

Title/Focus

Investigating Restorative Justice models and their application for use in primary schools.

To develop and implement a model for Relationship Management at Opawa School based on Restorative Justice principles.

Key inquiry question:

How can the principles of restorative justice be applied in the primary school setting to enhance relationships and facilitate deeper personalized learning?

Questions

To what extent are schools incorporating restorative justice practices?

How are school communities benefiting from restorative justice?

What training do staff require?

What restorative justice models are schools using?

What is the best process for the establishment of restorative justice practices in a school?

How are schools assessing the impact of restorative justice on relationships and/or student achievement?

What curriculum links can be made with restorative justice practices in schools?

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Why Restorative Justice?

'There has been growing international disquiet about the way in which schools manage their internal discipline problems. In many areas this has resulted in an increase in suspensions and exclusions of students in schools to their detriment.

There has been a theme throughout western communities in the 1900's of "**disconnectedness**," that has produced a challenge for all of us, particularly those involved in justice systems to support new initiatives which emphasise the reverse of that and look for reconciliation and positive results.

It is critical that schools take a leading role in crime prevention and in the building of relationships and effective ways of managing behaviour so as to model for their young people a way to deal with these issues constructively in the future.

School conferencing has proven to be highly successful in achieving these purposes'.

Carruthers: D. J. (Chief District Court Judge NZ)

Which Model?

The term "restorative justice" encompasses a variety of programmes and practices at the core of which is a set of principles and guiding questions. Restorative justice provides an alternative philosophy for thinking about wrongdoing.

Two Different Views	
Criminal Justice	Restorative Justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is a violation of the law and the state. • Violation creates guilt. • Justice requires the state to determine blame (guilt) and impose pain (punishment). • Central focus: <i>offenders getting what they deserve.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is a violation of people and relationships. • Violations create obligations. • Justice involves victims, offenders, and community members in an effort to put things right. • Central focus: <i>victim needs and offender responsibility for repairing harm.</i>
Three Different Questions	
Criminal Justice	Restorative Justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What laws have been broken? • Who did it? • What do they deserve? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has been hurt? • What are their needs? • Whose obligations are these?
<i>Howard Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice.</i>	

Restorative Principles

- Crime is a violation of people and interpersonal relationships.
- Violations create obligations.
- The central obligation is to put right the wrongs.

Howard Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice.

While similar in basic outline, the models for restorative justice practices differ in the number and category of participants and, in some cases, the style of facilitation.

Findings from School Visits

Restorative practices have been widely used in New Zealand schools for many years, often without teachers having specific knowledge about restorative justice principles or practices. Schools have promoted values such as respect, responsibility, care and concern for others etc. which are all inherent in a restorative approach. Students have been encouraged to think for themselves and to make good choices about their behaviour.

A specific focus on restorative practice will enable further development of this 'best practice' relationship management through an educative model which focuses on people and encourages our students to be actively involved in the problem solving and decision making. Schools needn't embark on this journey alone. Findlayson Park School was involved with a cluster of South Auckland schools in implementing restorative practices.

Some schools have opted to begin with more low level restorative practices such as the restorative chat which may take place between a teacher and a student before implementing the high level ("full monty") formal conference. Restorative chat cards have been developed for use by teachers as prompts to guide their conversations. Pamphlets for parents/caregivers developed at Findlayson Park School have provided useful guidance to allow restorative conversations/approaches to spread into the wider community.

Circle Time is a tool/strategy which is widely used in New Zealand schools to develop improved relationships and follows restorative principles. Rosehill College has developed with its students a dvd which demonstrated the restorative approaches to school discipline including conferencing and circle time.

Student discipline data showed that restorative practice had resulted in fewer stand downs, suspensions and exclusions. This was also evidenced in the respectful relationships and the hospitable atmosphere experienced during the school visits.

Observations and Recommendations

It is important for each school to determine how they will implement restorative practices and there are a number of important considerations to be made. As with any change process a key factor will be staff development. The key to successful restorative outcomes lies with the ability of the facilitator to guide the participants through a truly restorative process. A solid understanding of restorative principles and how they are applied is needed for successful facilitation.

Key resources for use in schools are;

Moxon, J, Skudder, C and Peters, J. (2006) *Restorative Solutions for Schools*. Essential Resources Educational Publishers Limited.

Thorsborne, M., Vinegrad, D. (2004) *Restorative Practices in Classrooms: Rethinking Behaviour Management*. Inyahead Press.

Thorsborne, M., Vinegrad, D. (2002) *Restorative Practices in Schools: Rethinking Behaviour Management*. Inyahead Press.

Zehr, H. (2002) *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Good Books.

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The resources above provide excellent support for schools wishing to develop restorative practices. They contain useful resources, checklists for implementing restorative practices, planning templates and recommended readings.

References

- Alexander, M. (2004) *Justice With Both Eyes Open*. Hazard Press Ltd. 178-192, 204-206
- Charlton, T., David, K. (1993) *Managing Misbehaviour In Schools*. Routledge.
- Cornwell, D. (2006) *Criminal Punishment and Restorative Justice*. Waterside Press.
- Gale, F., Naffine, N., Wundersitz, J. *Juvenile Justice, Debating The Issues*. Allen & Unwin. 1 (1) 17
- MacRae, A., Zehr, H. (2004) *The Little Book of Family Group Conferences New Zealand Style*. Good Books.
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Websites

- www.thorsborne.com.au
- www.restorativepractices.org
- [www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative Approaches and Practices.htm](http://www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Approaches_and_Practices.htm)
- www.inyahead.com.au