WELCOME
Margaret Armstrong
Building & Repairing Relationships the Restorative Way

“Placing relationships at the heart of problem solving”

National Coalition Against Bullying Conference - 2007
Restorative Vs Traditional

- Restorative practices focuses on repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than on punishing offenders. The process involves all parties affected and all have a say. Its focus is on community, relationships & healing.

- Traditional responses focus on what rule has been broken, who is to blame and making the wrongdoers accountable by punishing them. Often the victim is not included in this process.
Accountability

- For many, accountability means the wrongdoer gets what they deserve (they are punished)
- i.e. for every action there is a consequence. The victims see that justice has been done and a strong message has been sent to the community.
- So… how effective is this? Does punishment alter behaviour and repair the harm caused? Does it meet everyone’s needs?
Case Study

- Young 10 year old girl (Phoebe) recently arrived into the school has tolerated being picked on, called names, excluded from games and teased continually by a small group of girls.
- Her mother has complained to the school that her daughter is being bullied, but as none of the girls have reported anything, the school has no evidence.
- The situation escalates when Phoebe refuses to go to school and cries continually.
- Phoebe’s mum demands the school deals with the problem.
Needs of People in Conflict

Victims and wrongdoers have the same needs…

- A chance to talk about what has happened
- A chance to explain how it made you feel
- A chance to explain what made you say/do that
- An opportunity to understand
- A chance to apologise and to accept an apology
- A chance to make up for things
- A need to move on and put it behind you

Restorative Practices provides this – does punishment?
Restorative Practices
Building Social Capital

- Restorative Conferencing, Mediation
- Corridor Conferencing, Peer Mediation, Problem Solving Circles

RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

MANAGING DIFFICULTIES & DISRUPTIONS

DEVELOPING SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL CAPACITY
1. Accountability
2. Responsibility for self & others
3. Work Together
4. Personal Potency

1-5% of population

Whole School

Blood, 2004
Continuum of Restorative Practices

Less serious

Restorative dialogue between several students

Conference with a small group of students

More serious

Classroom conference with a whole class

Community conference with students, parents and teachers

“Continuum of strategies that is proactive – immersing the school community in a pedagogy that values relationships and a curriculum that values social & emotional learning”
Restorative Practices in Schools

- Daily circle time
- Informal chat in corridor, yard, etc..
- Classroom conferences – problem solving circles, no-blame conferences, starting a new topic, evaluating a topic, reflecting on work or progress, planning tool, etc..
- Restorative meetings for bullying, damage to property, continued disruption to learning of others, etc..
- Community conferences – very formal
a restorative school....

- Young people become used to relational language and are honest about their behaviour.
- All are accountable to those they have hurt and seek ways to make things right.
- Emotional literacy and social curriculum is explicit.
- Everyone is taught to manage their emotions, articulate their needs and resolve their conflict.
- The classroom and whole school becomes a truly safe, supportive learning environment.
Restorative Approach - Advantages

- Offers much for the interpersonal development domain of VELS with its clear emphasis on the value of building positive relationships, working & learning in teams, and managing and resolving conflict.
- Effective student management tool
- Vehicle for culture change in schools
- Assists in a move towards a more democratic, collaborative classroom, where negotiation and cooperation are key components.
- Explicitly teaches EI, civics & citizenships skills, values
- Builds positive relationships and gives young people connections to classmates and teachers.
- Effective way of dealing with bullying
- Effective way of working out “major” issues or situations within the school and community context
- Restores relationships and meets the needs of both the victim and the wrongdoer
Challenges…

- Major change in thinking regarding student management, consequences, “consistency” – major challenge is staff understanding and willingness to consider a different approach that probably goes against the way they were raised and the way they “manage” students.

- Time – time to develop relationships, train and mentor staff, to facilitate conferences & provide feedback, provide ongoing professional development of staff

- School community perception – some will believe it is a “soft option” until they have been involved in a conference.
“So teaching children to do as they’re told is not a good enough aim for behaviour management. Instead what I’d like children to learn to do is to think for themselves … not to think what would happen to me if I get caught … but what effect would my behaviour have on other people”

(Porter 2002)
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