



Dear parent or guardian,

Montgomery County Public Schools, with grant support from the U.S. Department of Justice, is implementing two research-based, positive behavior management approaches: Restorative Justice (RJ) and School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (SW-PBIS). As part of this grant, your child's school and more than 40 other MCPS schools are participating in a study on the roll-out and effectiveness of these approaches for our students. Researchers from the internationally respected RAND Corporation are leading the study. Many of you first heard about this grant in Spring 2019 and we appreciate your involvement over the past year.

You may have received and returned this form in the past. However, if you receive this email, we are asking that you please complete and return this new version of the form by January 31, 2020.

Students will be asked to complete a brief survey on their perspective of school climate, bullying, conflict resolution, and behavioral management at their school, and may be observed during the school day if participating in school behavior management program activities, such as restorative justice circles. MCPS will also share de-identified student demographic, academic, and disciplinary information with RAND to be used for this study. Student names will not be shared with RAND. All student responses will be kept private and confidential, and no personally identifiable information will be shared with teachers, school staff, RAND, or anyone outside of the MCPS research team.

Student participation in surveys and observations of behavioral management program activities is voluntary, and permission from a parent/guardian is required for a student to participate. Participation in this study will not impact a student's grades, school records, or interactions with school staff.

If you allow your child to participate, it will provide valuable information that can help your child's school, other schools in our district, and schools across the nation to create safe and supportive environments for students. If you would not like your child to participate, please indicate that on the consent form. A separate consent form will be provided for students who participate in behavioral management program activities where observations will occur.

There are two ways you can access this survey consent form. Your child's teacher sent a copy home with your child this week. If you did not get that form, you can print and fill out the consent form found at the link below. Please return one form for each of your children in the study schools:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/student-services/behavioral/RAND-MCPS%20Parent%20Consent%20Form%208.22.pdf>

Consent forms need to be completed by Friday, January 31, 2020.

The below FAQ has more information about the project. If you would like more information, you can view an informational webinar RAND conducted for parents earlier this year, at the MCPS Restorative Justice website:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/student-services/mental-health/restorative-justice-project.aspx>

Please feel free to contact Stephanie Iszard, Program Manager, Restorative Justice ([Stephanie R Iszard@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Stephanie_R_Iszard@mcpsmd.org), 240-740-3949) for questions about MCPS and Dr. Becki Herman, Senior Policy Researcher at the RAND Corporation (bherman@rand.org, 703-413-1100 x5468) for questions about the study.

Sincerely,
Montgomery County Public Schools

Restorative Justice and SW-PBIS Frequently Asked Questions

What is the RJ-PBIS grant?

Montgomery County Public Schools (MSCPS) and RAND, an independent, non-profit research organization, are working together to determine whether and how two approaches to positive behavior management in schools can impact school and student outcomes. The grant seeks to understand the impact of Restorative Justice (RJ) and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (SW-PBIS) in schools, when these programs are implemented separately and when in combination with each other. The grant has a two-year implementation phase from Fall 2019 through Spring 2021, after which MCPS may support continued implementation.



What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice is an approach to building community, self-care, and conflict resolution. It allows students to:

- Actively engage and problem-solve physical, psychological, social and disciplinary issues that affect themselves and the community.
- Take responsibility for their actions.
- Work with those affected to restore and/or repair the members and community who were harmed as a result of those actions.

What is a Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention Strategy (SW-PBIS)?

SW-PBIS is a team-based process for problem solving, planning, and evaluation that includes the following essential elements:

- 3-5 positively stated schoolwide behavior expectations
- Procedures for systematically teaching, modeling, and reteaching those expectations to students and staff
- Procedures for recognizing students when they demonstrate established expectations
- Procedures for intervening when students do not demonstrate appropriate behavior



Who is funding this work?

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), a division of the U.S. Department of Justice, is funding the work. MCPS and RAND won this competitive grant based on a collaborative proposal. NIJ promotes scientific research, development, and evaluation to identify and share best practices in the interest of public safety and equity in justice systems. NIJ's website may be accessed using the following link: <https://www.nij.gov>.

What is RAND?

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. Research is carried out by three units that address social and economic policy issues; by four federally

funded research and development centers that focus on national security; by professors and graduate students at the Pardee RAND Graduate School; and by researchers in RAND offices in the United States, Europe and Australia. Approximately 1,700 people from more than 50 countries work at RAND, representing diversity in work experience; academic training; country and regional experience; and race, gender, and ethnicity. This diversity reinforces RAND's core values of quality and objectivity by promoting creativity, supporting rigorous quantitative and qualitative research, deepening understanding of the practical effects of policy, and ensuring multiple viewpoints and perspectives. Project teams are assembled from among RAND's 1,000 research professionals (over 80% of whom are Ph.D.s), whose collective expertise spans nearly every academic discipline and profession—from economics and behavioral science to engineering and technical fields.

How were the schools selected for the project?

Forty-three MCPS elementary and middle schools will participate in the initiative. School leadership teams decided whether or not to participate in the grant, and participating schools were randomly assigned to an intervention or control group.

What will be done with the information collected?

At the conclusion of the study, RAND will provide MCPS with summary information about the implementation and effects of RJ and SW-PBIS in the district's schools. RAND will develop a best-practices guide for school districts about adopting and implementing RJ in combination with SW-PBIS, and will disseminate information about the effectiveness of these two programs via journal articles and research briefs. Results from this study will help drive the work of educators nationally in assuring safe and supportive school environments, and can inform student behavior management for years to come. After the study ends, data that contain no personal or identifiable information will be stored at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD). Individual data from the observations will be destroyed but aggregate counts by groups of schools will also be stored at NACJD.

Will an individual child be identifiable?

RAND is committed, both legally and morally, to protecting the individual identity of all study participants, and has designed a rigorous plan to do so. RAND's reports will not name any individuals—or any schools—that participated in the study. In public reporting of research findings, only group data will be reported. RAND will not release any information that identifies your child to NIJ or anyone outside of the study team. Individual survey responses will not be linked to any personally identifiable information.

What is the timeline for grant activities?

- Implementation
 - RJ and SW-PBIS training for first group of schools July-August 2019
 - RJ and SW-PBIS implementation for first group begins Fall 2019
 - RJ and SW-PBIS implementation for second group begins Fall 2021
- Data collection
 - Staff survey (June 2019*, March 2020, March 2021)
 - Teacher logs (monthly June 2019*; Oct 2019 – June 2020; Oct 2020 – June 2021)
 - Site visits (May-June 2019*, October 2019*, March 2020, October 2020)
 - Student survey (October 2019*, March 2020, March 2021)

*completed

What study activities involve student participation?

- Surveys: All students in grades 5 and above who can read at the 3rd grade level or above in English or Spanish, whose parents/guardians have provided consent, are asked to take the survey. Student surveys will be administered in Oct 2019, March 2020, and March 2021. Surveys should take no more than 20 minutes.
- Event observation: Behavior events (such as restorative circles or conferences) in RJ and SW-PBIS schools will be observed in Fall of 2019 and Spring and Fall of 2020, if all participants and parents of minor participants provide advance permission.

Will the student survey interrupt instruction?

The survey will take about 20 minutes or fewer to complete. Schools will determine when and how to administer the survey to students in a way that causes the least disruption to instructional time as possible.

Do students with consent have to participate?

Participation in the survey is voluntary: students can decide not to take the survey even if you have consented to it. Assenting students can skip any question that they do not wish to answer.

If I consent to the survey, am I consenting to my child participating in all data collection activities?

No. If a student is part of a behavioral management program activity, such as a restorative circle, a separate consent form will be required before researchers can observe this activity.

What risk is there to my child by participating?

Your child will be asked their opinions about school climate, bullying, conflict resolution, and behavior management. Their responses will be kept confidential and will not be shared with their teacher, school staff, or anyone outside of the RAND research team. Information gathered for this study will only be used for research purposes. Survey and event observation participation is entirely voluntary and may be terminated by you or your child at any time.

How do I indicate that my child can participate in the study?

Your teacher should have sent home a consent form with your child around January 13th. If your child does not have a copy of the form, you can print and fill out the consent form found at the link below. Please return one form for each of your children in the study schools. Please return the form whether or not you want your child to participate in the research. If you do not want your child to participate in the study, you may check “no”—although of course we hope you will see the value of this research for your child and others.

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/studentervices/behavioral/RAND-MCPS%20Parent%20Consent%20Form%208.22.pdf>