

ARE WE THERE YET?

An investigation into sustaining and embedding culture change
within the context of both
Restorative Practices and
School Wide Positive Behaviour for Learning

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Tena koutou katoa.
Nga mihi nui ki a koutou
He tumuaki tuarua kei te kura tuarua o Aranui
Ko Jacky Young ahau

Purpose

To investigate strategies used to sustain and embed into a school's culture a combination of Restorative Practices (RP) with School Wide Positive Behaviour for Learning (SWPB4L).

How have others overcome the 'implementation dip'? (M. Fullan)

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Naku te rourou
Nau te rourou
Ka ora ai te iwi

Summary

Like any child, sitting in the back seat of a hot car, on a long journey to somewhere exciting for the summer holidays, who asks “Are we there yet?” every 5 minutes, I wanted to find out if we were at that stage in my school’s journey with our behaviour management systems to also ask “Are we there yet?” and find out how could I make sure we do get ‘there’, when ‘there’ is that point where we could say that both Restorative Practices (RP) and School Wide Positive Behaviour for Learning (SWPB4L) were truly embedded into Aranui High School’s culture or tikanga. What have others done to ensure that their behaviour management changes were not only implemented, but embedded into their culture?

My research showed that many of the strategies that they used to embed these changes into their culture were very similar to those they used during the implementation phase. The ability to successfully sustain and embed RP and SWPB4L depended on a number of key factors (in no particular order of priority):

- Perseverance
- Time – both as a resource and as a reflection of how long these practices have been in place
- Ongoing active and explicit Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership involvement
- A widely accepted and often urgent need for these changes at the implementation stage.
- A group of passionate leaders to drive and maintain the change
- Regular, repeated and often differentiated provision of professional development – from both external and internal providers
- A collaborative culture within the school (and in some cases, across different schools)
- Integration of RP/SWPB4L within other initiatives, rather than as an extra on top on other initiatives, avoiding change fatigue
- Deliberate strategies to build the change team
- Regular team meetings focussing on maintenance
- Acknowledgements and celebrations of milestones and achievements along the way
- Regular communication of appropriate data through a variety of methods
- Student involvement

The word cloud over the page shows the key strategies used by the schools I talked with, where the larger the font appears, the more frequent was its use.

It also shows a number of less common but just as important strategies used by the schools involved in this investigation, shown by the smaller font size..

Key Strategies Used by Schools to Embed RP/SWPB4L into Their Culture



Background

Aranui High School is a small co-educational secondary school in the eastern suburbs of Christchurch. It currently has a roll of 350 students from Years 9 to 13. I have been the Deputy Principal since 2003, with responsibilities for Student Management and Support.

Prior to 2010, we had very high levels of stand downs and suspensions and as such we were part of a group of schools throughout New Zealand which were very closely watched by the Ministry of Education. It had been part of several initiatives aimed to reduce these figures, such as Schools Making a Difference (SMAD) and the Student Engagement Initiative (SEI). Funding for initiatives targeting the more difficult student behaviours, Ministry advisors, and staff professional development were provided, but our figures indicated that we were still removing large numbers of our students from their learning.

At a level below stand downs, our classroom management strategies made little change to either student or staff behaviour, being more of a 'tick and flick' strategy ie the referral of a student to a supervised room for a period of time. The Board of Trustees used their discretionary funding for many years to employ a full time staff member to supervise these removed students. Little learning, either academic or behavioural took place. Students, being the very creative teenagers that they were, often managed staff behaviour by misbehaving deliberately for the teachers or subjects they did not like and got referred, or arranged with friends to be removed together so that they could meet up! To address these issues, the punitive responses were often increased in an effort to reduce the numbers of students, but with little effect, other than removing students from learning time. Staff and students were ready for a change.

A very small group of staff had been involved outside school in a number of restorative practices to deal with issues, and so we began our investigations. Targeted staff were trained by Marg Thorsborne, Greg Jansen and Rich Matla. This group became our early adopters and the initial implementation team for a shift towards Restorative Practices in 2009. All staff were part of a review of our student management systems and so began the change in our culture where the idea of inappropriate behaviours were reframed as a breakdown in relationships between teacher and student.

The Board of Trustees was included in this process, and decided to include restoratives practices into their strategic goals, as it tied in very well with our values of Respect and Manaakitanga. At the end of 2009 the whole staff were trained in restorative practices, so that by the beginning of 2010 we had the skills and procedures in place to manage classroom student behaviour restoratively.

The Board employed an appropriately qualified person to supervise a Restorative Room so that if the classroom strategies did not work, the student would be removed to that room from that particular subject until a facilitated restorative conversation was held within 48 hours between that teacher and student, with the aim to repair their learning relationship. Incidences involving a greater level of harm or more people were managed by pastoral support personnel, deans, or senior management.

For the first time we explicitly linked behaviour with learning; and broken relationships between staff and students, or between students were repaired restoratively so that learning could continue. Feedback from those involved indicated that this was a well-received system, as time could be taken to discuss issues and come up with strategies to continue with learning.

Midway during 2010 we indicated our expression of interest in School Wide Positive Behaviour for Learning. Our staff fully supported being involved with SWPB4L as it was seen not as an extra initiative, but an integral part of existing initiatives we were already involved in, such as RP and He Kakano. However, due to the continuation of the earthquakes, all Canterbury involvement in

SWPB4L was put on hold until 2011, so we had a year of implementing our restorative practices before starting our SWPB4L training.

The result of both of these initiatives was that from the beginning of 2013 the 'Aranui Way' has been in place, where Restorative Practices exist within a Tier 1/universal SWPB4L framework. Like all of the schools who use RP and SWPB4L and who took part in this investigation, we would find it very difficult to separate the two when talking about how we manage our student behaviour at Aranui High School.

Evidence shows that after the introduction of restorative practices, our stand downs and suspensions reduced considerably, especially for our Maori students who were overrepresented in these higher level discipline situations. Also, students spent more time learning in class. Anecdotal evidence shows that staff and students prefer these strategies as they are more relationally based, and provide a framework by which we can reduce issues that get in the way of learning, improving the relationships between teacher and students.

RP/SWPB4L is a strong part of our school culture, but I do not believe that we can assume that it has been totally embedded. We have reached the point at which few students can remember or experienced the old system, and we have a significant number of staff who were also not part of the old system. But with all changes and change management, we have also reached that point where in order to ensure that a change is truly part of an organisations culture, there needs to be strategies in place to maintain these changes, so that they are part of the way we do things around here, our culture, our tikanga.

As part of the Minister of Education's plans for educational renewal in Christchurch, Aranui High School will be closing at the end of 2016. From the beginning of 2017 a new community educational facility from Years 1 to 13, (and beyond), will serve the community of eastern Christchurch. The 'Aranui Way' of managing student behaviour by building positive relationships to improve learning will cease to exist. My hope is that what we have achieved will contribute towards the culture of this new school.

Methodology

The general trends discussed here were as a result either talking to senior leaders when visiting schools or receiving input from senior leaders answering my questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

There is a mix of primary, intermediate and secondary schools, state schools and schools of a special character, single sex and co-ed schools.

I had originally intended to talk with schools around New Zealand which have been involved with both RP and SWPB4L for at least 3 years. ("In education, innovations come and go in 18-48 months": G Latham, 1988) They should have reached or even gone beyond the stage where they were making a conscious effort to sustain this change of culture.

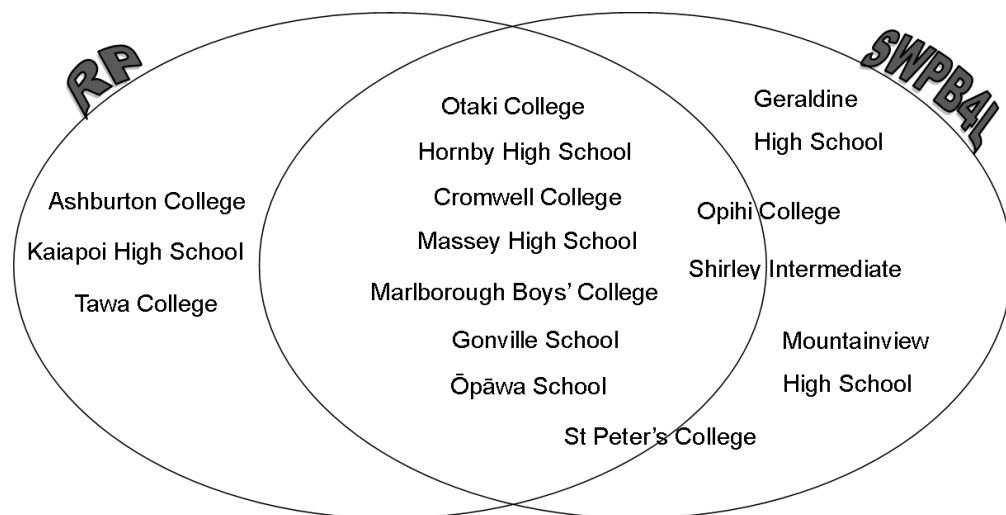
Finding these schools was difficult. There is no register of schools using RP. So my starting point was the list of SWPB4L schools kept by the Ministry of Education. This was followed up with a heavy reliance on word of mouth ie recommendations made by one school to contact another.

These schools had been involved with RP for a much longer period of time than SWPB4L because SWPB4L is relatively new in New Zealand. For those schools with both RP and SWPB4L in place,

their RP involvement came first, and ranged from 3 to 10 years. For SWPB4L this ranged from 1 to 4 years, with 3 schools involved at Tier II level.

I have also included information from schools that have either used only restorative practices for a long time, or have used restorative practices for a while and have only just started with SWPB4L, or have only been part of SWPB4L with little or no experience with RP, as the strategies they have used were also worth consideration.

The diagram shows which systems each school has been involved in. Three schools are firmly within the SWPB4L model but show elements of restorative or relational practices and so are partially within this circle of influence.



Findings

Most schools began with RP because of its emphasis on creating positive relationships, and the way it was able to repair broken relationships and any harm that had been caused. Some, like us, were part of SEI and so had high stand downs and suspension rates. All of them were dissatisfied with the way they had been managing student behaviour, and were keen to try something new. In most cases there was an urgent need to do something different, often 'nudged' towards that direction by the Ministry of Education.

Most schools got into SWPB4L because of its ability to provide a framework of explicit consistency, along with its focus on behavioural skills being taught in the same way as academic skills. However, if honest, they were also attracted by the money provided to support this change of culture.

All schools involved with both systems of behaviour management started first with RP, and now find it difficult to separate these two systems. In her interview, Kirsty Dowding from Massey High School echoed the thoughts of others when she said that RP and SWPB4L go together like coffee and cake! Most of the schools were clear that they considered both their restorative practices and their interpretation of SWPB4L as naturally complementary systems and that they were inseparable. SWPB4L provided them with the framework by which to operate, while RP provided the strategies by which to operate within this framework.

The work done in schools to introduce RP pre-empted the initial steps required during the SWPB4L training and so they were often further down this pathway than those not using RP. For the schools using both, SWPB4L provided the framework and the proactive aspects of behaviour management, while RP provided the staff with the skills to build positive relationships, as well as strategies to respond with when harm was done to a learning relationship.

As expected, most of my findings related closely to the various theories on culture change and maintenance, as written about by such theorists as Michael Fullan, John Kotter, and Rosabeth Kanter. Whatever the context, change is not embedded automatically nor without strategic planning. The strategies discussed below are not unique to RP/SWPB4L. They can be easily transferrable to any change management process.

My findings showed that not all schools used all of the following key strategies. Nor was any one strategy sufficient in itself. However, using quite a number of different strategies helped determine a greater level of success in embedding RP/SWPB4L within the school's culture. Nor did sitting back saying that we have now reached the end!

The most common strategies I found being used were:

1. **Time** - a common theme amongst schools who felt that they had successfully embedded RP/SWPB4L into their schools. However there are several ways in which this was important:-
 - a) Those schools that had started with RP 5-10 years ago had been through one or more generations of students who were familiar with RP as a way to manage the behaviour that impacted on their learning. The current students knew of no other system, and in schools with a regular turnover of staff, the staff knew of no other system. Neither had taken part in the implementation stages, and so required little else other than ongoing refresher courses or low key reminders in order to maintain the integrity of the school's systems. This implies that it is important to just keep on going and to keep up the pressure to maintain the integrity of this system.
 - b) Time to support maintenance strategies was just as important as at the implementation stage. Some schools provided time for specific staff in a management role to oversee these processes. Specialist Classroom Teachers, Teachers in Charge, or a full time position of Behaviour Manager all showed how valuable this culture change was to the school concerned. In each case, staff were provided with the time to plan, work collaboratively and to implement strategies to support the rest of the staff.
2. **Passionate and committed people** – who drive these systems and maintain their integrity. In all schools there was always someone at the Senior Leadership level that either actively supported the ongoing inclusion of RP/SWPB4L within their schools, or supported the key people within their school that kept these alive. The principal had a pivotal role, and if not directly involved in team meetings, then 'walking the talk' from them was essential.

Staffing changes happen in all schools, and when these leaders left and if not replaced with like-minded people, few schools were able to maintain the processes. There needs to be a leader or figurehead, and so sustainability in the event of staffing changes or attrition needs to be planned for.

As mentioned above, in a few cases, the school supported the value of such people by creating and funding positions and providing time where they could focus on this maintenance.

Maintenance is too large a task for just one person, and in smaller schools this person is often involved with many different areas. There is competition for time and energy and so distributed leadership in this area is crucial.

Most schools relied on the good will of a team of people. Strategically recruiting members so that they had influence across a range of areas within the school seemed to be the most effective way to ensure that all staff followed the processes.

3. **Collaboration** - not only within the school, but often across a number of schools. The existence of a collaborative culture within the school was an indicator of the successful embedding of this type of change within a school.

However, in a few cases, the school worked as part of a wider group from local schools in their community, either as part of a PB4L cluster, or as part of a local learning community. This

ensured that there were shared common values and expectations, and students were familiar with these types of systems when they transitioned from one school to another within the area.

4. **Board of Trustees support** - in a range of different ways at governance level:
 - a) Specific statements referring to RP/SWPB4L within charters, strategic plans, and annual goals. These provided the rationale by which to drive and maintain RP/SWPB4L and reinforced their importance within the school
 - b) Funding to employ RP/SWPB4L related staff – such as teaching staff to drive the programmes with the time to do this; behavioural support staff employed to run withdrawal rooms for students for whom classroom strategies have not worked; or staff that have been trained to run medium to high level restorative conversations.
 - c) Funding for staff professional learning related to RP
 - d) Restorative aspects as part of high level discipline meetings appear in a few schools

5. **Ongoing and regular professional development** - a great variety of different ways to upskill staff.

The most valued and influential type of professional learning was from outside restorative experts such as Marg Thorsborne from Australia, or from Greg Jansen and Richard Matla from Canterbury. They either came in to run teacher only days within their schools, as refreshers for existing staff, as induction programmes for new staff and as differentiated programmes for specific groups of staff such as deans, senior management, and pastoral support staff. These sessions, in general, were programmed every two years. Or schools sent specific staff to courses run by these people, for a range of different reasons, such as being a newly appointed dean, or if their data showed that a staff member may need “subtle nudging” in the right direction (Richard Edmundson, Hornby High School).

There was also a wide range of different in-house professional learning opportunities provided. The RP/SWPB4L team often took over part of regular fortnightly staff meetings. Refresher courses for identified staff were run as the need required. Induction programmes for new staff, usually as a one off at the beginning of the year, include restorative skills training as part of a focus on the school’s culture of managing student behaviour.

Whole staff professional development helped develop a shared understanding and language, and it was this that developed the momentum for this culture.

In the schools that have been more successful at embedding RP/SWPB4L I found that they had the attitude that regular reminders, redirects and refreshers for all staff were essential, and they did not assume that having learned these processes and skills once was enough.

6. **Regular reminders** - for staff, students and the wider community, to continue keeping both RP and SWPB4L in the forefront of the minds of those connected to these schools.
 - a) When the community was involved, it was generally via newsletters and, in a few cases, during regular community discussion groups, such as a monthly coffee morning with the Principal, or parent/teacher conferences. Three of these schools provided material on the school’s restorative culture in with their enrolment packs for new enrolments. Two schools provided information via their website.
 - b) Whole school or House assemblies run by either the Principal, a member of the Behaviour Team, deans, or senior students included information about the school values and how they were embedded into daily school life, to ensure that everyone knew the importance of these systems to the school’s way of doing things.
 - c) Signage and posters around the school kept the behavioural expectations and values visible
 - d) Staff handbooks and instruction manuals provided reference material for staff

- e) A few schools talked of their 'Fortnightly Focus', as a way to keep a consistent approach to key aspects of their procedures alive. These were on display in the staff room, around classrooms, and mentioned via daily notices, form periods, and assemblies.
 - f) A few schools even used student made videos to get their messages across, although these were not common, nor were they renewed each year.
7. **Regular team meetings** – held, in general, twice a term to review the data and to look at developing behavioural trends. In most cases, the data drove the PD provided.
8. **Acknowledgements** - more of an integral part of SWPB4L rather than RP. These took many forms from the frequent handing out of small certificates; up to on site shops students could use their certificates to trade in for a range of items of varying value. These were valued by most students, but not all. Rewards tended to polarise senior students, who received less than junior students. They also polarised staff, many of whom believed that students should not be rewarded for doing what was expected of them in the first place. Maintaining the equity of a reward system was often mentioned by many of these schools as an issue, with a growing divide between the perception of their worth by junior students compared to senior students.
9. **Communication systems** - to disseminate information about a school's behaviour management processes, as well as part of their review processes to gather feedback about how they were doing and what changes needed to occur to improve things.

Newsletters, community focus groups and student focus groups provided the feedback the schools felt was important to maintain their systems and to tailor them to their community needs. In a few schools, they had the issue of educating their community about the importance of a restorative culture within the school, as the parents often had a more punitive view for consequences. Using these communication systems helped get their message out there, as did word of mouth from parents who had been involved in restoratively resolved issues.

Communication of the success to the wider community of staff, students and parents also helped. This occurred by sharing anecdotal stories from those involved in the processes eg staff, or students; as well as sharing relevant quantitative data gathered around behavioural infringements.

10. **Perseverance** – one of the more important strategies. Schools that strive for continuous improvement in the learning relationships between their staff and students appeared to be those that had embedded these systems more successfully into their school's culture. By never giving up, or being satisfied that the endpoint has been reached, these schools have truly embedded these culture changes in the way they do things at their school.

Issues/Risk Factors

When asked about challenges to their change management processes, a number of common factors came out that had the potential to put the embedding of these changes at risk:

1. Maintaining the energy for these changes
2. Burn-out of key leaders or drivers of these processes – good will can stretch only so far!
3. Senior leaders not actively and explicitly involved
4. Staff turnover – within the whole staff, and within the change team
5. The proportion of staff who showed apathy towards change – the laggards
6. The size of the school – too large could result in difficulties to maintain the fidelity of RP/SWPB4L, but also provides a greater pool on which to draw from when putting a change team together. But too small a school overloads the few staff who are willing to be involved in driving and maintaining these changes. In small schools, the few who step up to lead are usually involved in many other aspects of the school and too often overloaded. Smaller

schools also had a smaller sized discretionary budget to go towards maintaining behaviour management initiatives.

7. Insufficient time to plan, to implement, to run PD sessions, or to prepare for and run RP conferences.
8. Assuming that staff trained once will be competent and confident users of their newly acquired skills
9. Board of Trustees support not formalised, in terms of their charter, strategic goals, and budgets
10. Outside pressures and stresses – in times of stress, staff may regress to old habits which may be more punitive than relational
11. 'Initiative-itis' – by overloading the staff with too many whole school initiatives. Fewer done in depth is better than too many that are just glossed over and ticked off as being 'done'.
12. Competing for limited financial and human resourcing.
13. Community perceptions – parental expectations may be more punitive, seeing restorative practices as a 'soft option'.
14. The SWPB4L language – some see the language used within the surveys as not aligned to a New Zealand educational context.
15. Lack of clarity or an urgent need for the change.

Conclusion

So, the answer to my opening question, 'Are we there yet?' for Aranui High School has to be 'No, not yet!'

Many other schools felt the same. When asked if they felt that their culture change of combining RP with SWPB4L had been embedded into their school culture, quite a few of the schools I interviewed answered 'nearly'. What was totally embedded was their belief in the value of such a combination of processes for their staff and their students and the impact this has on their learning. Alongside this was their philosophy of constantly working on improving relationships within their school in order to improve learning for all. Few were satisfied that they had reached an endpoint in their journey, due to the dynamic nature of their schools, and that constant reminders and revisiting of skills helped embed the processes.

They did not rely on one or two strategies by which to maintain their change. They selected from a smorgasbord of strategies by which to keep the ideas fresh, and to keep moving forward in a positive manner. Nor did they rely on just one person to embed this change.

My investigation has shown that external support processes (as well as internal supports requiring resourcing) were highly valued, and very important for the continued health of this form of behaviour management.

Not all schools were able to fully fund all of these strategies once their initial financial supports had finished, and often had to limit their strategies based on their budgets, putting maintenance at risk.

Sustainability is also dependent on the energy of a team of people involved in driving it and ensuring the fidelity of that change. They require support to be able to keep doing this.

My hope is that the various agencies involved in supporting schools to introduce this blend of behaviour management strategies look beyond the initial stages and plan to help support schools after this stage has been completed.

All changes within an organisation's culture will go through an implementation dip. Knowing that this is a part of the process means that you need to plan to sustain this change from the beginning.

Sustainability will not happen automatically. The level of energy required to reach a point of momentum for the change may not always be at the same initial level, but the focus of the change will not continue without some effort.

Last Words

The Ministry of Education in Wellington and a group of dedicated people have been working for the last year on developing a more structured model combining both SWPB4L and RP. They plan to start extending their trial with more schools during 2015. I look forward to seeing this rolled out across a much wider range of schools, and would like to think that those I have been privileged to visit and talk with provided the ground-breaking work to prove the value of such a culture shift. I see this development as a vindication of the belief, passion and energy put into this way of building positive learning relationships within schools. Once this culture change has been introduced into a school, it will be essential that the change leaders within that school develop plans to sustain these changes in order to embed this culture change into the tikanga of their school. I hope that those overseeing these trials look not only at supporting the implementation stages, but also provide ongoing support once these changes have been put into place.

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Appendix 1:- Questionnaire used

Are We There Yet?

An investigation into strategies used to embed a change in student behaviour management into a school's culture - with a particular focus on restorative practices and school wide positive behaviour for learning.



TEACHNZ sabbatical research 2014

Jacky Young, Deputy Principal, Aranui High School, Christchurch.

There are a lot of research papers and resources written on introducing change into an existing culture - regardless of whether the context is educational, or business related - but it has not been so easy finding out about strategies that can be used to maintain this change to such a point that it becomes embedded into an organisation's culture. The answers to my questionnaire will help us at Aranui High School maintain our change of culture around how we manage our student behaviour using both Restorative Practices and Positive Behaviour for Learning, so that they firmly continue to be part of the way we do things at this school.

I really appreciate the time you will take to answer the questions below.

1. Name of school
2. Name of staff member responding to questionnaire
3. Date
4. Type of school eg primary, intermediate, secondary, special character
5. Size of school - students
6. Size of school – staff
 - Full time teaching:
 - Part time teaching:
 - Involved non-teaching:
7. How long have you been involved in RP?
8. What do you see as the key features of RP being implemented in your school?
9. How long have you been involved in SWPB4L?
10. Describe what practices your school previously used to manage student behaviour before RP/PB4L.
11. Why did you change to RP/PB4L?
12. Why did you combine both RP and PB4L?
13. What role/function does RP/SWPB4L play in your school?
14. Who leads/manages these changes within your school?
15. What strategies have you used to maintain the impetus of these changes?
16. Has this been a successful change?
17. Why?
18. Have these changes been embedded into your school's culture?
19. How do you know?
20. What has worked well for you in this change process?
21. What have been some of the challenges of this change in culture?
22. How have you overcome these challenges?
23. What further support (or 'magic wish list') do you have or need for these changes to continue in your school?
24. Any other comments, information, interesting ideas you wish to share, or lessons learned along the way?

Thank you for your time.

Jacky

