



RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sabbatical Report Term 3, 2014

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RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

SABBATICAL

Background and Acknowledgements

I came to Tawhiti School as Deputy Principal in 1994, and in May 1996 I was appointed Principal.

By 2014 I had been leading Tawhiti School for 18 years. Sarah my Deputy Principal was returning fresh from a year on parental leave. I felt the time was right to apply for a sabbatical.

The opportunity to be able to take time out and look in depth at restorative practice as well as enjoying some time for relaxation has proved invaluable.

I now return refreshed, invigorated and more knowledgeable having had the opportunity to study my chosen area in depth.

I would like firstly to thank the NEITA foundation (National Excellence in Teaching Awards). In 2011 I was nominated by the Tawhiti community for a leadership award. For this nomination to proceed I had to complete a self-portrait. As a requirement of the nomination I chose to write a paper on Distributive Leadership which is one of my biggest passions, 'growing leaders'. This resulted in my receiving a Regional Excellence in Educational Leadership Award.

In May 2012, a total of 20 regional award participants being, 12 ASG Excellence in Teaching and 8 Cognition Education Excellence in Leadership recipients travelled to Wellington where our awards were presented by the Minister of Education, Hon Hekia Parata.

Following this presentation all regional award participants were required to deliver their paper to a panel of judges who chose 5 for a national excellence in Educational Leadership Award.

The following November a community assembly was organised which was a total surprise to me. Our school hall was full of our Tawhiti community, past and present teachers, students, parents and other family members. I had been taken out for lunch by a fellow colleague and on arriving back I found the streets lined with cars and waiting for me at our hall entrance were two members of our Kapahaka group. I was led into the assembly to a powhiri, a school community welcome. And to say that this was one of the most humbling moments I have ever experienced is downplaying the moment.

The award was presented by Cognition Education and a Ministry of Education representative. I was given a beautiful crystal apple, plate and a professional development grant to assist me to further study, reflect, observe and develop in an area of my choice. I chose a practice I believe strongly in- Restorative Practice in schools.

I am indebted to all the professionals that have helped me in my chosen area of professional development. These individuals have each played a part in assisting me to establish and develop restorative practice in Tawhiti School.

In particular Marg Thorsborne, whose knowledge, skills and total passion for restorative practice has motivated and inspired me.

Marg has a long history in education, guidance and counselling. Her passion while employed in education has always been to find better ways to build and rebuild relationships between teachers, students and other members of the school community, to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Marg is now a private consultant. She continues to work in schools as well as private and public sector workplaces.

Mark Corrigan, who invited me to attend some of Marg's workshops as well as other workshops associated with restorative practices.

Greg and Rich (Greg Jansen, Richard Matia) Consultants (restorativeschools.org.nz) who have been using restorative approaches for a number of years in a variety of contexts, working with children and young people and staff groups from both inside and beyond the education sector. They collectively bring over 40 years of teaching, training and instructional experience to the field and are extremely passionate about this work.

We have been lucky enough to attend some of their workshops and this year a teacher only day was held where Greg and Rich led professional development for all our staff in 'Circle Time', a restorative practice that is now embedded in our school culture. This is a practice that I will explain further on in this report.

Chris Hilford, Hawera High School Guidance Councillor. It was through Chris that I was first introduced to restorative practices and I am indebted to her for encouraging me to take this journey.

My thanks also go to the Board of Trustees of Tawhiti Primary School for supporting my application for sabbatical leave, the Ministry of Education and the NZEI for making this opportunity available in the Primary Principals Collective Agreement.

Thanks are also due to the Tawhiti Teaching Team, all of my staff who have supported and assisted Sarah to ensure that all children at Tawhiti School continued to receive a very high standard of education in my absence.

Most importantly I need to extend my thanks and gratitude to Sarah Johnston, my exceptional Deputy Principal, who has been a very capable teaching and learning leader and manager of Tawhiti School in my absence, as without her support and willingness to take on the role of Acting Principal I would not have been able to undertake this opportunity.

Executive Summary

- Restorative Practices (R.P.) should be the practice adopted by all schools. Retributive Practice should never be a practice that is used in schools.
- Emotional Literacy needs to be researched and understood by all teaching personnel.
- Changes to behaviour happens when those in authority do things WITH rather than TO them or FOR them.
TO = Punitive
NOT= Neglectful
WITH =Restorative
FOR = Permissive
- Restorative Practices means rethinking how behaviour management works in a school.

Purpose (My sabbatical proposal)

The purpose of my sabbatical is to use the time available to support and develop the restorative justice and behavioural management journey that I have begun to take our school on. Last year Tawhiti was accepted onto the Ministry of Educations 'Positive Behaviour for Learning' contract.

This contract assists, complements and adds value to our restorative justice and behaviour management journey practices. I required the time that a sabbatical would provide, to allow me to research, consult and organise to make arrangements to visit schools also undertaking this journey. Sharing the knowledge and skills gained is also a key purpose of the sabbatical and I will complete a written report at the completion of the period.

This reports outlines my experiences and findings. My goal is to determine how our restorative justice and behavioural management practices at the primary school level can lead to a seamless process that students will experience while at the secondary level.

Tawhiti students leave our school being well versed in the 'restorative way'. They then attend their local Hawera Intermediate and then Hawera High School.

When reaching Hawera High School they will know and understand that restorative dialogue is the way disputes are managed. If the practices they experience and the management of their behavioural issues are familiar, the transition from primary to secondary school will likely be more successful.

The intended outcome being that if we begin to teach restorative practices to our 5 year olds by the time they are aged 13 years and are attending secondary school these practices will be so embedded as a part of the school cultures that behavioural issues will be minimised.

The sabbatical has also allowed me to spend valuable time with Marg Thorsborne looking at some of the schools that she has worked with.

Background

Why restorative practice? In a school we know when kids misbehave there has to be consequences? We know that *Johnny* started the trouble. He always is the instigator. He needs to be punished. We don't need to find out why it happened we just know!

It is the above practice and teacher talk that led me to ask some questions. What are we doing to our children? Are we really listening to what they are saying? Probably not! Do these children have a chance, or are they labelled from a very young age? Sometimes this occurs because of just one incident at maybe even 5 years of age. Is this the start of their school journey, one failure, one incident where the right choice was not made and their future is affected? I know the above may be exaggerated and probably not just one incident but I made the statement to help form the big picture. Are our children being treated fairly? Are we backing them against the wall? Not all children are mathematicians or literacy experts, and if they are not, what do we do? We teach them. We give them strategies to achieve, to feel success. What do we do if children misbehave? Do we teach them how to behave or do we PUNISH? This is a question all schools need to ask of themselves.

All these questions led me to reflect on the way 'Education the Tawhiti Way' was working. Our vision is 'A Caring Place for Life long Learning'. Do we really have a 'Caring Place for Life Long Learning'? Do we live and breathe our vision? Would student voice reinforce our vision? I began to have some questions I needed to answer.

I had heard about restorative practices but did not know how this worked in schools. After 2 years of pressuring Ministry of Education personnel I finally got to attend a two day workshop with Marg Thorsborne on restorative practices. This workshop did not just focus on Restorative Practices (R.P) in schools but it did give me a feeling of what it could mean if a school went on this journey.

Marg was a very impressive facilitator. She was passionate about R.P. Her message was clear and precise. I was sold. This is the journey I wanted to be on.

This raised a lot of questions, What needed to be my first step? I had to sell this to my team. How was I going to do this?

Well, I had just spent two days hearing from the best so my first step was easy. I needed to get Marg to our school to facilitate a workshop for the team.

Marg resides in Australia and I thought this may have posed a problem but no matter what the cost it would be worth it.

I had the approval of my board to arrange a visit from Marg. Fortunately I was able to fit in with another school in New Zealand so the cost was less than what I expected. A two day training workshop was organised in August 2011. I organised two teacher only days (Friday, Saturday). The teacher only days included all support staff (9 teacher aides , my office manager and ICT tutor, the Board of Trustees, my PTA (parent teacher association).

As a result of the two day workshop everyone was 'on board'. And so our RP journey began.

Consequently, when the opportunity came to apply for a sabbatical, R.P. in schools was the context that I wanted to spend time researching and studying. We had already come a long way in introducing this into our school. I now wanted to visit other RP schools and also have time to research practices that we could put into Education the Tawhiti Way.

I took a step back in time to reflect on what was happening at Tawhiti School before our journey.

Relationships have always played a huge role in the development of our school culture. It has always been extremely important for staff to form healthy relationships with each other and for staff to treat our children with the respect and caring that they all deserve. It was also important that our parent/ caregiver community had a voice. We have their children in our care for at least 6 hours a day; 30 hours week; 1200 hours year! It is important that they know their children are in a safe environment and that we have their best interests at heart.

Looking at the above, and knowing this was in place before taking on restorative practices you might ask, well if this was happening why do we need to look at restorative practice?

Healthy relationships were present, but staff were all guilty of generally dealing with behaviour problems in a retributive way.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retributive_justice

Retributive justice is a theory of justice that considers punishment.....Wrong doing has happened, we need to blame, and then to punish.

We were guilty of not always listening to the full story and thus delivering retributive justice. For example, a child who had been physically abused by another (punched or kicked). The child that had inflicted this hurt needs to be punished; parents rung, removal from playground for a period of time, a behaviour contract put in place. We did not hear the full story of how the wrongdoer had been verbally abused by the victim on a daily basis. Despite the wrongdoer constantly asking the victim to stop calling him names it still continued. The wrongdoer couldn't take it anymore so what did he do? He lashed out and physically attacked the victim. Had we taken the time for a restorative conversation we would of found this out.

We needed to make sure that this practice did not continue. Student voice was critical to ensure that any misdemeanour would be dealt with in a restorative way. If we had looked at the above example in a restorative way we would find instead of a wrongdoer and victim we had two wrong doers and two victims.

I had also been delivering a 'No Put Down Programme' to all classes at Tawhiti since 1994. After taking on position of Principal, due to the demands of the role, events, meetings etc I found I was not able to deliver this programme on a regular basis. This was a concern for me. We needed to have restorative practices embedded in or school culture and it needed to be embedded in the whole team.

Methodology

I engaged in professional reading on restorative practices on the internet as well as the resources listed in this report. A number of schools were visited in Australia. These were restorative schools that Marg Thorsborne had worked with.

Findings

Restorative approaches in schools

*Research tells us restorative practices in schools reduces misbehaviour and bullying and improves the overall climate for learning. People are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things **with** them, rather than **to** them or **for** them.*

Restorative approaches in schools are being sought as alternatives to more punitive disciplinary systems and procedures where often there have been little or no links between wrongdoers and those they have harmed, nor any real connections between the punishment and the actual offence.

Previous measures are also often failing to meet the relational needs of teaching and learning in 21st century schools. Increasingly schools are finding restorative approaches more effective in establishing long term lasting changes in relationships, more connecting of the members of a school community, more involving and hearing of victims, and more enhancing of climates of care within schools as a whole.

Punitive verses Restorative Responses

<u>Punitive Responses</u> Focus on punishment	<u>Restorative Responses</u> Focus on accountability, healing & needs
1. What rule has been broken?	1. What happened?
2. Who is to blame?	2. Who has been affected? How?
3. What is the punishment going to be?	3. What needs to be done to put things right?
	4. What do we need to do to move forward?

Jansen / Matla adapted Zehr

We need to take note of this research as bullying in school such as stand downs and suspensions are still constantly happening. It is the above that led to the following practices being embedded in our culture.

Firstly we began by embedding the 'Restorative Chat'.
At Tawhiti we now call these a W.A.R.M. conversation;

- W **What** happened? Tell the story
- A **Affect**. Explore the harm-who do you think has been affected? In what ways?
- R **Repair**. How are we going to repair what has happened?
- M **Move forward**. How can we make sure this does not happen again?
(monitoring)

The last step has to be followed up not once but often to ensure that the repair has happened.

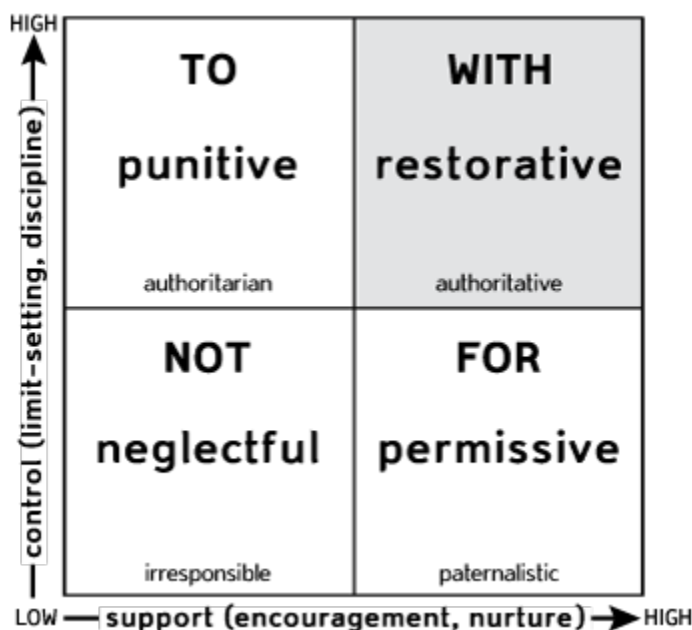
Monitoring is an essential component of the W.A.R.M. conversation. Too often this is the step that is easily forgotten as experience tells us that if the W.A.R.M conversation is not successful it is usually due to there being no ongoing monitoring.

When looking at punitive measures compared to restorative measures it is important to consider the Social Discipline Window.

This window is an excellent tool to use when reflecting on your own practice. It identifies what is happening in your school and can also be an excellent tool to use as a discussion point for a parent / caregiver meeting.

RESTORATIVE MATRIX

Social Discipline Window



- TO /PUNITIVE confrontation, win/lose, authoritarian, stigmatising
- NOT / NEGLECTFUL indifferent, unsafe, lazy, given up
- WITH/ RESTORATIVE problem solving, respectful, collaborative, responsibility
- FOR/ PERMISSIVE protective, rescuing, undemanding, excusing

Again:

The fundamental hypotheses of restorative practices is disarmingly simple: that 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)

Restorative Practices means rethinking how behaviour management works in a school.

A teacher's response to problem behaviour in a school is usually a reflection of school policy as well as his/her own personal beliefs and skills about how best to challenge and change behaviour.

Key questions to consider when reviewing your behaviour policy:

- What do we believe our job is?
- What are our core values and beliefs about relationships and behaviour in our school?
- What is the purpose of our discipline system? What outcomes does it seek to achieve?
- Where do we stand on issues of justice and fairness?
- How important to us is the development of social and emotional competencies?
- Do our daily practices reflect our beliefs and values?
- How do we articulate these values and beliefs in concrete and practical ways to our students, teachers and community?
- In what way do we evaluate our practices and measure our performance?

As well as the W.A.R.M. conversation, classroom conferences and community conference are components of practices that a restorative school undertakes.

(a) Classroom conference:

This conference is designed to address the harm caused by one or more wrongdoers whose behaviour has been seriously inappropriate and affected a large number of classmates, but in your opinion does not require participation of parents. Preparation is critical for the success of this conference

(b) Community conference:

Effective to use when dealing with serious cases of bullying, assaults, abusive behaviour towards teachers, theft, vandalism, & other serious incidents of harm. This conference is a process which brings together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the wrongdoer & those harmed along with their families, & appropriate school personnel. The purpose is to explore the harm done to all those affected; decide what needs to be done to repair that harm & how to minimise the chance of it happening.

Again preparation is critical.

(Restorative Practices in Classrooms: Rethinking Behaviour Management – Margaret Thorsborne and David Vinegrad)

(Restorative Practices and Bullying : Re thinking Behaviour Management- Margaret Thorsborne and David Vinegrad)

The above resources are essential when having a class, group or community conference. These resources outline the preparation needed before the conference as well as giving you the exact script you need to follow when leading the conference.

When looking at restorative practices we need to have also researched Emotional Literacy.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY is the ability to recognize, understand and appropriately express our emotions. Just as verbal literacy is the basic building-block for reading and writing, emotional literacy is the basis for perceiving and communicating emotions. Becoming emotionally literate is learning the alphabet, grammar and vocabulary of our emotional lives.

Emotions are an integral part of human nature. Through emotions we respond to life in many different ways -- with anger, happiness, fear, love and loneliness. Emotions influence our thoughts and actions; they inspire our needs; they affect our bodies and impact on our relationships.

Many of the problems in modern society are due, at least in part, to people being unable to understand and appropriately express emotion. Emotional Literacy is a preventive tool, which properly understood, can help solve many social ills -- violence, illness, drug abuse, dysfunctional relationships, and global societal conflicts.

On the other hand, people who deal with emotions in a positive way find tremendous benefit. Emotional Literacy can contribute to health, to positive relationships, to success, and to quality of life.

Emotional Literacy is a profound and beautiful language available to everyone. It can be implemented rapidly, safely, and with lasting effect. Learning how to become emotionally literate is one of the best investments that human beings can make for themselves, their children, and the future.

(ref Campaign for Emotional Literacy, San Mateo, California)



Maurice Elias: *When kids enter schools every day, they put many things in their lockers. But one thing they do not put in there are their emotions. They carry their emotions around all day, to every classroom, in every hallway, on the staircases, and on the bus. For some kids, this is a very heavy burden. When schools do not recognize this and act as if students are unburdened, we get the curriculum gap: what the kids get is far different from what teachers think they have delivered.*

Not only that, if kids do not have the skills to understand what they are feeling and how to properly label it, and how to regulate their strong feelings when necessary, they will not be successful in the classroom. From the earliest grades, children's academic and life trajectory is affected by their ability to pick up emotional nuance. Stories cannot be properly appreciated unless characters' feelings are well understood... from Dr. Seuss onward!

History and current events become dry and disconnected facts unless enlivened by empathy and compassion and an understanding of what the individuals involved in the events were and are experiencing. And being able to work with one's classmates benefits enormously by being sensitive to signs of their feelings, knowing when to back off, knowing when they are interested, knowing when they need help or support, etc.

As educators we need to teach emotional literacy just as we teach reading, writing and maths. Restorative practices are a key to teaching children how to understand their emotions. Understanding their emotions will help them better understand their thoughts and behaviours.

A restorative practice that we have introduced at Tawhiti School is 'Circle Time' our goal is to have this as a compulsory practice in all classrooms in 2015.

Circle Time'

1. 'Circle Time' brings together teachers and students in an enjoyable atmosphere of cooperation. It is a time set aside each week (At Tawhiti each day) when students and teachers sit in a circle and take part in games and activities that are designed to increase:
2. Understanding and valuing of self
3. Understanding and valuing others
4. Positive relationships

As participants learn more about themselves and each other, a warm and supportive group atmosphere is built, along with improved relationships.

'Circle Time' is simple and safe to implement.

The teacher is always a participant. When young people come to the circle, they know they are accepted and equally valued. The games, discussions and activities are structured so that all have equal opportunity to contribute.

While the activities are non-threatening and supported, they encourage thoughtful reflection. 'Circle Time' is gentle in that it creates harmony among the students and their teacher. The students are encouraged to explore and discover how they feel and what they believe, as well as how others feel and what others believe. In 'Circle Time' everyone is accepted.

There are three rules that must be followed to ensure the success of the circle:

1. One person speaks at a time
2. No Put Downs
3. Right to pass

We need 'Circle Time' to build Emotional Literacy in our children.



Implications

To continue our RP journey I need to ensure that new staff are fully versed in what restorative practice looks like, feels like, sounds like at Tawhiti School. The Tawhiti Community need to constantly be informed of the RP practices operating at the school. This can be achieved through newsletters and parent evenings.

Professional Development in this area needs to be planned and delivered on a regular basis to all staff.

Our behaviour management policy needs to be reviewed and revised. Involvement with the High School needs to continue and be increased so that R.P. becomes a seamless practice .

I need to also engage in discussions with the leadership team of our local Intermediate school to see if this is a practice that they be interested in implementing to develop continuity right through our students education as .

Restorative practices and PB4L practices are more effective when fully integrated. Professional development with Marg Thorsborne and Greg & Rich will be an ongoing part of this journey.

Conclusion

As part of my sabbatical I have reflected on the above restorative practices we have operating. I have added to these and looked closely at the 'No Put Down Programme' I deliver. I have put into place a programme that is closely linked to restorative practices and PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning).

Our Behaviour Management policy is regularly reviewed and if needed changes made. As a team we constantly work on the 'postives'. Our children know they have a voice and will always be heard.

*Manaakitia te tangata
ahakoako wai,
ahakoa no hea*

*Treat people respectfully,
Irrespective of who they are
And where they come from.*

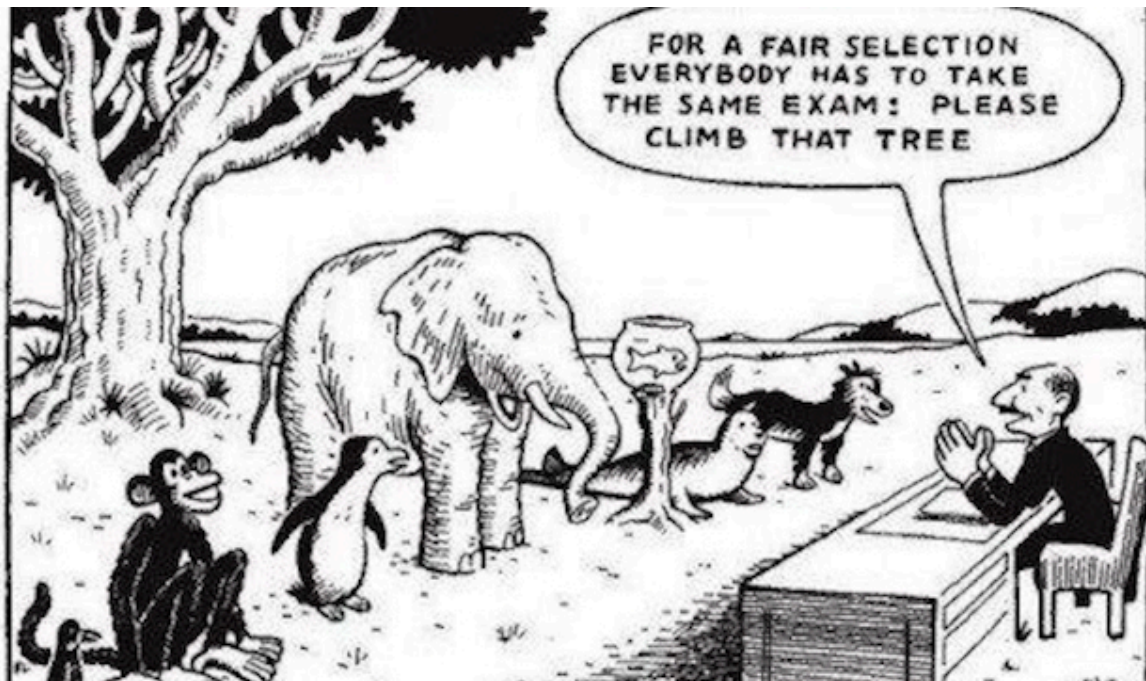
they may
forget what
you said
but they will not
forget how
you made
them feel.

cari w buechner

www.doodlebugteaching.com

www.doodlebugteaching.blogspot.com

“I am thankful for all the difficult people in my life for they have shown me exactly who I do not want to be.”



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Restorative Practices in Classrooms: Rethinking behaviour Management-
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Circle time for Emotional Literacy-Sue Roffey

The Circle Time Games and Activities Book-Bob Bellhouse

Beginners Guide to Circle Time with primary school students-Bob Belhouse

Circle Time and Learning about Feelings- Bob Belhouse/ Glenda Jackson

Professional Development Notes – Marg Thorsnorne workshops

Professional Development notes – Greg Jansen / Rich Matla

Various readings from internet as referenced in report.

References

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