Growing a Learning Community through Restorative Practice

Proposal:
1. To attend a Restorative Practices conference.
2. To visit Melbourne schools that have successfully trialled then implemented the Restorative Practice model into the culture of their school.

Key questions:
1. What does the literature say about Restorative Practices in schools and how could this be applied to a school environment?

2. What are other schools already doing that is Restorative and how could this be included into relationship building practices?

3. Have Restorative Practices made a difference for the teachers and students of schools in Melbourne?

4. Is Restorative Practice a successful model?

Introduction
Restorative practices provide a collaborative and constructive approach. It focuses on the harm caused to a relationship and the subsequent repairing through ownership by the parties involved- victim and wrongdoer. It is a positive way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour and attitude that results in improved behaviour and higher levels of student engagement in learning, academic achievement and attendance. Restorative Practices is a (fair) process where the needs of the victim and wrongdoer are met.
   o An apology and commitment not to repeat the harm/hurt is given
   o It has a plan about how we will treat each other in the future
   o And if you are part of the problem (wrongdoer) then you are part of the solution (to repair and rebuild the hurt/harm caused to the relationship)

The corner stone to Restorative Practice is the rebuilding of positive relationships between all members of the learning community when things have gone wrong- students need to feel safe and connected (belonging) at school whether they are the victim or wrongdoer.

Outcome of the Research Project
The outcome of the sabbatical would be that Restorative Practices are seen as a model for formative (restorative) practice in relationship management and growing school culture. This would give emphasis to both *Teaching and Learning as inquiry* e.g.:
   o What happened as a result of my interaction/behaviour?
   o What are the implications for future interactions/behaviour?
   o Is there something I (teacher/student) need to change?
   o What are the steps I (teacher/student) will take to make these changes?
   o How can the class teacher help the student achieve these next steps?
This concept of inquiry is in alignment with the school curriculum statement (i.e. the NZC)?

Key concepts of Restorative Practices
   1. Misconduct is a violation of people and relationships
   2. Violations create obligations and liabilities
   3. Restorative practice seeks to heal and put things right

Restorative Practice therefore is collaborative, exploring the harm with victim and wrongdoer sorting out a genuine apology. It's about (gentle) conversations and a commitment to restoring positive relationships. It is re-integrative through planning a way forward with all parties. Its long term goal is to develop our young people to be active members of the community they learn, live and will ultimately work in.

Rethinking Behaviour Management: Restorative Practices in classrooms
The challenge we face as educators is to shift our thinking about the management of behaviour - from the most serious and challenging incidents that usually attract stand-down, suspension or exclusion, through to the management of minor incidents in classrooms and the playground- from a punitive to restorative process. The *Restorative* approach to behaviour management views misconduct as damage to people and relationships, rather than the traditional thinking around rule breaking. Restorative problem solving has a focus on repair. Wrongdoers are made accountable directly to those they have wronged, entering into dialogue which explores the context of the wrongdoing, what harm has been done, and therefore what needs to be done to make amends and make things right.

Traditional response		Restorative response
What happened? Who is to blame? What rule has been broken? What is the punishment?	To...	What happened? Who was involved? What harm (and to who) has been done? How can we make it right?
- adversial and retributive/punitive		- restitution and reparation

Conferencing which brings the wrongdoer/s together with the victim (includes all those affected by the incident- students, staff community members), to deal with the harm generated by an incident. Early evaluations of this approach in St Josephs School (and this is supported with work in Australian, New Zealand, British, Canadian and North American schools) have shown significant benefits in terms of building a positive school culture, diminished incident rates of inappropriate behaviour, development of thoughtfulness (empathy and understanding to the needs of others) and a reduction in stand-down and suspension rates. This is due to the fact that all parties have significant input into the process and decision-making.

Much of the daily business of the school in terms of behaviour management happens in classrooms, where low-level misbehaviour and rule breaking can also be resolved via these restorative processes (chats/conversations) making them ideal for classroom teachers.
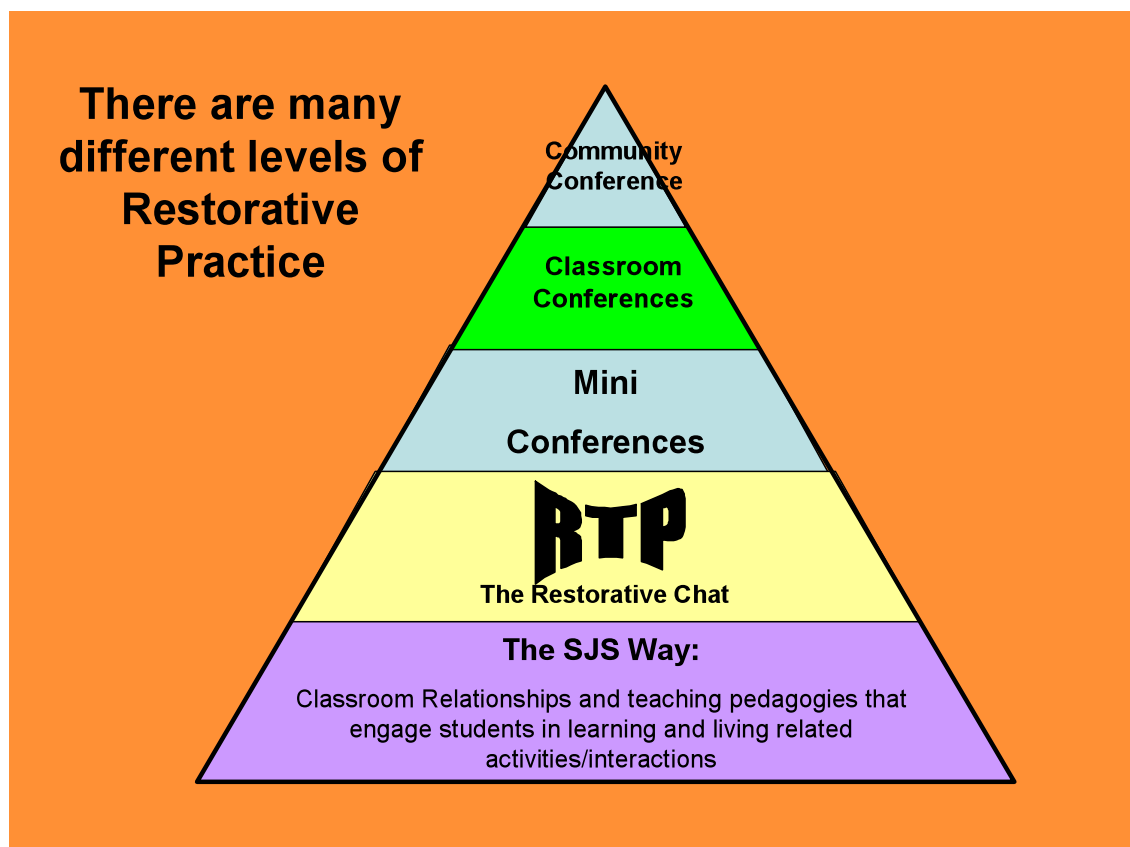
Rebuilding connections between our young people is a major purpose of this approach, leading to the conclusion that behaviour management might more accurately be defined as *relationship* management.

Restorative Practices (strategies) in the school environment
The highly practical strategies below can be used by teachers to support/enhance current classroom practices. These reinforce notions of compliance, justice and fairness and that give participation in and practice of restorative interventions with a focus on low to medium level misconduct to students. The language of restorative practice is also critical in applying the approach in classrooms, corridors and playgrounds.

1. Relationship management
   - Get this bit right and learning improves or conversely, inappropriate behaviour and disengagement from learning will decrease
   - Involves collaborative teaching and learning processes- meaningful learning, formative assessment practices, inquiry teaching **and** learning, effective teaching, developing a localised curriculum and a commitment to community engagement
   - Strong emphasis on *Positive support programmes* i.e. student council, leadership opportunities… so students are actively engaged/connected to the school they attend
   - Staff commitment to building positive relationships with students and role-modelling this with staff, students and parents
   - Building connectedness- kids need and want teachers to be part of their world
   - Building positive relationships with students i.e. affection, attention and acceptance. Refer attachment 1
   - Capturing the philosophies and practices behind *best evidence synthesis* i.e. Ka Hikitea strategy- *knowing our kids and them knowing us*

There are many different levels of Restorative Practice

- Community Conference
- Classroom Conferences
- Mini Conferences
- **RTP** The Restorative Chat
- **The SJS Way:** Classroom Relationships and teaching pedagogies that engage students in learning and living related activities/interactions

2. Restorative Conversations/chats
   - For low level class/playground disruption/difficulties
   - Used as a preventative action and early intervention
   - Models respectful dialogue and the language of restorative practices:
     What is happening?
     What were you thinking?
     Who do you think is being affected?
     How do you think they are being affected?
     What do you need to do to put it right?

3. RTP (Restorative Thinking Programme)
   o Manages disruptive behaviour in class/playground
   o Students rethink, plan and restore their working relationship with the teacher
   o Can be used with Restorative dialogue, traffic light system, thinking spot and reflection sheets
       What are you doing?
       What is the rule about that?
       How is it affecting (hurting, upsetting, distracting…) others?
       What is the best choice you can make now?
   o Can involve the use of a self-monitoring component (goal and self/peer monitoring sheet). Acts as a daily reminder to the agreed way forward and opportunity for the student to acknowledge their own improvement

4. Traffic Light strategy
   o Avoids negative dialogue- threats, frustrations…
   o For low-level continual disruptive behaviour
   o Wrongdoer has opportunity to reflect and correct behaviour
   o Precedes a restorative chat
   o Issue sorted and resolved together (learner and teacher)
       What was I doing?
       What should I have been doing?
       What am I going to do now?

5. Thinking spot (used with reflection sheets)
   o Designated area within classroom where students reflect upon their behaviour
   o Used to prepare for a restorative chat
   o Allows both teacher/student take-up time- to prepare for chat and cool down
   o Students accountable for behaviour
       What happened?
       Who have I hurt?
       How can I fix things?
       (or questions from bullet points 2, 3 and 4 above)
   o Can involve the use of a self-monitoring component (goal and self/peer monitoring sheet). Acts as a daily reminder to the agreed way forward and opportunity for the student to acknowledge their own improvement

6. Non-crisis circles or Circle time
   o Develops an awareness of others- build positive relationships within the group/class
   o Develops a sense of self and community- allows everyone to participate and contribute
   o Reinforces the concept of rights and responsibilities (for both my learning and behaviour- today's generation- the Gen Z kids- are in deficit/denial to this concept)
   o Use in conjunction with Talking/learning Buddies and a *Talking piece* (an ancient form of communication found throughout world traditions)
   o Use for learning and living (building social and emotional capital) experiences. *'Ok let's circle up. Today we are going to talk about what it means to be a great reader, writer, friend…* Refer to *TRIBES* resource
   o Circles in classrooms to develop classroom safety and community and to teach social/emotional well-being

7. Mini conference
   - Conflicts that involves several students and/or the teacher
   - Neutral facilitator leads process
   - Can be used for mentoring and peer support
   - Agreement reached is formalised and recorded then monitored
   - Use a self-monitoring component (goal and self/peer monitoring sheet). Acts as a daily reminder to the agreed way forward and opportunity for the student to acknowledge their own improvement

8. Class conferences
   - When whole class is being affected by hostility or conflict
   - Learning is being impeded and relationships damaged
   - Neutral facilitator leads process
   - Attended by teacher support personnel
   - Whole class involved,
   - Problem/s named, effects discussed- harm being caused, solutions agreed upon
   - Agreement reached is formalised and recorded then monitored
   - Very useful when there is high frequency of low level bullying and hurtful behaviour
   - Useful when the teacher is a victim of classroom behaviour
   - When programmes have been used but have not translated into a change of behaviour
   - At the beginning of the year to establish and acceptable baseline of behaviour- via non-crisis circle

9. Community Conferences
   - Used where the incident of harm/hurt is serious
   - Involves the whole community of people who are affected by the incident
   - May accompany or replace a stand down
   - The group decides what needs to happen to repair the harm and resolve the issue
   - Neutral facilitator leads process
   - Requires careful planning and preparation of all participants
   - Agreement recorded and monitored

10. Giving a genuine apology

An Apology should tell:
   - What you did.
   - What hurt or damage you caused by this action.
   - Your ownership of the action without making excuses. (Responsibility and recognition of role)
   - Words that show you feel sorry.
   - A promise that your action will not happen again.
   - Words that ask for forgiveness.
   - An offer of a way to make things right.

A good apology shows:
   - You felt really bad about what happened.
   - You understand how the other person feels.
   - That you are serious about not making the same mistake again.
   - That your apology often won't make what you did go away.

o That if there is some way you could fix what you did you would like to.

Our Journey- 2009 and beyond
Restorative practices are currently being framed into our school culture as the underlying philosophy and practice in school-wide Behaviour Management systems (G*rowing saints: our quest to be the best person I can be*) to:
i) manage day to day disruptions in the classroom
ii) deal with school-wide incidents such as bullying, verbal/physical attacks…
iii) resolve conflict between members of our learning community (students, staff and community)
iv) help reduce stand-downs or be a positive tool used as a support to this process either pre, during or post the stand-down
v) inform our social skills programme
vi) co-construct learning and social interaction in the classrooms

Benefits of Restorative Practices
i) develop democratic processes within our school i.e. kids have a say in repairing the hurt/harm
ii) restorative practices are non-confrontational (no growling or blame and shame tactics)
iii) students to be more aware of the effects of their behaviour on others and therefore make better choices
iv) there is a victim *voice*
v) the process empowers students to own their current and future behaviour
vi) resolution is discussed and agreed upon
vii) create a high level of internalised awareness of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour

Implementation (global)
o Evidence (serious incidents, number of stand-downs/suspensions, staff morale…) indicates current practice/philosophy re behaviour management needs modifying/adapting
o Identify willingness in school community
o Form a management/planning team
o Start small
o Seen as a support to student mentoring/coaching programmes
o Collaborate with support personnel i.e. RTLB… for training and conference facilitation
o Develop a model capable of assessment
o Requires commitment, composure, courage…
o Allow 2-3 years for implementation
o Commit to on-going professional learning for all staff
o Community engagement during the development and implementation phases

Implementation (localised)
Phase 1
Ensure the key messages of the Restorative Philosophy are understood and ready to be practised by both staff and students:
o We must *take responsibility* for the wrong things that we do
o We need to *think* about why we do wrong things when we do them
o We must *understand how other people* are affected by our wrongs
o We must *fix things up* after we have done wrong

- That staff support and commit to the belief that growing students to be active members of the community they live in, is about relationship management, not behaviour management

Phase 2
Introducing into classrooms:
- Develop with class values that reflect restorative practices it's more about the values and less about the rules. Values associated with Restorative Practices include: Respect, Participation, Honesty, Humility, Interconnectedness, Responsibility, Empowerment, Hope
- Ensure discussions *when things go wrong* focus on the best way to *fix* things
- Introduce the *restorative chat* as a way to solve problems

Phase 3
Introducing across school:
- Use *rethink, repair, reconnect* words in class and playground situations that involve minor hurt, harm or upset
- Use the traffic light strategy for minor or on-going misdemeanours in the classroom. The restorative chat is an essential part of this strategy
- Thinking spot strategy. Also used in combination with restorative chat
- Giving a genuine apology: The full context that repairs hurt/harm/upset
- Establish a hierarchy of classroom/playground behaviours. Developing a shared understanding of behaviours in terms of their seriousness along with appropriate decisions when managing students and to decide what type of restorative action to take

Phase 4
Future focus
- Information for Board/school community
- Regular access for staff to professional development
- Regular review of implementation process
- Reviewing and revising school documentation (i.e. BM plan) so they are restorative/relational in belief and practice. Emphasise to staff that practices are for positive behaviour support and not a replacement for discipline plan
- Establish a Reflection room/space for students to go to complete a reflection sheet and to prepare for a restorative chat
- Delete the detention practice from the schools psyche and practice. Replace with restorative conversations facilitated by the management team for major incidents. Note: a detention maybe an agreed outcome of the conversation
- Introduce Breakfast meetings with open invitation to staff (teaching and support) to discuss and plan next steps
- Review school values and define in terms of behaviours so kids know what they *look, sound and feel like*
- Modify/adapt Learning target stamp for social skills/goals. Connect with traffic light strategy also i.e. Think for pink, green for go…

Note: all phases require a serious commitment to professional learning conversations and training. Implementation phase require access to skilled personnel to facilitate mini, class for community conferences should the need arise

Six stages to a Restorative conversation/chat
- o Engagement(involvement): both the victim and wrongdoer commit to the process
- o Reflection: facilitator encourages thoughtfulness and empathy (creative solutions to the problem in resolving the issue)
- o Understanding: esp. by the wrongdoer to how other people have been affected by the behaviour
- o Acknowledgment: to the harm done and a genuine apology given
- o Agreement: making a plan to fix things
- o Follow-up: making sure the plan is working

Outcomes (anticipated)
- o Reduction of stand owns/exclusions
- o Student/teacher knowledge of effects of inappropriate and anti social behaviour
- o Strengthening of protective factors around students- builds emotional and social well-being/capital
- o Collaborative relationships between students, teachers, families and agencies
- o Improved school engagement i.e. academic achievement and attendance

Conclusion
The success of Restorative Practices in any school will be dependant on establishing a vision for the process, the professional support given to staff and commitment/courage of all the people of the institution to want a *better place.* Restorative Practice values relationships over rules and seeks to engage young people in taking responsibility for restoring relationship damage caused by hurt and harmful incidents.

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Attachment 1
Attention- showing interest in what students have done especially outside of school and in what they're about to do by giving positive feedback/affirmation
Affection- kids need to know they're okay, that it's okay to make mistakes and that you like them
Acceptance they need to feel they're part of the gang and decision making group, and that they are treated equitably and fairly.