3 things you/your school need:

24. Please add any other details you'd like to share regarding your/your school's experiences with RJE:

See #6 above ... "no" response goes to #25, 26, 27

25. Are you familiar with RJE?

- A. Yes
- B. Somewhat
- C. No

26. Has your school been involved in RJE in the past?

- A. Yes
- B. Maybe
- C. Not sure
- D. No.

27. Please explain briefly why your school does not currently engage with RJE?

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28. Would you like to be contacted to learn more about the study's results or be connected to a planned network of schools engaged with RJE? Please note that if you choose to be contacted, your contact information will not be connected to any of the answers you provide in the survey. Your survey answers will remain anonymous.

- A. Yes (go to form disconnected from survey to provide name and contact information)

B. No

Contact Information (if chosen in 28 A)

Name:

Email Address:

## Appendix B: Email Recruitment Letter

Dear ....

My name is Dr. Dorothy Vaandering, and I am a faculty member in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am conducting an on-line survey research project called Restorative Justice Education in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools--An Overview of Engagement along with Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli from the Department of Sociology at MUN. This provincial study is being conducted to understand the current engagement of educators and schools with Restorative Justice Education (other terms used may be: restorative practices, restorative approaches, restorative discipline, relationships first, ...).

We are contacting you to invite you to participate in this online survey in which you will be asked to complete various multiple choice and short answer questions. If your school engages with restorative justice education in any way, participation will require approximately 10 minutes of your time. If you/your school is not involved in restorative justice education in any way, we invite you to complete a small segment of the survey that should take about 1 minute of your time. The survey is to be completed on-line and will be available to you from any computer.

If you have received this invitation and are not currently employed or involved in a school in NL, we request that you not fill in the survey.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please click the link below to access the online survey. Here you will find a short introduction to the study and details regarding your consent for use of the data you provide. The survey is completely anonymous, with an option to provide your contact information that will allow us to send you the study results later in 2020. This contact information will not be connected to the responses you give.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me by email at [dvaandering@mun.ca](mailto:dvaandering@mun.ca) or by phone at 709.864.3266.

Thank-you in advance for considering this request. Your input will help us plan for future engagement with restorative justice education in the province.

Dorothy  
Dr. D. Vaandering

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr.chair@mun.ca](mailto:icehr.chair@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

## Appendix C: *Beyond the survey summary*

The foundation that was laid in August 2012 with 17 participants from 8 different schools was the start of all that this study reports on. What follows is a brief overview of the trajectory of that growth and the interconnection that had with the Dept of Education and various stakeholders in the community.

- In a Synergy Session hosted by MUNL's Harris Centre to which a wide variety of representatives from institutions serving/advocating for youth were invited, the participants of the 2012 summer institute shared details of their experience and its impact on their roles as educators. Over 40 people attended, and from this, an invitation was extended to attending organizations to become part of a Consortium of partners committed to and advocating for relational, restorative justice institutional cultures that served youth. Seven responded and Relationships First: Restorative justice in education Consortium of NL was founded. Included in the response were Department of Education, NLESD, NLTA, St. Bonaventure's College, Thrive, Violence Prevention-Avalon East, Turnings, Provincial Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. Since then, the RNC and The RCMP have also supported the work and have representatives on the Advisory Board. This Consortium became a visible presence in the province, and awareness of RJE grew;
- Accelerator Funding in 2016 allowed for research to assess whole school implementation of RJE in two schools where 2012 summer institute participants worked in the St. John's area. From this experience, more educators became involved and aware and we could determine the needs for whole school implementation.
- The Department of Education Safe and Caring Schools Department seconded a 2012 summer institute participant as a consultant from their school position. In this role, the Department of Education was made aware of its very brief reference to restorative justice as a way to address inappropriate student behavior in its 2014 Safe and Caring Schools Policy. To deepen awareness of a more comprehensive understanding of RJE in this reference, in 2016 eight days of professional learning by Relationships First was provided to a group of 14 safe and caring schools itinerants (S&C) whose role it is to help schools implement policy directives. Response was positive, and, in their roles, they not only promoted the use of RJE principles and practices in the province's public schools but also began to use these as their way of being in their engagement with schools. Turn-over within the roles of the S&C Itinerant role is high, and the following year half of the group had been reassigned. However, those that remained mentored and supported their new peers and the Dept of Education provided support for 3 days of professional learning. This support from the Dept of Ed, when coupled with a growing number of educators engaged in RJE in their classrooms and schools, resulted in significant growth of awareness of the positive impact this RJE way of being could have in a school. However, what is important to remember is that throughout this time, an official mandate re RJE or resource support on the part of the Department of Education or the NLESD did not occur until the most recent provincial election (see Recommendations on p.15).

- Educators and schools continued to learn of the potential of RJE from their peers. Professional learning opportunities offered by Relationships First were provided in some summers and when requested by individual schools. In 2019, the S&I Itinerants were committed to promoting it further and proposed to the NLESD a cohort model of implementation as recommended by RF-RJE. Support was approved (though still not as an official mandate), and schools were invited to become part of a cohort that would follow a three-year implementation model. On the Avalon, 24 schools applied, nine of which were accepted. On the West Coast and Central, 12 schools applied, and six were accepted. This interest is significant as an application required commitment by a team of 4-5 educators from the school that included an administrator. This was very hopeful. However, once again, S&I Itinerant turnover, retirement of a few key directors, time limitations, and then the onset of the pandemic have all but halted this initiative.
- MUNL's Faculty of Education offers a graduate course in RJE once a year. Out of this, several significant research projects have emerged demonstrating the impact of and effectiveness of RJE in the province (See Appendix D for a list of theses and projects.)

Though all of this is very hopeful and speaks clearly of the effectiveness of grassroots implementation, province-wide growth has likely neared its limit. Providing ongoing professional learning by educators or itinerants for each other is not reasonable given the high demand and the reality that time and resources are currently not allotted for by the districts or Department. Ongoing professional learning by the researcher supported by research grants or the organization Relationships First: Restorative Justice in Education NL Consortium that relies on research funding cannot be expected for the whole province with the resources it has.

## **Appendix D: Theses, Projects, Reports, Publications arising from the NL experience:**

### **Masters Projects & Theses:**

Boluwade, Bukola (2018). The Dynamics of the Learning Circle in High School: Teacher and Students in "Equal Partnership" (Masters Thesis)

Clarke, Courtney (2019). Investigating the Use of Restorative Justice Circle Process in Individualized Education Plan Meetings (Masters Thesis)

Edokpayi, Omoregie (2018). A Paradigm Shift through Talking Circle: A Narrative Study to Investigate the Impact of RJE on Students after Completing an Introductory Graduate Course in RJE.

Lu, Min (forthcoming). "The Impact of COVID-19 on Teachers' Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) Practice in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)."

McGettigan, Danielle (forthcoming). "Impact of K-12 Schooling on Incarcerated People in Newfoundland and Labrador"

Pardy, Margaret (2018). Relationship building at Sheshatshiu Innu school. (Masters Project)

Power, Erin (2014). "I believe in inclusion but...": A critical exploration into teacher beliefs and attitudes around inclusion. (Masters Thesis).

Saleh, Tina (2020). RJE and social dynamics in the classroom. (Masters Thesis)

Wright-Cameron, Taneisha (2021). RJE Principles and Practices: A Professional Learning Guide Booklet for Grade 9 Form Teachers to be used in their Form Time with Students to Create, Nurture, Repair, and Transform Relationships geared at addressing School Violence Issues. (Masters Project)

### **Researcher Publications/Presentations**

vaandering, d. (April 2021). Radical Love or Recolonization: Why Theory Matters. Relational Schools World Conference. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7FaThGvFoo>

vaandering, d., Evans, K. Wilson, S., Bowen, S. (April, June 2021). Interrogating Whiteness in RJE. Relational Schools World Conference and Eastern Mennonite University Conference.

Vaandering, d. (2020). At this time; Now, NOT later (blog series). *Relationships First*.  
www.relationshipsfirstnl.com

Evans, K. Morrison, B. & Vaandering, D. (2019). *Critical Race Theory and RJE in Listening to the Movement: Essays on new growth and new challenges in Restorative Justice*, Wipf & Stock Publishers. <https://zehr-institute.org/publications/listening-to-the-movement/>

Vaandering, D. (2019). "Too much changing has happened to go back": Professional Development, Paradigm Shifts and Poetry. *Contemporary Justice Review*.

Vaandering, D. & Voelker, D. (2018). *Relationships First Implementation Guide: A Holistic, Whole-School, Responsive Approach*. Self-published.

Vaandering, D. (February, 2017). *Nurturing dignity and interconnectedness for all*. Premier's Taskforce submission on behalf of Relationships First: RJE NL Consortium.

Vaandering, D. (February, 2017). *Nurturing dignity and interconnectedness for all*. Premier's Taskforce submission on behalf of Relationships First: RJE NL Consortium.

Evans, K. & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Vaandering, D. (2015). Critical relational theory. In B. Hopkins (Ed.), *Restorative Theory in Practice: Insights Into What Works and Why*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Vaandering, D. (2014). Relational restorative justice pedagogy in educator professional development. *Special Issue: Curriculum Inquiry 44:4*. Editor: Kathy Bickmore.

Vaandering, D. (Spring, 2015). Living justly: How restorative justice nurtures our communities. *Newfoundland Quarterly*, 107 (4), p. 36-39.