The Challenge of Embedding Restorative Practice at a School District Level

An Australian case study

Lesley Oliver
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Adelaide South Australia
An Australian case study

What have we learnt?

Lesley Oliver
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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
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Context +</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>= Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features of participants, organisation, staffing, history, culture, beliefs, values, attitudes (etc)</td>
<td>The way in which new resources interact with different ‘reasoning’ to give changed decisions &amp; choices</td>
<td>Different behaviour ⇒ different short term outcomes ⇒ different medium term outcomes ⇒ …</td>
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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 programs 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


….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
Culture change

changed experiences — changed stories

changed practice — changed beliefs
How do we capture the multifaceted nature of RP in schools?
A relational foundation for school culture.

Restorative Practices supported by a clear vision, explicit values, language, structures and processes.

Lesley Oliver
Student Inclusion & Wellbeing 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
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 & responding to incidents using restorative questioning along a continuum of intervention e.g.

- affective statement
- affective interaction
- small impromptu meeting
- group or circle
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

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<th>1 Undeveloped</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>3 Functioning</th>
<th>4 Strategic</th>
<th>5 Embedded</th>
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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
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