The Challenge of Embedding Restorative Practice at a School District Level

An Australian case study

Lesley Oliver
South West Metro District
Education Services
Adelaide South Australia

An Australian case study

What have we learnt?

Lesley Oliver
South West Metro District
Education Services
Adelaide South Australia

Today's session

Discuss what we've learned from our experiences

Key principles

- **The context & its impact on RP**
- **The process of Introducing, embedding & Sustaining RP**
- **The multifaceted nature of RP in schools**
- **Research & Evaluation**

THE CONTEXT

Let's start with ourselves.

- **What does/did restorative practice have to offer you ?**

- **What void are/were you wanting restorative practice to fill?**

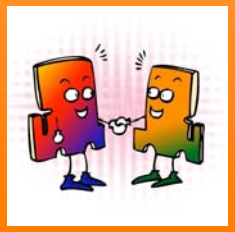
Terry O'Connell
Real Justice, Australia

Context +	Mechanism =	Outcomes
Features of participants, organisation, staffing, history, culture, beliefs, values, attitudes (etc)	The way in which new resources interact with different 'reasoning' to give changed decisions & choices	Different behaviour ⇨ different short term outcomes ⇨ different medium term outcomes ⇨ ...

Ray Pawson, Nick Tilley 1997, *Realistic Evaluation* Sage Publications Ltd

What outcomes are you looking for by implementing RP?

What are you hoping to achieve ?



What outcomes are we measuring?

- Less behaviour incidents
- Reduction in suspensions
- Better process regardless of outcomes
- Better learning outcomes
- Better reputation (better stories being told)
- Happier teachers/students
- Changed student/teacher attitudes
- Changed teacher practice
- Improvement in school culture

Research & Evaluation Questions asked by the researcher

- Are we evaluating behavioural changes or cultural change?
- What aspects of RP do we evaluate?
- Are we evaluating the implementation of RP (process) or the impact (outcomes) of RP?
- How do we research this?

"Impacts on Teacher & Student Practice in Three Primary Schools" September 2006

Researcher -Gill Westhorp

- ✓ **A qualitative and investigative approach.**
  - **Data Collection**
  - **Data Analysis**

What were the research outcomes?

Factors that supported changes

Research findings

- Context of perceived need
- The training & development process
- Discussions in staff meetings about ongoing practice
- Whole school approach
- Supportive leadership
- Immediate practice after training
- Explicit teaching of restorative practice & related progra to support the approach
- Staff commitment

Barriers to change

Research findings

- **Time**
- **Seeing it as not different from what we already do**
- **What to do when you don't get the outcomes you want**
- **Lack of follow through by leadership**
- **Perceptions of leadership not able to support it**
- **Competing priorities**
- **Resourcing**

Summary 1

Know yourself as part of the context

- How can you best contribute & influence?
- What are your challenges?

Be explicit about outcomes you are wanting from RP

- Behavioural change or cultural change?
- What aspects of change are you focusing on?

Know what you expect form the resources you provide

- How are they making a difference?

Consider research & evaluation

- To measure your outcomes
- To help inform your direction
- To assess how to best use your resources

Have a framework to help navigate your way

Introducing, Restorative Practice.

"If we have learned anything about large scale improvement in education since the 1980's, it is that reforms that are done to the system do not have the desired effects"

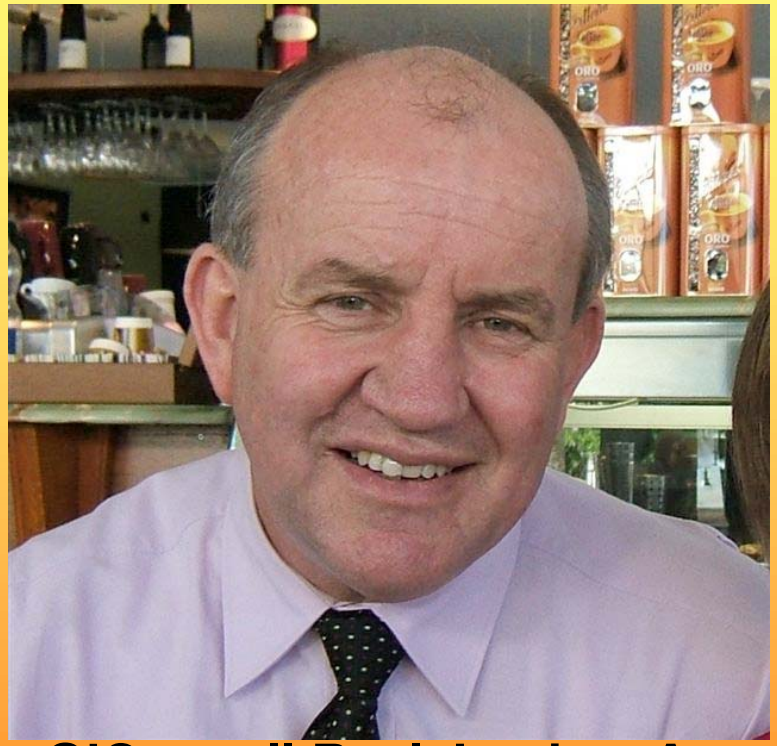
Ben Levin *Reform Without (Much) Rancour 2008*
www.decs.sa.gov.au/eastdistrict/files/links/Reform_Without_Much_Rancor.pdf

….how do we work WITH the system?

Enlist support

This is not a journey to go alone

Delivering the message



Terry O'Connell Real Justice Australia

Inspiring – experienced – humorous-committed

respectfully challenging

Where did we start?

- Trial
- Observations
- Commitment

What did the training/workshops look like?

An emotional connection is crucial

- **No one can persuade another to change. Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal…”**

Nathan S. Collier, ***Guarding the Gates of Change,*** Marilyn Ferguson
April 7, 2008 www.nscblog.com/?p=239

Summary 2

- **The change process requires an emotional connection for people to make different choices & change behaviour.**
- **The role of school leadership is critical in supporting staff & providing direction**
- **Teachers need to be facilitators & provide students with opportunities to develop responsibility for their behaviour & leaning**
- **Time for dialogue & reflection is critical for sharing of experiences , practice & beliefs & developing respectful challenge.**
- **Restorative Practice = Good Practice**

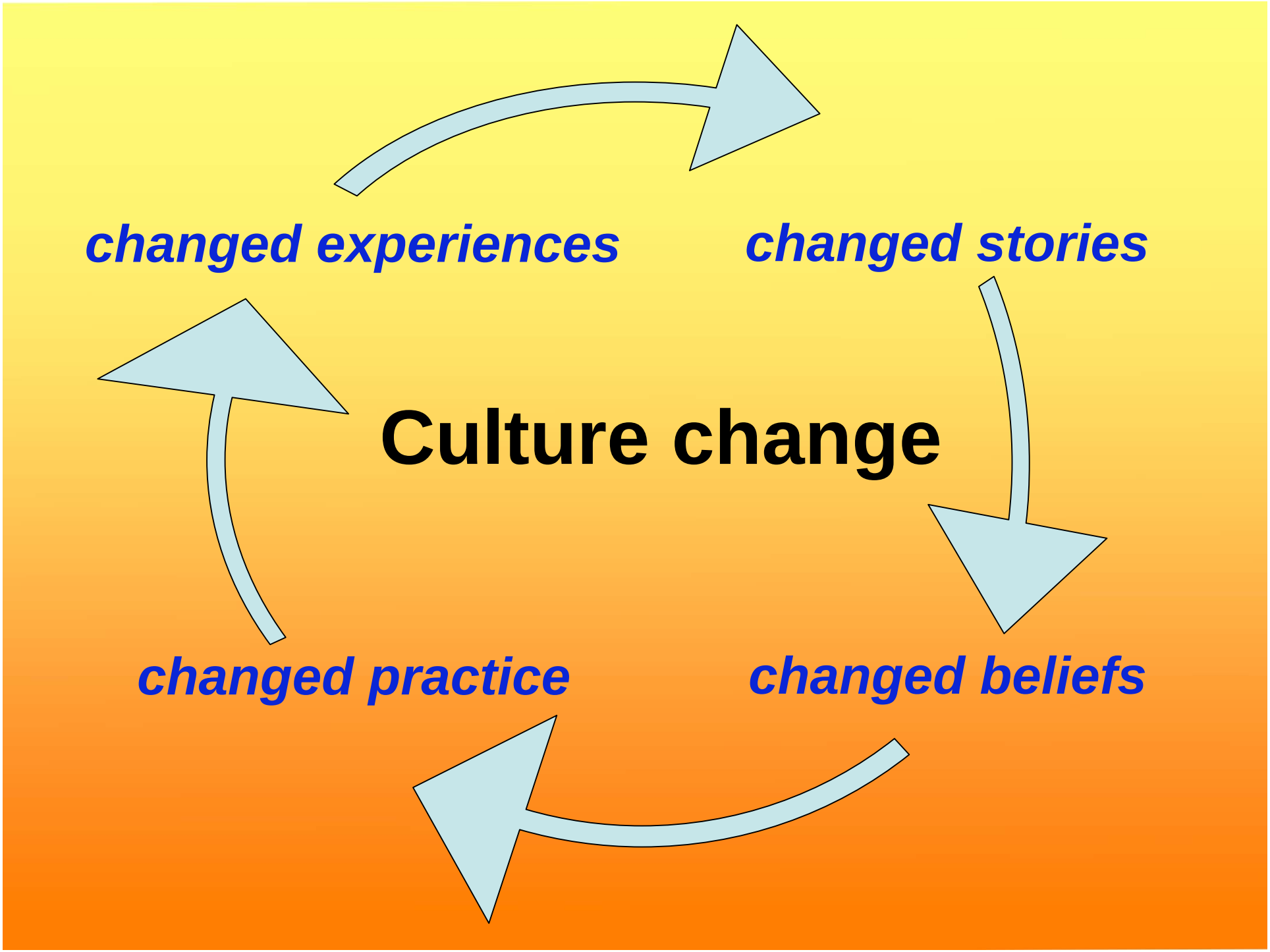
Restorative Practice - Good Practice Checklist

- ***Is My Practice?***
- **Respectful** (Distinguishing behaviour from the person)
- **Fair** (Engaging, with Explanations & clarify Expectations)
- **Restorative** by repairing harm and building relationships

- ***Does My Practice?***
- **Develop Empathy** (through reflection, insight & learning)
- **Enhance** responsibility and accountability
- **Promote** positive behavioural change

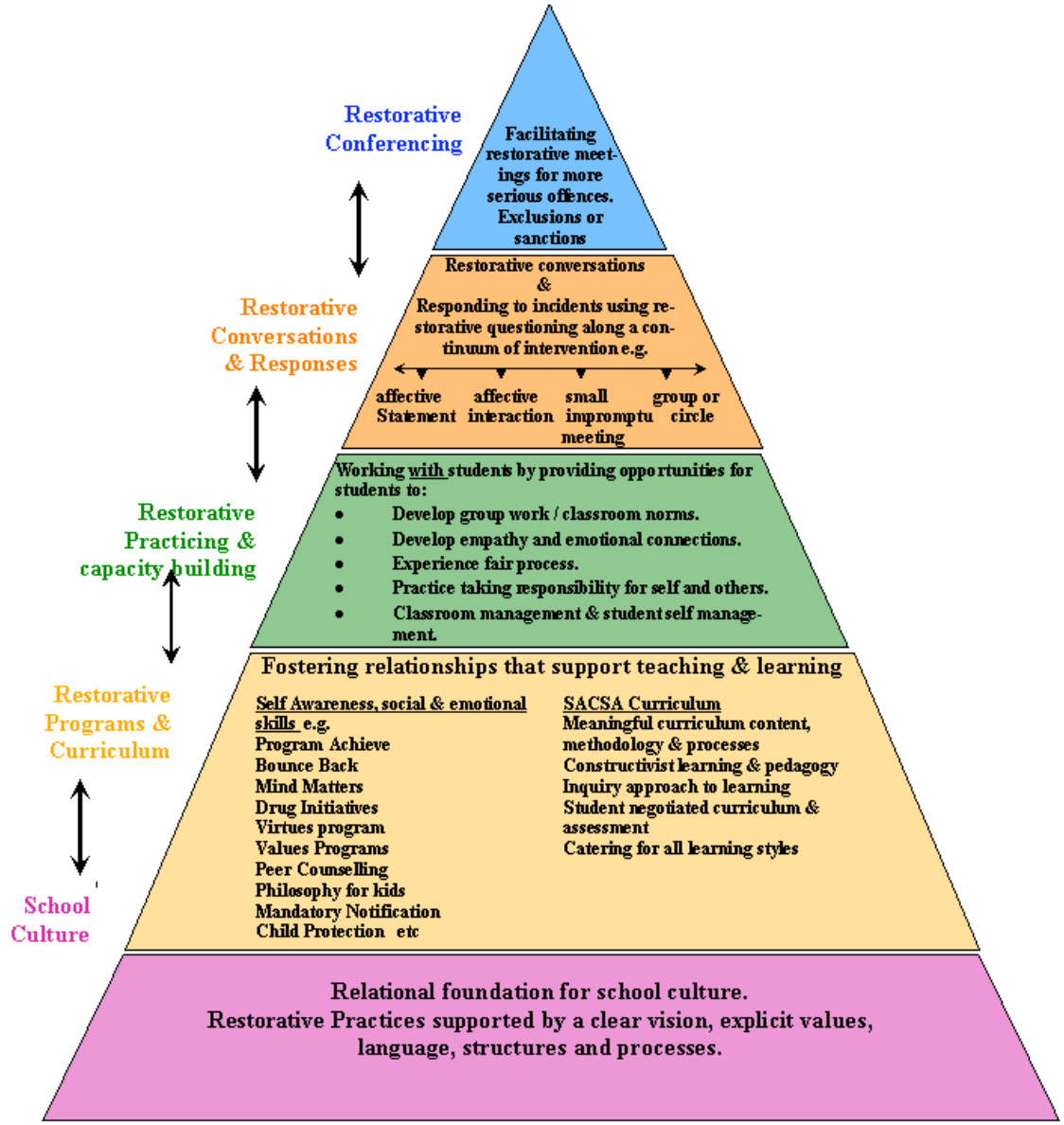
Embedding Restorative Practice

- **Engaging people in meaningful dialogue → different conversations**
- **Shared stories & experiences – everyone had a different story to tell**
- **"If you give people the opportunity to experience each other in different ways, they tell different stories"**
- **Documenting → clarifies the process – explicit**
- **"If you can't articulate it you can't sustain it"** Avis Glaze 2008 *Results without Rancour & Ranking:* Ontario Improvement Strategy
- **Publishing & promoting – affirms & connects**


changed experiences
changed stories
Culture change
changed practice
changed beliefs

How do we capture the multifaceted nature of RP in schools?

A relational foundation for school culture.



Lesley Oliver
Student Inclusion & well Being Coordinator
Wednesday 15th November 2006-7

Restorative Programs & Curriculum

Fostering relationships that support teaching & learning & develop a safe classroom community

Self Awareness, social & emotional skills e.g.

- Program Achieve
- Bounce Back
- Mind Matters
- Drug Initiatives
- Virtues program
- Values Programs
- Peer Counselling
- Philosophy for kids
- Mandatory notification
- Child Protection
- Tribes
- HIPP
- SRC etc

SACSA Curriculum

- Meaningful curriculum content, methodology & processes
- Constructivist learning & pedagogy
- Inquiry approach to learning
- Student negotiated curriculum & assessment
- Catering for all learning styles

Restorative Practicing & capacity building

Working with students by providing opportunities for students to: -

Develop classroom norms.

Develop social & emotional capacity

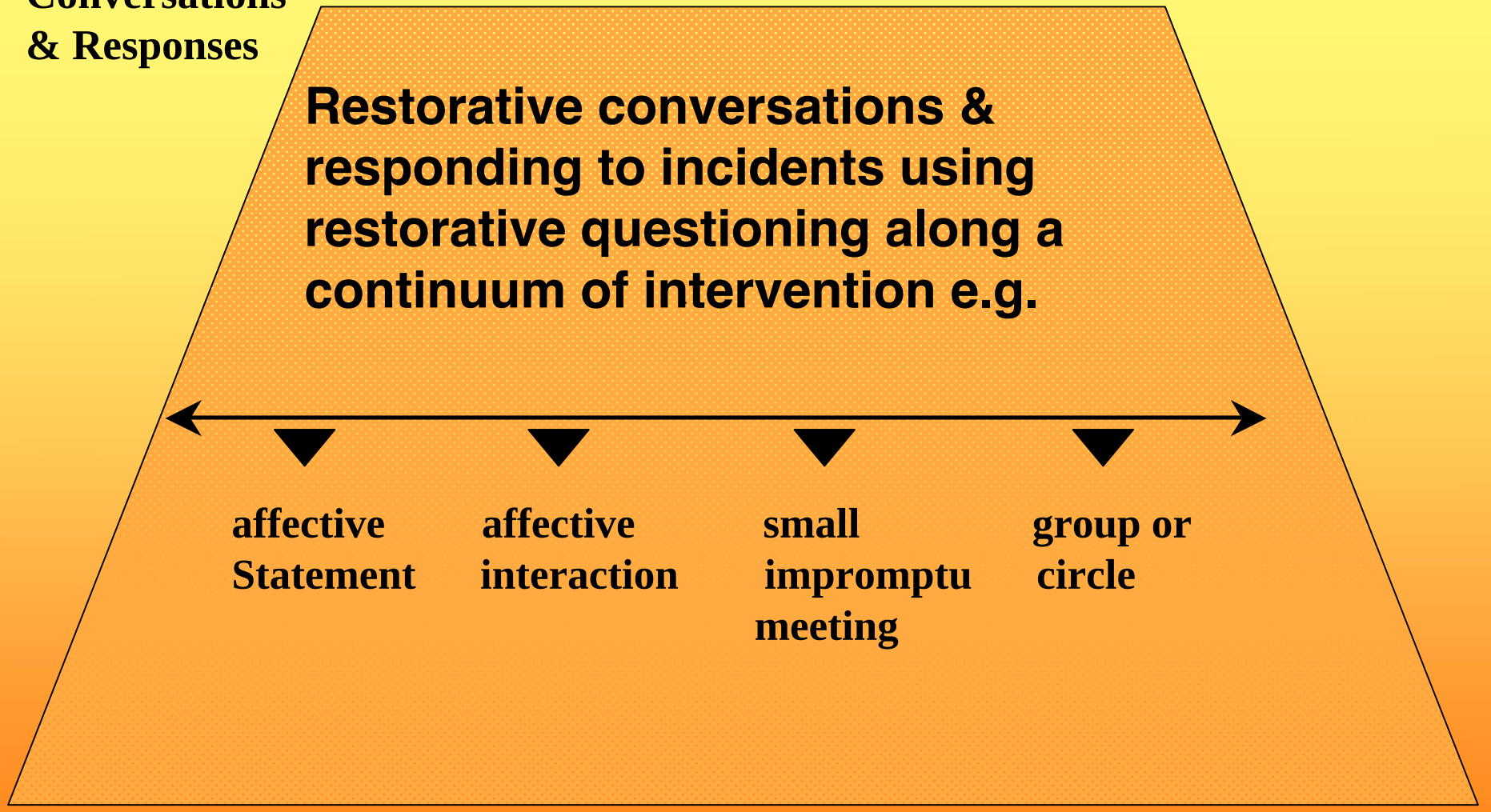
Empathy and emotional connections.

Experience fair process.

Practice taking responsibility for self and others.

Develop a classroom community & sense of belonging

Restorative Conversations & Responses



Sustaining RP

We'll help you if you do it the RP way

Summit - 8 schools making most progress

- Self Review process
- Shared experiences
- Integrated research
- Explored links to learning
- Documented & promoted stories & processes
- Presented RP at district conferences

School's self review process

	1 Undeveloped	2 Developing	3 Functioning	4 Strategic	5 Embedded
Restorative Conferencing					
Restorative Conversations and Responses					
Restorative Practicing and Capacity Building					
Restorative Programs and Curriculum					
School Culture					

Investigating Restorative Practice in five Schools:

"Whole School approaches, and Supportive leadership"

Researcher -Gill Westhorp

A qualitative and investigative approach.

Data Collection
Data Analysis
Report Style…

It’s not all smooth sailing

What conflicts, criticisms & tensions did you encounter along the way?

Conflicts & Tensions are a normal & healthy aspect of the journey if we use them as an opportunity for learning.

- **What relationships existed to restore people to?**
  - **Emotions - anger fear vulnerability**
  - **Facilitating a meeting where you were the victim**
  - **Default positions**
  - **RP at home, not out there, don't forget the family**

Summary 3

- Time for dialogue & reflection is critical for sharing of experiences , practice & beliefs & articulating good practice.
- Change the stories – change the culture
- Learning communities are instrumental in maintaining momentum
- Documenting stories helps clarify the process
- Promoting & affirming keeps the wheel turning
- Conflict & tensions are opportunities for learning.

Evaluation

- Decide whether you want to evaluate the implementation or impact of RP
- Decide what aspect of RP you wish to evaluate
- Decide how you will show the difference
- Decide on the methodology – qualitative or quantitative – depends on purpose

Employ an independent researcher

Thanks to Gill Westhorp

What's happening now?

- **Further Research "Reintegration after exclusion from the classroom – what works?"**
- **Circle work – building social & emotional capacity in the classroom**
- **Integration of RP into the curriculum**

What's been the most important learning on your journey?

Thank you

Contact details:
Oliver.lesley@saugov.sa.gov.au
www.decs.sa.gov.au/southwest