

## **Restorative Practice: Changing Implications In a School Setting.**

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### **Acknowledgements:**

Thank you to the Ngaere School Board of Trustees for approving this sabbatical and to: Mark Hill and Donna Bridgeman, the leadership team, and to all staff for supporting my leave.

I also appreciate the support I received from the wider teaching profession who were willing to share their professional knowledge and practices and to engage in professional dialogue around Restorative Practices.

Thank you to the wider educational, psychological and legal professionals who give their time and passion on a daily basis to ensure that restorative practices work in the best interests of victims and perpetrators.

Thank you Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Educational Institute for supporting the sabbatical leave process.

I cannot over emphasise the impact of the refreshment aspect of the sabbatical and the impact this has had on my passion and energy levels towards life, and education.

### **Activities**

- Restorative justice and practice readings and research.
- Draft a plan for introducing and implementing the use of restorative practices school-wide.
- Attended Restorative Practice New Zealand three day conference in Auckland, 2013.
- Attended 2 restorative practice workshops at New Plymouth Principals' Conference.
- Helped organise and attended Restorative Practice Cluster development with 5 local schools including 80 fellow teaching professionals.
- Discuss and debate with other professionals, behaviour management practices in their schools or institutions.
- Begin to link restorative practices with Kaimata School's charter values, vision statement and daily practice.
- Visited schools to observe and discuss behaviour management.
- Refreshed by visiting family and renovating a house.
- Moved Schools from Ngaere School where the focus was on RESPECT for: learning, all others, environment, property and yourself; to Kaimata School where we quickly developed the R.I.S.E. philosophy focussing on: respect, integrity, self-esteem and excellence.
- Joined and participated a Professional Learning Group where several schools were embedding restorative practices within their schools.
- Established a meaningful link between the School and the local marae Te Upoko o te Whenua.

## Purposes:

- Undertake reading and research into Restorative Justice and what it would mean on a daily basis in a school's behaviour management philosophy and practice.
- Challenge my traditional values around punishment and discipline.
- Investigate Restorative Justice Practices in a variety of schools that already have it as a focus.
- Develop and implement my findings into Kaimata School's behaviour management programme, vision, values, and charter.
- Investigate the link between positive behaviour management and student achievement.
- Should the research and actions support positive outcomes then investigate the possibility of training as a facilitator?

## Executive Summary

Having a traditional upbringing in the 1960's and 1970's where corporal punishment and punitive punishment was the norm, I have witnessed a change in philosophy and practice in New Zealand education where such discipline isn't only unacceptable, it is against the law within education institutions and indeed within the family house hold.

My personal challenge is to create a balance within our school where discipline is consistent, effective, respected, causes no harm, and builds relationships. When this is agreed through staff training and consultation; then direct and transparent links should be evident within Kaimata School's philosophy, and visible in our practice. A restorative practicing school should positively impact on the culture of our wider community; where relationships are not only valued, but where all members of the community have a shared and agreed vision towards problem solving, and how we treat each other.

Schools traditionally build their foundation on achievement: however successful schools, businesses and institutions actually have their foundation stones built on relationships.

"Restorative Practice is a philosophy, in action, that places the relationship at the heart of the educational experience." (Corrigan 2012)

Success is built on active listening, a connection with the agreed vision, and positive relationships which are valued for what their similarities and differences bring to their shared successes.

Therefore if we agree that relationships are the foundation then how can we use relationships and the communication between all participants to actively foster the Kaimata School's vision of **R.I.S.E.** How do we act and talk '**Respectfully**', act and show '**Integrity**', Build our own and others' '**Self –Esteem**' and use these to achieve '**Excellence**'?

It would not be argued that a School that has R.I.S.E. values in action and not just on paper, would have restorative values at the heart of daily interactions and conflict resolution.

## RATIONALE

Traditional punitive discipline focuses on punishment:

1. What rule has been broken?
2. Who is to blame?
3. What is the punishment?

Restorative discipline focusses on accountability, healing and needs:

1. Who has been affected?
2. How have they been affected?
3. How can it be put right?

In essence the emphasis moves away from a focus on punishment to a focus on people. (Jansen and Matla 2013)

“Offenders are unmasked as people and victims are empowered” (Fyfe 2013).

In a 2012 study of Restorative practices in New Zealand Schools Mark Corrigan of the New Zealand Ministry of Education revealed: that not only did schools who operate restorative practices have less misconduct, fewer stand downs and suspensions, and calmer school environments; significantly these sample schools also has a higher level of student achievement at NCEA level 2.

During the 2013 Restorative Practice Conference in Auckland the speaker, Nigel Fyfe from the Ministry of Justice( speaking on behalf of Chester Burrows), stated that that offenders who took part in restorative justice conferences re-offended at a rate 20% less than non- participants. There is such convincing evidence around the benefits of restorative practices in education, justice and indeed the business sector. It would also appear that marae justice and restorative justice are symbiotic in nature.

“Marae justice, involves calling a hui where the perpetrator and his whanau, the victim and his whanau meet to discuss the issue.” Taranaki Daily News, *Marae justice can work for communities*.pp8(09/09/2014)

In essence offenders need to face up to their offending with the victims and form mutually beneficial solutions that cause no harm and that have a future focus.

So how do we change or adapt a culture within a school? As a transformational leader I foster a change model that occurs with staff, students and the community; based on shared beliefs and a shared vision. Although the process is consultative it must be driven by passionate, well researched, and diligent leadership.

“...transformational processes will change mind sets, target values and build a culture which can truly support new strategies and organisational aspirations. However it can only be driven by passionate and persistent leadership at the top” (Blood and Thorsborne (2005)

So now that research supports the fact that schools facilitating a restorative culture are: happier, have a collective vision based on a transformational culture, are calmer, and have improved achievement levels; then it appears obvious that any change principal, supported by their community, would adopt this restorative philosophy.

If the research supports the “so what?” the challenge in 2014 is the “now what?” Having being impressed with the workshops presented by Jensen and Matla I attended at the 2013 New Plymouth Principals conference, our local cluster of schools engaged them for a teachers development day involving all teachers and support staff from our five local cluster schools (our community of schools). The intention was to educate ALL staff and attempt to create a wider community of restorative practice.

The features of the development day supported the research and gave the Inglewood cluster of schools the “how” on a daily basis.

Key features of daily restorative practice in schools include:

There is an element of connectivity missing in New Zealand society. Such is the emphasis that it may be found as the vision statement for the New Zealand Education Curriculum. “We want students who will be confident, **connected**, actively involved, and lifelong learners” (pp3 New Zealand Curriculum). Students who don’t feel connected to their learning will see less purpose in their learning and are more likely to behave off task or act inappropriately. Therefore connectivity and communication within an atmosphere of respect are essential.

How ‘we discipline’, becomes the foundation of restorative policy and practices. If we have shared and agreed standards of behaviour, and clear definitive ways to act, then restorative conversations are focused. We are focused on moving forward and not focused on whether or not the action was appropriate. Discipline should be a learning and positive process for all, not a harmful and punitive one for anyone. If a child can’t read....I teach. If a child can’t spell I teach. If a child can’t swim ...I teach. If a child can’t behave ....we punish” (Jansen and Matla. 2014)

“We need to be as purposeful in teaching young people how to be disciplined as we are in teaching them to read and write...”. Langley & Hansberry (2008)

“Human beings are happier more productive and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them” (Watchel 2012)

“Increasingly schools are finding restorative practices more effective in establishing long term lasting changes in relationships, more connecting of a school community, more involving and hearing of victims, and more enhancing of climates of care within schools as a whole” ( [www.restorativeschools.org.nz](http://www.restorativeschools.org.nz) Jansen and Matla 2013)

It appears that schools who engage in restorative philosophy and practice have a warmer tone, more caring and connected environment, higher relative achievement and a more positive involvement from communities. Hence the core role of achievement through active and uninterrupted teaching and learning is more easily achieved in restorative schools. As a principal this is a key statement towards the “why restorative practices at Kaimata School?” It is unconditional that school leaders would want this tone of care and achievement as the core foundation. Through our R.I.S.E values at Kaimata we have established a base line for learning and behaviour and the majority of students teachers and whanau live these values to a successful level. As we know the minority students, teachers, and whanau who don't live the values can through their actions, dominate our learning time, a teacher's teaching time, and a leader's leadership and management time. So it is what we do for our ten percent that allows the 90% to continue to learn and live in a positive, learning focussed environment.

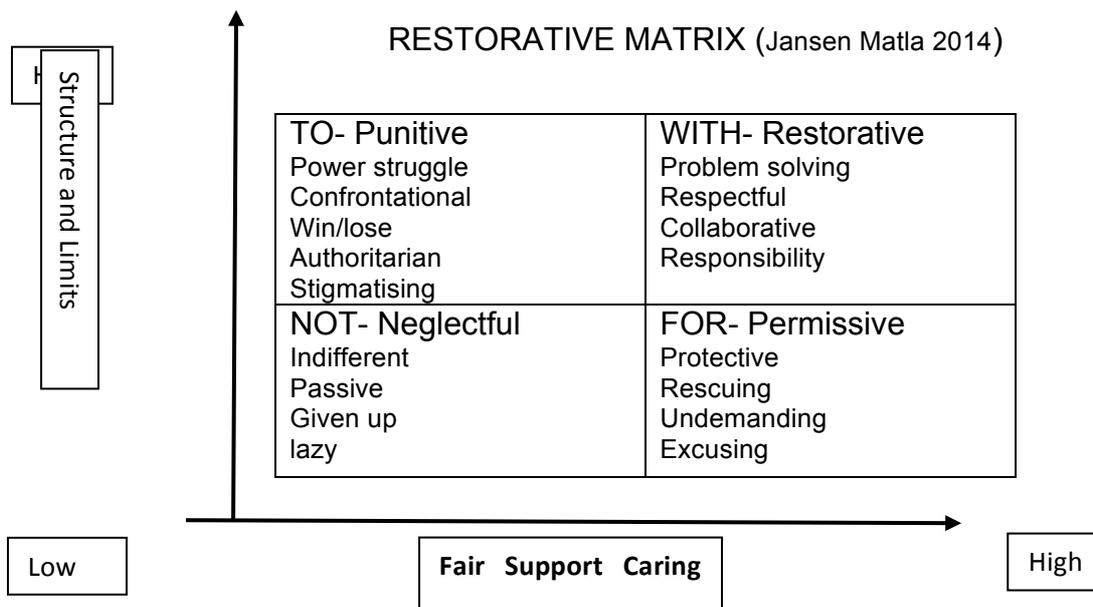
Restorative interviews must be informed by the notion that “the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem, and the focus is in the relationships that have been damaged” *Restorative Practices for Schools*. (2003).pp15

Through education of our adults and senior students we can have restorative conversations and tone at the source, i.e. in the classroom, playground, sports field, scout camp, church, and marae. Restorative conversations and practices must be the norm as any deviation from this can be destructive and damaging to the overall vision. To accept mediocrity is to expect even less.

The way we act is summarised by Matla and Jansen 2014 in the following restorative matrix.(Table 1).

Teachers as educators can fall into unproductive practices that are: too kind or soft, or too harsh or authoritarian or too lazy or neglectful. Working with students in a collaborative, respectful, responsible manner, to solve academic, behavioural and social problems is more productive and effective for all parties. Changing the hearts and minds of staff can be the greatest challenge for culture change.” Blood & Thorsborne (2005).

TABLE 1



In summary, being too permissive or neglectful as an educator can be just as harmful as being too punitive. Our objective is to work with people, problem solving in a respectful, collaborative way ensuring that all parties act responsibly. To do ‘no harm’ to anyone during a resolution conversation is the objective; neither, victim, or perpetrator should leave being harmed or feeling harmed.

Restorative principles, according to Howard Zher, involve an action of misconduct as a violation of people and relationships and these violations create obligations and liabilities. Restorative practice seeks to heal these violations and move forward.

At the point of conflict how we act is essential to maintaining the trust of victims, perpetrators and the wider school community; who we know are watching and judging. (Cronin-Lampe 2010 Explorations: An E Journal of Narrative Practice)

The initial restorative conversation is crucial to the success and ability to move forward. Successful conversations have four features with an appropriate acronym of W.A.R.M.

**What-** Tell the story. This has the assumption that all participants are ready to participate and the mediator knows what they are going to ask?

**Affect-** Explore the harm; who is affected and in what ways? This is a conversation not a monologue.

**Repair the harm-** what needs to be done to put things right? Calm conversations that set in place actions and strategies that repair and don’t cause more harm.

**Move forward-** How do we make sure this doesn’t happen again? These actions are followed up by a post conference phase where participants touch base to ensure agreed undertakings are followed up and further support and guidance are offered.

Matla and Jansen (2014).

## CONCLUSION

There is irrefutable evidence that restorative practices reduce crime, reduce the effects of crime, and significantly for me as an educator: reduce inappropriate behaviour at school, and reduce the impact of such behaviours. Most significantly for School Boards of Trustees, who are trusted, (through their principal and staff) to improve achievement; restorative schools have less misconduct, fewer stand downs and suspensions, and calmer school environments; and higher level of student achievement.

The restorative framework has been fully investigated by Kaimata School and we are now implementing the specifics into our daily discipline behaviours. Our discipline policy is being adjusted to encompass restorative practices and our charter values and vision link directly and seamlessly. Teachers have had some initial training and through our R.I.S.E philosophy and actions restorative approaches are now more common as a focus for discipline conversations and conferences.

Personally although growing up in a punitive system I charge myself to implement modern well considered restorative practices that cause no harm and build students who are: confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. Many of our community have lived through punitive discipline environments and hence Kaimata School, as part of a cluster of Inglewood Schools, will lead the way in changing attitudes and actions to ensure the village that raises the child has a consistent voice.

## **FUTURE ACTION**

Create a restorative environment with the Kaimata School environment and wider school community." The Kaimata village will raise our community restoratively"

The tone of our school will be judged on a daily basis. How we act with or without adult support. How we act with or without school leaders, how we act outside of school: at church, at scouts, at rugby, on the marae, at netball, at the supermarket... Although this change begins at school, it should be in partnership with home, and with the wider community. To act appropriately whilst being monitored is one thing, to act appropriately because our actions are within our core beliefs systems, is the true and actual panacea for success.

Restorative practices evolve within a school and community and are a journey that will never be completed. We at Kaimata School are at the beginning of this journey and we will know that we are being successful when restorative practices are not just what we are, but **who we are**. We will be judged on our R.I.S.E. values and they will be restorative as their foundation.

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