

Primary Principals Sabbatical Leave Scheme

This report relates to the sabbatical granted to Mark Penman, Principal of Hamilton West School, by the Ministry of Education and The Hamilton West Board of Trustees.

Sabbatical Proposal: Supporting students, including Priority Learners, Maori and Pacifica through Restorative Practices.

Objectives

To undertake professional learning on the relationships between Restorative Practices and Maori traditions.

To undertake professional learning on the relationship between Restorative Practices and Pasifika traditions.

To evaluate how Restorative Practices support the Ministry of education Strategy 2013-2016: Ka Hikitia and the Ministry of Education Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017.

To use an Appreciative Inquiry approach to study the impact of Restorative Practices on schools and their stakeholders, including those described as Priority Learners.

Outcomes

The sabbatical would also assist the school in meeting Ministry of Education goals related to lifting the achievement of priority learners, through meeting the wellbeing needs of these students using a restorative approach.

The sabbatical findings would assist me as Principal to enhance my practice, and that of my colleagues, to better meet the needs of the students at Hamilton West School.

Definitions

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry through the positivist constructionist paradigm asserts “that individuals in relationships with one another can and will co-create an effective future when a positive inquiry into the heart and soul of a system, its greatest accomplishments and deepest values, generate new meaning and inspires new possibilities” (Finegold, Holland & Lingham, 2002, p.235).

Restorative Practices

The principles associated with the restorative justice approach are concerned with repairing the relationships that have been affected due to the actions of an individual.

Belinda Hopkins (2004) refers to restorative justice as finding a mutually acceptable way forward with all those that have been involved in the offence. Also there is the ethos surrounding the practice, the values and philosophy which gives central importance to building, maintaining and repairing.

Priority Learners

Priority Learners are groups of students who have been identified as historically not experiencing success in the New Zealand schooling system. These include many Maori and Pasifika learners, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with special education needs. (ERO - August 2012).

Professional Learning Inquiry - Four Provocative Statements

An Appreciative Inquiry (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) approach was used to examine the positive impacts of Restorative Practices in schools, including their impact on those defined as Priority Learners.

As a result of my study I contend that one of the important ways schools can improve student participation and achievement (especially for Priority Learners) is through enhancing relationships between stakeholders within a school community and that the use of established and embedded restorative approaches is one platform for achieving this.

On a number of occasions during my study it occurred to me that the success of restorative practices not only results from what we do when there are relationship issues, it's what we do to create a harmonious learning environment that effectively reduces the potential for the breakdown of relationships. The ethos surrounding the practice, the values and philosophy of being restorative gives central importance to building, maintaining and repairing relationships. It is vastly more than just repairing.

I believe that restorative practices, along with other support strategies, can assist our Priority Learners to be far more successful at school because of their ability to make students feel that their specific needs are identified and responded to in a coordinated and planned manner. If they are listened to and feel that they belong at our schools their learning will be impacted in a very positive way so they may take their place with confidence in our schooling system and wider society.

My Appreciative Inquiry

Discovery

1. The Road to Santiago

I began my journey of discovery by walking the French Pyrenees and across Spain. On The Road I spent many hours walking alone, the solitude was a time for reflection and celebration.

When walking alone, with the autumn sun on my back, I liked to think of the prayer the Rt Reverend Peter Rickman gave me on a scallop shell before I left for Spain:

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind always be at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

The rains fall soft upon your fields.

And until we meet again may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

This Irish prayer helped me come to terms with my mums passing 4 months prior to my adventure and my daughter's current journey with illness. It helped me to also come to an important personal decision.

The times walking with others was also an important aspect of contemplation, discussion and thought.

My personal discovery on the Camino centred on thinking when I was at my best managing the more difficult aspects of my work, three simple words kept coming back to me:

Calm - keeping calm during adversity

Considered - being considered in making decisions

Content - being content that the best has been done

I will try and bring these to the fore and encourage others to do the same to help on the days that don't go quite right. I / we are at our best when remaining calm, being considered in my / our response and being content that I / we were at our best in meeting the challenge. They will help with our restorative approach

2. Life at Hamilton West School

Restorative practices have become a critically important aspect of life at Hamilton West School. It has become the preferred approach when relationships are damaged through the action (behaviours) of others. The outcome of this has been a more harmonious school. Specific actions / developments that have supported this including:

- Restorative cards
- WITS
- Restorative Chats
- Restorative Conferences
- Professional Development and Learning - mentoring for teachers & students
- The development, communication and modelling of 5 core values that guide and shape our attitudes and behaviours - coupled with a move away from a rule-based system

3. Restorative Practice and Success for Maori at School

Academics such as Angus McFarlane and Mason Durie draw links between modern restorative approaches and ancient Maori traditions. Mcfarlane (2007) acknowledges that Maori traditions relate closely with restorative justice principles and traditional Maori disciplinary procedures are in tandem with the modern restorative approach.

Four aspects of pre-European Maori discipline are identified by Olsen, Maxwell, and Norris (cited in Macfarlane, 2007)

1. an emphasis on reaching consensus and involving the whole community
2. a desired outcome of reconciliation and a settlement acceptable to all
3. not to apportion blame, but examine the wider reason for the wrong
4. less concern over whether there has been a breach of the law and more concern with restoring harmony.

These principles align with restorative ways at Hamilton West School. The introduction of restorative practices has seen the reduction of stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions at Hamilton West School. (See below). Our suspensions have fallen. Historically the group highly over represented in our statistics has been Maori (60 percent), especially Maori males (53%). The reduction in suspensions is likely to be impacting positively on Maori students and their whanau, and those from low income families who in my view were also likely to be overrepresented in our statistics. Better relationships and participation in school is likely to be impacting positively on the learning of our Maori boys. The move to a restorative approach is assisting the school meet the vision of Ka Hikitia by “ensuring that all Māori students, their parents and their whānau participate in and contribute to an engaging and enjoyable educational journey” (p13).

	Total	Māori		NZE		Other		Exclusions
		MM	MF	NZEM	NZEF	M	F	
2006	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
2007	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
2008	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2009	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
2010	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
2011	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2012	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	
2013	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	2
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	15	8	1	5	1	0	0	6
% of total		53%	7%	33%	7%	0%	0%	

Pasifika

The use of restorative practices is also in tandem with the Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 (PEP) which is aimed at raising Pasifika learners’ participation, engagement and achievement from early learning through to tertiary education. Restorative practices certainly provide the opportunity for Pasifika students and their families to increase participation and engagement within a school community.

Values

As schools have moved to a restorative approach they have often moved away from a reliance on rules to the promotion of values and this has been our experience at Hamilton West School. The values that have been adopted (see below) support our restorative approach and are how we try and live at the school. They too are based on Maori traditions and assist the school to meet the intent of Ka Hikitia whereby Maori “have their identity, language and culture valued and included in teaching and learning in ways that support them to engage and achieve success” (p)

Ako: we learn together

Manaakitanga: we care for each other

Rangatiratanga: our best always

Kaitiakitanga: guardianship of the environment
Whanaungatanga: we respect each other

I mentioned earlier in this report that it occurred to me that the success of restorative practices not only results from what we do when relationships are strained, it's what we do to create a harmonious learning environment that effectively reduces the breakdown of relationships in the first place. At Hamilton West School the introduction of our values and the support they are given has in my mind made a significant positive impact on enhancing, and sustaining a harmonious learning environment (on most days - touch wood).

Dream - from thoughts, visits and dialogue

I did many miles to find and visit 11 schools (see below) using all sorts of public transport; planes, trains and buses. I always managed to find my way, sometimes with the help of a friendly stranger. Thanks to all those people who helped organise or host my visits. So many great people, many differences but many more things in common in our pursuit to do the best we can for the young people who attend our schools. Before I left I spent time with Clive Hamill of Melville High School to discuss restorative practices at the schools we lead.

Melville High School, Hamilton, NZ
Rosa Parks, San Francisco, USA
June Jordan High, San Francisco, USA
Queensbridge Primary, Hackney, London, England
Downs Park High School, Hackney, London, England
Monmouth Comprehensive, Monmouth, Wales
Carr Manor Comprehensive, Leeds, England
Tulliallan Primary, Cupar, Scotland
Bill Baxter High, Cupar, Scotland
Kilmaron Primary, Kincardine, Scotland
Friends School, Saffron Walden, England

Punitive to Restorative

The schools I visited had all bridged the divide from punitive to restorative over a period of time. Commonly the first part was getting staff support for a restorative approach, in most schools this meant all staff. Professional development and learning was critical to its successful implementation. Also there was agreement amongst my hosts that you could follow a model to some extent, but schools needed to adapt it to their own context. Each school that goes on a restorative journey must go about it in their own way but they can expect similar positive results. Through different paths the schools I visited had arrived at a place where they had stopped detentions, retired school rules, increased mentoring, grown student voice, and focused on the development of a values approach.

My experience in visiting schools in the USA and UK supports my notion that restorative practices support those described as Priority Learners, including those from low socio-economic backgrounds. For example at Carr Manor Secondary School in Leeds half the school population is included as being in the lowest 10 percent deprivation index across the UK. Four years ago there were around 120 exclusions and since the introduction of restorative practices this fell to 16 last year.

Support

At the beginning of this report I stated that the success of restorative practices hinges not only what happens when relationships falter but also what is done to build and maintain relationships. Thus I conclude what has also made the use of RJ successful at Hamilton West School is the support mechanisms that are created for students which has seen a more peaceful environment develop; these include:

Student Support Worker
Mentoring
ABA therapists
Stepping Stones
Student Voice

In the schools I visited in the UK the same applied, there were also excellent support systems in place to support and enhance the success of the restorative approach. One example of this that I found was at Queensbridge Primary School, in Hackney, London. After breaks they had staff going around and doing a “mop up session”. They were called sweepers and just checked around to see if there were any issues that needed sorting out as students were heading back to class. Thus taking the pressure of classroom teachers having to deal with playground issues when trying to get back to their class.

The Dream - what more can we do?

The ongoing success of any school initiative relies on it being kept close to heart, close to the chalk face and close to the mirror.

Hamilton West School looks after the wellbeing of its students particularly well but there is never room for complacency. We must continue to dream of what might be for our students and how we can help them be successful young people. Excellence is an elusive goal that needs to move and shift with the times.

The following are some suggestions resulting from my school visits, my adventures and thoughts in other places. We at Hamilton West may choose to have dialogue around these ideas in the interests of our students, particularly those who loosely fit into the term priority learners. It is important that my colleagues have input into any new initiatives we introduce to support students through restorative practices:

- Ongoing PDL for all staff in RPs, schools like HWS will usually have changes of staff, some may have no background in restorative practices so need to be inducted into it. Also not all teachers adopt restorative ways at the same rate so they need ongoing support in their implementation
- Better information for parents about restorative practices. I noted some schools in the UK were very good at informing parents about their restorative approach. This needs to be developed more at HWS.
- Evaluate the benefits of Quality Learning Circles for assisting with restorative practices in building, sustaining and repairing relationships. Should the use of Quality Learning Circles be used by all teachers?

- Would it be worthwhile developing some form of peer mediators, restorative reps/agents? At Carr Manor RP Reps were trained to talk restoratively to students who were off task in class. A great group to talk to, with some great thoughts about the positive impact of their work as RP Reps, for themselves and the school.
- When talking with the RP reps the teacher always asked one of the students to begin, they spoke and selected left or right around the circle. Excellent way to ensure all voices heard. I must do this circle technique more when meeting with students.
- From Downs Park Deputy Head, Frances Jesse - over a period of time if you are still angry you are feeding it, you are choosing to be in that space. It no longer relates to the other person/s involved. I think this is worth discussing at HWS.
- How can Buddy Classes be used to support our values and restorative practices?
- Sign language was used at Queensbridge School to promote restorative practices, would this work for us? Students were given a sign to remind them of living up to the school values.
- Using recent alumni to mentor some of our senior students, especially in supporting transition of our Year 8s to high school.
- Look at building our mentoring programme, make it specific to learning, especially reading and writing, could involve such things as excels rated learning, homework club, senior leaders mentoring identified students.
- Monmouth School really did have an inter agency approach to supporting their students, what can we do in this area?
- Friendship tokens used at Queensbridge, are we making the most of GOTCHAS?
- How do we keep restorative practices to the forefront of our practice? How do we keep embedding them?
- Do we need regular meetings, and meeting slots in support of students at risk in any aspect of their school life?
- Would doing mop up sessions / sweepers reduce bullying at the times when students report it happens most often and teachers don't listen - because they have to get to their classes?
- Buddy bench went through my mind again, other schools liked this idea.

- June Jordan High School used role play to promote positive behaviour, even used a mock fight to illustrate why this is such damaging behaviour. Our Student Counselors could help with this at assembly.
- There is certainly room to spend more time discussing with our students the concepts associated with restorative practices. When recently talking to a group of our senior students it became apparent our relationships could well be advanced if students had a better idea of the terminology around a restorative approach and what it looks like in real life. The Maori concepts that align with restorative practices may be of assistance here.
- A similar picture emerged during 2015 when it became clear that some of our parents weren't well versed in our restorative ways. There is work to do here.
- Develop the Tuakana Teina Concept - possibly through structured Buddy Classes - as part of structured Buddy Reading.
- Keep finding ways to help those in our community who struggle to cope financially, socially, emotionally, academically and physically. Our community continues to support us to do this with generosity that very few are aware of.

Design

After the dream of what might be, it is time to concentrate on the design aspect of the appreciative inquiry. A Wellbeing Plan 2016 has been designed using aspects of the the dream created on my sabbatical combining aspects of when the school is currently operating at its best. This design is shared as a separate document. One of the exciting aspects of this design is the use of our own expertise and support/input from a number of outside agencies - Tainui Iwi, YMCA and Central City IES CLuster.

Destiny

Our destiny is to increasingly share how Hamilton West School is at its best when meeting the wellbeing needs of the students who attend the school. At the end of 2016 collectively (BoT, Senior Leaders, Teachers & Parents) will reflect on the success of this plan and develop the next design phase.

Conclusion - what is happening in New Zealand?

Only this week we have heard our prison incarceration rates are increasing to record levels, " The prison muster rose to 9360 last month, contrary to long-term forecasts of a fall in prisoners, and is expected to rise " (Isaac Davidson - HB Today, 18th Feb 2016). Also we heard that in an OECD report just released, Low-Performing Students - Why They Fall Behind and How To Help Them Succeed, showed New Zealand children from poor families are over six times more likely to do badly at maths than children from well-off families. Among OECD countries, only Israel, Poland and Ireland performed worse.

Child poverty remains a huge problem as 1 in 4 children in New Zealand (UNESCO December 11 2015) live in poverty. Also wealth disparities continues to grow, “in the two decades from the mid-1980s on, the rich-poor divide widened faster in New Zealand than in any other developed country. Incomes for the richest New Zealanders have doubled, while those for the poorest have barely risen (and, after housing costs, have actually fallen over 30 years). That change has altered New Zealand society profoundly” (<http://www.inequality.org.nz/understand/>)

Ours schools are simply images of the societies within which we live, the aspects of New Zealand society mentioned above are clearly visible in our schools and impact upon them. The question that arises is - are schools doing their bit, especially given the societal factors mentioned?

In my view the answer is yes, even though in the OECD we spend one of the lowest amounts per primary school student (22nd out of 28). One of the reasons we are coping is through school based initiatives that seek to look after the wellbeing of our students. Restorative practices falls firmly into this category. These initiatives succeed to a large extent due to the professionalism of our New Zealand teachers. This professionalism was confirmed in another OECD report recently released. It is nice complete this appreciative inquiry on a positive note.

Final ramblings from The Road

The way forward is to seek ways to return to a more egalitarian society like that in which I grew up. If the wealth continues to be shared with fewer and fewer citizens it will inevitably even impact on the gatekeepers of the wealth, as those without find nefarious ways to extract their share of the crumbs.

When will we learn you can't always evaluate the positive impact of education in economic outputs. The social good of education needs to be viewed as part of the overall health of the society it serves. Neoliberal education policies of competition and a fanaticism with measured outcomes is not serving our children well.

When travelling around Europe one of the things that fascinated me was the shared responsibility and honesty of the people. On many occasions Jenny and I noticed this when travelling. Everyone paid for a ticket but few were ever checked. A man got on the water bus in Venice, he was beside himself because he didn't have time to buy a ticket. Overwhelmingly we got the feeling they all paid because of a sense of responsibility and honesty. They were living by the ideas associated with a restorative society.

Come on New Zealand we were once like this, you could go on holiday and not lock the door like we did in 1975. We couldn't find the key anyway. People had more time for each other and to build, maintain and restore relationships.

You expect people to do the right thing and they will.
You expect people to do the wrong thing and they will.

“It is the simple things in life that are most extraordinary: only wise men are able to understand them” Paulo Coelho

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