

Restorative practices in education: Building teacher capacity and empowering student voice

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Restorative practices in education

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	2
Portfolio Introduction	2
Portfolio Process	6
Portfolio Tasks	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review Introduction	10
A Theoretical Approach: Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices	11
A Practical Approach: Restorative Practices in Educational Settings	15
A Contextual Approach: Responses to Restorative Practices	21
Literature Review Conclusions	24
Chapter 3: Resources Introduction	27
Resource #1: Narrative	31
Resource #2: Pamphlet and PowerPoint	31
Resource #3: Reflection	33
Chapter 4: Products	35
Narrative: A Tool for Educators	35
Pamphlet and PowerPoint: Tools for Students	49
Reflection: A Tool for Growth	51
Portfolio Proposal Conclusion	60
References	62
Pamphlet, hard copy	64
PowerPoint, hard copy	66

Chapter One: Introduction

How might I support educators to adopt a proactive mindset and develop the skills to respond to conflict restoratively? How might I empower students to take ownership for, and work toward, resolving conflicts that occur in school focusing on restoring and valuing relationships, with decreased adult dependence and increased personal independence?

I would describe myself as a peacemaker. As the youngest of three children from a family with many internal struggles and challenges, many of my memories involve responding to uncomfortable home situations by trying to solve the issues among my family members, a habit which followed me into adulthood. Through experience, I've learned that listening, rather than speaking, can often be a more effective strategy for building relationships and restoring harm in most social situations. When I listen to understand, and not to respond, I sincerely hear what my family members, friends, colleagues, and students really need in order to move forward and/or heal in a given situation. In my personal and professional relationships, I've noticed that truly listening, and being heard, appears to be the key to developing relationships with greater clarity, mutual respect, and deeper commitment.

I believe, passionately, in building relationships from a deep-rooted, sustainable perspective. Personal connections are the bridge between maintaining relationships and honouring commitment. From my past teaching and current administrative experiences in education, when I support students' relationships with each other, I feel that I am laying the foundation for students to think restoratively in their interactions.

Restorative practices in education

I first learned about restorative thinking and action in 2010 when I read the book, *Walking After Midnight: One Woman's Journey Through Murder, Justice and Forgiveness* (Hutchison, 2006). While trying to break-up a house party of young adults, Katy Hutchison's husband, Bob McIntosh, was murdered by Ryan Aldridge. Ryan served a traditional and appropriate consequence in the form of jail time; however, Katy's response toward Ryan included reconciliation and forgiveness, truly encompassing and modeling restorative justice. She advocated for his early parole with a view to supporting his restitution and return to society as a reformed and valuable human being. In 2012, my school board sponsored Katy Hutchison to attend and speak at a professional development session for our secondary teachers and central administration. I was mesmerized by the progressive humanity embodied in Katy's thoughtful approach, which she explained with genuine warmth and commitment. The term restorative justice (RJ) had started to seep into the education system, and I embraced the opportunity to support my own students' accountability toward one another through listening, sharing, forgiveness, and restitution.

In my current role as a new secondary school Vice-Principal, I respond to office referrals. When something goes wrong between/among students at school, I am often the person whose 'job' it is to sort through the issues. From my experience in education, problem-solving when 'things go wrong' can be a top-down process, a sorting through of the details to determine who is right (the winner) and who is wrong (the loser) with the winner feeling validated (rightly or wrongly) and the loser being assigned blame (not always completely warranted) with resultant punitive consequences.

Restorative practices in education

In the traditional discipline model, the expectation from all involved – students, teachers, family members – focuses on consequences being delivered against the student who is perceived to be in the wrong. As an example, if a student hits another student on the yard, the current approach would support that student being removed, the family called, and the student being assigned a seat in the office during the next recess break. The wrongdoer feels resentful, the victim (often the reporter of the incident) feels vindicated, and a ‘clear’ message has been sent to the entire group intended to encourage compliance with established school rules.

Oftentimes, however, there is no clear wrongdoer and no clear victim when an incident occurs. A student who acted out using physical force or hurtful language may have been provoked and cajoled to the point of frustration. Although underlying provocation is not always the case, I’m learning that extenuating or mitigating circumstances often factor into conflict.

In a restorative model, time and energy are invested in supporting students involved in conflict to understand the reasons underlying an incident (Hopkins, 2002). There may be existing and deep-rooted tension between specific students that, once explored, may have the opportunity to be repaired. A wrongdoer may actually be the victim of bullying or there may be previously misunderstood anxiety, depression, or mental wellness issues. In the above example of a student hitting another on the yard, a restorative approach would include the students involved (participants and spectators) each having the opportunity to be heard privately in a supportive manner to glean all perspectives. The wrongdoer and the student harmed are then brought together with a facilitator, usually an adult, and supported as they share their feelings with, and explain their positions to, one another. From my experiences, restorative meetings

Restorative practices in education

have the potential to result naturally in sincere apologies, deeper appreciation of another's point of view, and compassion toward each other moving forward.

To be clear, restorative practices (RPs) do not negate appropriate consequences; however, they do enhance the capacity for relationship building (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). When a wrongdoer faces the person s/he has harmed and hears first-hand the pain or discomfort s/he has caused, the results can be powerful. Giving voice to a person harmed can similarly have a significant cathartic effect that serves to begin the healing process and foster forgiveness

Whereas a traditional response to wrongdoing can be immediate, RPs inherently require more time, especially if the approach is not embraced by a whole school. Given that “the notions of relationship repair and offender accountability have particular appeal in schools, where issues of order, justice, and punishment are closely linked to social relationships and educational inclusion” (Shaw, 2007), RPs represent a shift in a school's approach to discipline. Adults are motivated to respond to conflicts in the time and space where they occur by asking restorative questions and supporting students to seek resolution. When students begin to think restoratively and to apply the concepts to their own relationships, they are in a position to affect the outcome and direction of potential and real conflicts as they arise (Shaw, 2007).

My goals for this portfolio centered around developing my skills and abilities to: support teacher confidence to incorporate RPs into their relationships with students; and to extend the restorative model into the hands of students through education and practice. To that end, my portfolio is be comprised of the following resources:

Restorative practices in education

- (1) a Literature Review of RPs research;
- (2) a Narrative explaining my journey as I endeavour to build my skills to support educators incorporating proactive circles and responding to conflict restoratively;
- (3) resources for Intermediate students designed to develop my abilities to explain and model the theory, practicalities, and context of restorative thinking; and
- (4) a concluding Reflection considering my experiences, successes, challenges, and next steps.

Portfolio Process

I set out to achieve two specific goals for this project: to build my skills to support teacher confidence to incorporate RPs into their relationships with students; to develop my abilities to empower students to think and act restoratively in their interactions with one another.

From my experience working in education, previously as a teacher and now as an administrator, the historical mindset of both teachers and students tends to default to school administration solving or handling most of the discipline issues. Traditional models of consequence are detentions (for skipping class or study hall, late arrival to class, rude conduct) or in-school suspensions (for frequent lates, excessive missed assignments, egregious conduct). More serious infractions of rules or breach of moral codes result in out-of-school suspensions (for drug or alcohol possession, physical fighting, social media bullying). Our administrative team, comprised of the principal and myself, endeavours to include RPs into our progressive discipline approach with a view to supporting students' repairing harm and rebuilding relationships. Such an approach does not negate consequences; however, it does take into

Restorative practices in education

consideration any mitigating circumstances together with the responses of students involved in conflict. Often, a restorative approach results in students who have behaved or spoken poorly taking responsibility for their choices and appreciating the opportunity to ‘make right’ a wrongdoing against a peer. Students who have been wronged often experience empathy toward a wrongdoer and extend genuine forgiveness from a place of understanding and compassion.

I am hopeful that developing my skills to build teacher comfort to incorporate RPs will support a more immediate and relevant facilitation of issues between and among students. Teachers might be more willing and able to respond to conflicts as they occur which will increase student communication and reduce opportunities for hard feelings to become deeply entrenched. Enhancing my abilities to empower students to use restorative language might support their abilities to solve their own conflicts in a productive and authentic manner with less reliance upon adult interpretation and intervention.

Although I support students from the full range of Grades 7 – 12 in my school, for the purposes of this portfolio I decided to focus on our Intermediate division comprised of Grade 7 and 8 classes. As with most secondary models where Grade 7 and 8 students have been added into high schools, our Intermediate students are kept separate from our high school students: their timetable is prescribed, teacher supervision is constant, and students spend their school day with set parameters on their mobility in and around the school building. Grades 9 – 12 students have inherent opportunities to leave school property during breaks and lunches; however, for safety our Grades 7 and 8 students must remain in their designated yard resulting in more instances of office referrals for minor conflicts. In the short term, increasing teacher comfort for supporting RPs within our Intermediate classes will empower our Grade 7 and 8 students to

Restorative practices in education

assume increased responsibility for their own conflict resolution. In the long term, our Intermediate students will bring their restorative skills with them as they progress into high school and beyond.

Our Intermediate division is comprised of a combination of Core and Immersion classes. I chose one specific class for the purpose of this portfolio because of its large size and the inherent opportunities to empower those students with skills that they will, hopefully, bring to their Grade 9 high school experience in the near future. I am cognizant that students who are new to high school often struggle with making appropriate choices in response to the freedom that comes with moving from a fully supervised, prescribed Intermediate environment to a situation where they have the autonomy to move freely in and out of the school as high school students.

Portfolio Tasks

My portfolio consists of the following tasks:

1. A Literature Review focusing on three perspectives:
 - Theoretical Approach: I needed to understand the theory behind the progression from Restorative Justice (RJ) to Restorative Practices (RP);
 - Practical Approach: I wanted to understand the practical application of RPs in educational settings; and
 - Contextual Approach: I hoped to understand the response to RPs within a real school context.
2. A Narrative of my experiences as I endeavoured to develop my skills to build teacher and student appreciation for my philosophy of, and begin to rely upon, RPs. The narrative writing

Restorative practices in education

process is based on my past teaching experience together with my current endeavours supporting the implementation of RPs into a classroom in my own school and will serve as a reference for Intermediate teachers;

3. A two-part resource for Intermediate students designed to serve as a practical guide for incorporating restorative language and action into conflict resolution based on my endeavours to explain and model my restorative philosophy. The resource is comprised of a brief pamphlet together with a PowerPoint. The pamphlet provides tips for incorporating proactive and restorative circles together with a unique strategy for applying a restorative approach to conflict resolution between peers. The PowerPoint is organized as an inquiry-based learning experience designed to support students and teachers collaboratively exploring the theory, practice, and context of RPs in a school setting; and

4. A concluding Reflection sharing my thoughts vis-a-vis the achievement of my goals, challenges, successes, and next steps related to developing my skills to support educators and my abilities to explain and model for students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature Review Introduction

Responding to student conflict is an inherent component within the job description of school administration. Restorative Justice (RJ) is a framework that enhances the discipline model by adding an extra layer of care with a view to supporting the parties involved beyond simply responding to conflict in a punitive manner only. As contrasted with the previous and still used short-term approach of identifying an offender, attributing blame, and assigning consequences, RJ enhances the discipline process by attending to needs, supporting restitution, and repairing relationships. For school administrators, achieving a balance between assigning appropriate consequences and supporting restitution “employs a responsive regulatory approach that identifies social engagement as the key element for creating rich motivational ecologies that nurture bonds of belonging” (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 139) and significantly enhances opportunities for relationship building within the response to conflict.

Schools are relational spaces (McCluskey et al., 2008b), and within my role as a new secondary vice-principal, I am passionate about incorporating relationship building as a central construct in my approach to students’ wrongdoing. A holistic approach is required for RPs to be implemented and applied successfully in an educational environment. When RPs are embedded in school culture as a whole-school initiative, the accompanying growth mindset “opens up alternative and more constructive ways of dealing with emotions, with conflict and with life more generally” (Bevington, 2015, p. 109); thus, affecting behavioural changes in schools is enhanced by finding common ground through the use of RPs (Hopkins, 2002).

Restorative practices in education

Varied perspectives lend themselves not only to the advancement of RPs in schools, but also to the continued quest for achieving their maximum effectiveness. Bevington (2015) suggests that restorative approaches may “engender feelings of guilt and inadequacy on the part of hard-working staff” (p. 113) resulting from the occasions when they feel unwilling to invest the time and energy into restorative conversations and collaborative meetings. Conversely, McCluskey et al. (2008a) suggest “most staff [are] comfortable with the language of RP and identified improvements in staff morale” (p. 410) suggesting that perceptions of the effectiveness of RPs in schools vary among researchers and school staff. The information within this literature review is organized into three contextual categories of understanding: the theory behind RPs, the practical application of RPs in schools, and the contextual reality of RPs for staff and students.

A Theoretical Approach: Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices

A theoretical exploration of the literature helped to clarify the connection between RJ and RPs and to support my understanding of the philosophy of RPs in educational settings.

The research suggests that, from a theoretical perspective, RPs as a supportive response to discipline issues in schools originated from the use of RJ in the criminal justice field. A restorative approach within educational contexts supports the assigning of appropriate consequences within a progressive model with the additional and significant component of encouraging accountability that emphasizes empathy and repair of harm.

In their *Handbook of Restorative Justice*, Johnstone & Van Ness (2007) compile and edit a collection of ideas from a variety of researchers about RJ within the framework of the criminal justice system while making connections to social situations. They set the tone in their

Restorative practices in education

introduction, “We outline three different but overlapping conceptions of restorative justice: the encounter conception, the reparative conception, and the transformative conception” (p. 1) which serves as a basis for the exploration of RPs moving through the literature in this review: What happened? Who has been harmed? What needs to happen? (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007). The book refrains from constricting the reader with exacting definitions, rather it provides a historical overview of RJ, and leaves the concept open to interpretation, implementation and application. Zehr’s (2002) formal definition provides a foundation upon which to understand and apply RPs in educational settings: “Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (p. 37).

Drawing on Zehr (2002), Vaandering (2013) provides the most flexible explanation of RJ as “an alternative paradigm, one where the focus shifts from following and enforcing rules, to identifying who has been harmed, what their needs are, and how the harm can be repaired” (p. 298), leaving the application open to use-specific interpretation and application. From my position as a school administrator, a restorative approach means that I not only seek to learn the specific circumstances involved in a breach of school rules or from the outcome of conflict, but that I also devote time and energy to understanding the root causes of a conflict with a view to supporting repair and restitution between/among the parties involved.

Amstutz & Mullet (2005) suggest that “although in our Western culture, restorative justice emerged initially within the justice field, this approach is increasingly gaining recognition and application in the educational arena” (p. 4), underpinning their support for the alignment of RJ with anti-bullying initiatives. They provide specific examples of RJ approaches used among

Restorative practices in education

students, teachers, administrators, and community partners when harm has been caused and suggest “if meaningful relationships are already established before things go wrong, people are more likely to be motivated to work out their differences through conversation than if these relationships are absent” (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005, p. 34), promoting a school culture that values a supportive underlying foundation constructed from caring, healthy interactions.

In her article, *Student, Teacher, and Administrator Perspectives on Harm: Implications for Implementing Safe and Caring School Initiatives*, Vaandering (2013) further identifies RJ as “much more than a practice or strategy. It is a philosophy” (p. 301) that considers discipline from a problem solving perspective. The traditional model within school cultures that focuses on third party intervention “removes responsibility and accountability from those directly involved, increases anger and alienation, and perpetuates further harm” (Christie, in Vaandering, 2013, p. 298), contributing to the discourse around the negative effects of consequence-based discipline. From my experiences in school administration, Vaandering’s (2013) observations are accurate: traditional models of discipline ignore unresolved issues and foster resentment that emerges between parties on a continual and regular basis. More contemporary initiatives including anti-bullying education and programs (Vaandering, 2013) align with an RJ mindset.

Building on Johnstone & Van Ness’s (2007) *Restorative Justice: Pedagogy, Praxis, and Discipline*, Morrison & Vaandering (2012) “describe the theory and practice of RJ with the aim of contextualizing this distinctive paradigm in comparison to other forms of discipline, as one that uniquely emphasizes social engagement over social control” (p. 138). They also provide a comprehensive overview of the RJ framework within educational settings. With its focus on improved relational ecology “through nurturing the human capacity for restitution, resolution,

Restorative practices in education

and reconciliation” (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 140), RJ is contrasted with traditional discipline models where third party decision-making removes opportunities for problem-solving and growth. RJ can be viewed as similar to traditional discipline models in that all students are still held accountable but in differentiated and individually appropriate ways: “The aim is to build positive affect (empathy, interest, and excitement) and discharge negative affect (anger, humiliation, fear and disgust)” (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 140); thus, a restorative approach is not a replacement for consequences resulting from actions, but rather an enhancement to the discipline process with a view to supporting students as they move forward collaboratively. In schools, students share spaces (classrooms, hallways, yards) and people (friends, teachers, support staff, administrators); thus, a framework that supports working through differences empowers students with strategies to navigate safely the communal life of a school.

Richard, Schneider, and Mallet (2011) consider the RJ-bullying discussion by seeking to establish the aspects of school climate that are linked specifically to the issue of bullying. They conclude that “globally, there was less bullying in schools that are perceived as safer, that have higher achieving students, and that have more positive student-teacher relationships” (p. 276), emphasizing the value of relationship building in reducing incidents of bullying behaviour in schools that adopt a restorative mindset.

In summary, RJ is a global social movement that originated within the criminal justice system as an alternative means for perpetrators to repair harm done toward victims (Johnstone and VanNess, 2007). Amstutz and Mullet (2005) connect RJ to educational settings through the use of RPs that encourage accountability through a collaborative, community-owned process.

Restorative practices in education

The philosophy of RPs is best explained by Vaandering (2013) as an approach that shifts the traditional focus of following and enforcing rules to considering the needs of the person who has been harmed and restoration of that harm.

A Practical Approach: Restorative Practices in Educational Settings

The research in this section is organized to explain how RPs become integrated into school settings as an integral component of progressive discipline and to support an understanding of the practical application of RPs to foster accountability, restoration, and relationship building.

In *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Zehr (2002) claims that “schools have become an important arena for restorative practices” (p. 45), moving the concept of RJ from a legal framework to a social construct wherein the discourse of interconnectedness continues around the three pillars of harm, obligations, and engagement/participation. Zehr further includes a section on RPs, which are described as being on a continuum together with conferencing, proactive circles, and transitions. The differences between retributive and restorative justice are also introduced, through the significant opportunity for accountability that RPs afford.

In their article *Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools*, Thorsborne and Blood (2013) further clarify the RJ concept as one that “allows an opportunity for participants to explore facts, feelings and resolutions. They [participants] are encouraged to tell their stories, to ask questions, to express their feelings and to work toward mutually-acceptable outcomes” (p. 47), supporting the relational significance that a restorative approach offers a school community. Thereafter, the discourse around the practical application of RPs in schools includes a

Restorative practices in education

recommendation that a team of specialists should support school staff in the implementation of restorative thinking (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). From my experiences and through the research in this literature review, I believe that a holistic, supportive school environment is required to empower individuals to adopt a restorative mindset.

For a practical understanding of implementing RPs into schools, I refer, once again, to Morrison and Vaandering (2012) who discuss tension for educators who may be ready to learn and incorporate RPs, but who may be reluctant to let go of options provided under more traditional forms of discipline. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) recommend that “a commitment to whole school implementation must be embedded” (p. 149) and further indicate that “a more comprehensive approach does not ignore harmful behaviour, but shifts the focus from managing behaviour to honouring dignity and humanity, through relational practices that focus concurrently on individual and community well-being and responsibility” (p. 151), thus again reinforcing the relational aspect of schools’ communities.

Supporting the practical implementation of RPs in schools, Hopkins (2002) clearly advocates for a whole-school approach and extols the benefits of invested adults to adopt an “underlying ethos that encompasses the values of respect, openness, empowerment, inclusion, tolerance, integrity and congruence” (p. 194), all of which culminate to create a ‘walk the talk’ restorative mindset. Hopkins (2002) further provides a comparison table, *Old Paradigm-Retributive Justice vs. New Paradigm-Restorative Justice*, (p. 145, adapted from Zehr), which compares and contrasts the traditional punitive model with contemporary restorative thinking. I include it here as Table 1.

Restorative practices in education

Table 1.

Hopkins' Old vs New Justice Paradigm

OLD PARADIGM – RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE		NEW PARADIGM – RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Misbehaviour defined as breaking school rules or letting the school down	1	Misbehaviour defined as harm (emotional/mental/physical) done to one person/group by another
Focus on establishing blame or guilt, on the past (what happened? Did he/she do it?)	2	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and exploring how to meet them in the future
Adversarial relationship and process – an authority figure, with the power to decide on penalty, in conflict with wrongdoer	3	Dialogue and negotiation – everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent	4	Restitution as a means of restoring both parties, the goal being reconciliation and acknowledging responsibility for choices
Attention to rules, and adherence to due process – 'we must be consistent and observe the rules	5	Attention to relationships and achievement of the mutually desired outcome
Conflict/wrongdoing represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	6	Conflict/wrongdoing recognised as interpersonal conflicts with opportunity for learning
One social injury replaced by another	7	Focus on repair of social injury/damage
School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation; those affected not involved and feeling powerless	8	School community involved in facilitating restoration; those affected taken into consideration; empowerment
Accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	9	Accountability defined as understanding impact of actions, taking responsibility for choices and suggesting ways to repair harm

Hopkins, 2002, p. 145

Table 1

Restorative practices in education

The traditional model of discipline measures behaviour against a set of principles and metes out consequences by a third party based on a subjective assessment of the level of wrongdoing, within which the person harmed is invisible in the process. Often, the third party is a principal or vice-principal who most likely did not witness the incident and ‘deals with’ the situation from a far more removed perspective than the teacher or staff member who overheard, observed, or was privy to portions of the conflict. The restorative model considers the person harmed, the reasons or mitigating factors that may have led to the conflict, and empowers the people directly involved to restore the relationship in conjunction with holding the wrongdoer accountable (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). From my experience, when educators approach discipline from a purely punitive perspective, the students in the process are akin to chess pieces on a board. A wrongdoer is assigned a consequence according to the institution’s specific protocol without consideration of any mitigating circumstances or a plan for supporting the student moving forward. Similarly, the victim’s role in the conflict is neglected as are his/her feelings about navigating shared spaces in the days to come. In a restorative model, however, both sides of an altercation, together with bystanders, are provided with opportunities to voice their perspectives and to explain their needs for moving forward collaboratively and with comfort. Supports are put in place, often in the form of a mutually agreed upon plan, focusing on restoration of the harm and follow-up meetings (Hopkins, 2002). Within a restorative model, consequences assigned to a student follow a progressive discipline model that takes into consideration students’ previous behaviours, personal circumstances, learning/social profiles, and assessment of future risk (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Restorative practices in education

Vaandering (2014) furthers the advocacy of a whole-school approach by “drawing on a qualitative study that examines the experiences of educators committed to implementing RP principles” (p. 64), the purpose of which was “to illustrate, support, challenge and expand initial theories of RJ in education” (p. 67) through studying students from two schools. The data came from asking the following specific questions (among others):

What does RJ look like, sound like and feel like in schools? What do the voices of teachers and principals reveal about the practice of RJ and its philosophy? How can this knowledge contribute to the effective implementation and sustainability of restorative practices in school communities in such a way that its transformative potential can be experienced? (p. 68)

The study recommended clearer development of principles, alignment of personal values, more comprehensive training and resources, and evaluation of teacher pedagogy relating to educator/student engagement.

In their article, *“I was dead restorative today”: From restorative justice to restorative approaches in school*, (McCluskey et al., 2008b) suggest that, based on staff and pupils’ reflections and experiences, a broader conceptualization of restorative approaches, which draws on but is substantially different from restorative justice, can make a substantial contribution to thinking about conflict in schools and help to promote social justice in education. (p. 200)

Their discussion sets out strengths of RPs in schools, including improved school environment and stronger human relationships, together with weaknesses, including the use of RPs by some

Restorative practices in education

educators to impose another form of punishment or control through shame (McCluskey et al., 2008).

The Peacemaking Circle processes, which weave in and out of the literature covered in this review, serve as both a proactive and a reactive response to RPs. Although circle processes are discussed generally in *Restorative Discipline for Schools* (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005), I discovered that *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach* (Pranis, 2005) provides a more comprehensive overview, with Chapter 5 devoted specifically to classroom use together with an Appendix written by Cynthia Zwicky entitled *The Circle Process in Schools*. Ideally, “circles aim to create a space where participants are safe to be their most authentic self, share stories, and develop understanding of self and others” (Pranis, Stuart, & Wedge in Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 143), affirming the inclusivity inherent in a holistic, school-wide restorative mindset.

Circle processes, “which first entered the field from indigenous communities” (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005, p. 52), can be implemented as a proactive community building process or as a response to wrongdoing. I have been involved in circles that served both purposes. As a teacher, I incorporated proactive circles into my classroom as a means to build relationships with and among my students, to encourage community thinking and identification as a cohesive class, and to model collaborative problem solving. As a school administrator, when significant harm has been caused, I bring parties together when they are ready to begin the healing process and to support resolution and restitution. As part of our local police diversion program, I have participated in the circle process with a student, family members, and community representatives.

Restorative practices in education

Circles support students' understanding that community is learned (Zwicky, 2015) and reinforce the concept of perspective as multidimensional rather than singular, thus fostering empathy for others and community-minded thinking. As with most of the RPs information, the facilitation of circles tends to be guided by adults. Student voice and student response is missing from the various perspectives and observations documented in the literature.

In summary, the broad aim of RPs is more clearly explained within the relational context of educational settings as supporting policy and practice to be more responsive and restorative to the needs of a whole school (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). RP's are becoming embedded in the culture of school communities along a continuum that replaces traditional, more punitive discipline methods with supportive approaches that emphasize the building and repairing of relationships (Vaandering, 2014).

A Contextual Approach: Responses to Restorative Practices

The research in this Contextual Approach section is organized to explore who may be exposed to, or engaged in, RPs in an educational environment and to understand the responses of those participants to their experiences.

Bevington (2015) comments on a range of perspectives shared by a selection of staff in one inner-London, UK primary school. The findings include congruence in values, practice, and outcomes and incongruence with respect to individual personal judgment. Although the study concluded that RPs open up "alternative and more constructive ways of dealing with emotions, with conflict and with life generally" (p. 109), barriers were also identified in terms of "people's guilt at not responding restoratively to conflict all the time" (p. 113), due to the emotional state

Restorative practices in education

of children or staff, low self esteem, lack of confidence/competence, or lack of time or physical space (Bevington, 2015). From my experiences in education, I also observe a level of confusion or uncertainty among educators in relation to the adoption of restorative thinking and the implementation of restorative strategies, resulting in inconsistency in responses to student conflict.

Similar to Bevington (2015), McCluskey et al. (2008a) also discussed successes and challenges experienced by RP participants. In response to a 2004 Scottish pilot project, they collected data from a range of staff and students from eighteen schools to “explore the successes and challenges schools experienced and discuss the potential contributions of restorative practices for schools in challenging times” (McCluskey et al., 2008a, p. 405). Successes were identified through the positive changes to school culture and included: use of restorative language by staff and students, calmer school atmosphere, feedback from students indicating that teachers were fair, improved morale, development of conflict resolution skills, and some decreases in suspensions. Challenges were identified as teachers experiencing difficulty when reconciling RPs with traditional discipline/compliance methods and results.

Rigby (2004) examined a variety of anti-bullying approaches and concluded, “there is some evidence that the program [RPs] can increase students’ feelings of safety” (p. 296) and reinforced the relational value of RPs. The difficult task of integrating alienated individuals into the broader community is “associated with restorative justice and through the practice of restorative justice” (Rigby, 2004, p. 297), a process through which the inherent social aspect of schools continues to be reinforced and relied upon to create healthy school environments. Ten years later, in his continuing exploration of bullying in schools, Rigby (2014) observed, “there is

Restorative practices in education

likely to be considerable pressure on the bullies to make acceptable suggestions [to take reparative actions]” (p. 412); however, significantly the role of the victim in possibly provoking the bully may not have been acknowledged, thus a bully may be pressured to restore a situation that was not entirely his/her fault. Given that RPs bring parties together with a view to supporting the rebuilding of relationships, student voice in the process is integral. According to Rigby (2014), a RPs approach “appears to be at least as successful, if not more so, than the more coercive approach” (p. 413), thus confirming the underlying foundation of a restorative framework wherein parties have the opportunity to voice their feelings and experiences, all of which support the desired outcome of restoration.

In an examination of schools using guided conferencing strategies and a variety of prevention and intervention strategies along an RPs continuum, Shaw (2007) concluded, “that restorative practices can be an effective process for repairing relationships, acknowledging consequences of behaviour, and solving disputes” (p. 131). More specifically, RPs provide the opportunity for students to experience behavioural accountability and for teachers to experience increased confidence supporting the emotional needs of their students while engaging in problem-solving conversations. Notwithstanding challenges implementing RPs which related to lack of time, the personal style of individual educators, and sustainability, positive cultural changes resulted from the incorporation of RPs at the whole-school level (Shaw, 2007). Further, although challenges arise from changing school practices and engagement, “there is sufficient evidence in this study and in the literature to argue that restorative practices can be used in schools to address such things as bullying, conflicts, breakdown of relationships, alienation, and reintegration of marginalized students” (Shaw, 2007, p. 134); thus, within the context of a school

Restorative practices in education

setting, there is strong evidence that incorporating RPs has the potential to enhance inclusivity through enhanced feelings of comfort, safety, and belonging.

In summary, RPs in schools demonstrate promise for decreasing instances of bullying (Rigby, 2014). An exploration of school-based perspectives results in a range of experiences that determined that symbiotic relationship exists between a school culture and its RPs mindset (Bevington, 2015). A whole school approach that incorporates significant staff development was identified as having the most positive effect on the implementation of RPs in schools (McCluskey, et al. 2008a), and adopting RPs can be effective in changing school culture to value relationships and inclusion (Shaw, 2007).

Literature Review Conclusions

The research described in this literature review suggests that the identified successes of, and positive responses to, RPs in school settings outweigh any negative reactions, and further, that challenges can be mitigated through proactive and sustained support.

Vaandering (2014) recommends “more comprehensive resources that allow for and encourage the development of supports within school contexts beyond an initial introduction to RJ” (p. 78), meaning that educator training in RPs should, initially, be intensely supported by ongoing professional development and in-school teams of skilled and knowledgeable practitioners. Bevington (2015) noted that staff identified certain skill development as essential to successful implementation of RPs, including “speaking and listening, thinking and reflection, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution and problem solving” (p. 112), whereas strategies to overcome barriers to successful RPs implementation included having a core of highly skilled

Restorative practices in education

staff on whom to call for support, a shared bank of resources and ideas, and a renewed focus on emotional intelligence within staff development.

McCluskey et al. (2008b) claimed significant improvement in school attitudes where a whole school approach had been adopted. Relationships are central to school life including, but not limited to, “playground relationships, mediation/peer mediation, a range of circles...restorative conversations...as well as restorative management” (McCluskey et al., 2008, p. 209) all of which are supported along a restorative continuum. Understanding an entire school culture from a perspective of ethos fosters a “philosophy which gives central importance to building, maintaining, and, when necessary, repairing relationships and community” (Hopkins, 2002, p. 145), merging together to support a symbiotic relationship between a school’s mission and RPs (Bevington, 2015).

When considering the responses and opinions vis-à-vis RPs in schools, most of the studies, articles, and books in this literature review include positive feedback from adults. As an exception, McCluskey et al. (2008a), in their review of studies, also include student responses, indicating “pupils felt that restorative practices had led to teachers ‘not shouting’, ‘listening to both sides’, and ‘[making] everyone feel equal’” (p. 413) and further identify additional positive responses from students relating to restorative meetings and teacher fairness. Bevington (2015) includes a brief statement indicating students reported to adults “the benefits of restorative work” (p. 110), while Shaw (2007) suggests that “restorative practices can provide students with important opportunities to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and promote accountability” (p. 131); however, a more in-depth examination of student perspectives might

Restorative practices in education

clarify benefits, identify barriers, and provide a basis for setting specific goals and outcomes for inclusion in School Improvement Plans, Resiliency initiatives, and Social Justice clubs.

From my experience, the discipline model flows from the yard/classroom to the office and back towards the student who is ultimately blamed as the instigator in a conflict.

Incorporating restorative approaches may have the benefit of empowering students to resolve conflicts on their own or with the support of a close adult. The research herein suggests that an opportunity for students to engage directly in RPs, from a position of strength rather than on the receiving end, could empower students to take ownership for certain conflicts that occur at school directly among themselves without the need for, or reduced reliance upon, adult intervention. Information and opportunities for practice designed to empower students to adopt a restorative framework and then apply the concepts to their real life situations could be the catalyst for sustained change in a school discipline model.

Chapter 3: Resources

Resources Introduction

Next steps in my portfolio development included my designing an empowering framework to inform teachers and students about RPs and to provide practical opportunities through which students could apply the concepts in their real life classroom, yard, and social media realities. The resources I have produced are aligned with my research herein and are mindful of my two specific goals contemplated in this Portfolio endeavour: to build my skills to support teacher confidence to incorporate RPs into their relationships with students; and to develop my abilities to empower students to think and act restoratively in their interactions with one another.

I applied my research, experience, and emerging knowledge to a specific class at my school. My reasons for choosing that class are as follows:

(a) The class is a large Intermediate class. The high number of students in the class creates more challenges for the teachers attached to it to develop meaningful relationships with the students because more time investment is required supporting the learning needs, monitoring for understanding, supervising transitions, and managing behaviours. Currently, many of the office referrals that come to me in my role as VP from the Intermediate teachers in my school are for students in that specific class. Examples of reasons for the student referrals range on a continuum from minor to major incidents that include, but are not limited to:

- swearing at or speaking rudely to each other;
- hands-on behaviours between/among each other and rough play;
- spreading rumours about others (verbally and on social media);

Restorative practices in education

- inappropriate responses to change or transitions in the classroom;
- non-compliance with classroom/school routines, procedures, rules; and/or
- excluding others through actions and/or words.

I was hopeful that through this endeavour I might develop my abilities to empower the students (or at least the majority of them) to problem-solve some of their minor (and dare I hope - major!) conflicts among themselves;

(b) The class is comprised of an unequal gender mix. With more than twice as many boys than girls, the classroom dynamics are inherently askew. From my experience with this class and my observations of other classes with similar gender splits, the boys' 'issues' tend to dominate the classroom culture, leaving the girls feeling somewhat less important than their male peers. I am hopeful that the introduction of proactive and restorative circles to this particular class in my current school will support the girls' contributing their voices to the classroom community, provide a forum within which the girls feel valued, and support the boys' recognizing how their behaviours and actions may preclude the girls' experiencing inclusion;

(c) The students who identify as male in the class demonstrate a varied range of personalities and social skills. Similar to the gender inequality within the classroom, the composition of males in this class is widely diverse. From my experience, this diversity among the males typifies a general representation of most Intermediate classes and is not specific to this one class. In broad terms, there is a large group of boys whose personalities exude confidence which is manifest through the exchange of a comfortable banter with each other. They are on each other's hockey and soccer teams, they hang consistently in a set cohort during non-instructional times, they wear similar name brand clothing on casual dress days, and they demonstrate an ease with both

Restorative practices in education

relaxed and organized sports on the yard and within school intramural and team activities. In contrast, there is a smaller group of boys whose personalities are equally fascinating yet their demonstrated characteristics are revealed through quieter interests that relate to discussing video games, creating pretend scenarios on the yard, trading collector cards, and participating in lunchtime clubs including Social Justice, Tech, and Chess. Additionally, there are the few boys who meander through their Intermediate existence as independent agents often spending time alone or linking randomly but not reliably with any specific peers. What appears to be a common phenomenon across genders has unfolded among the boys with the dominant group acting in a manner that is inclusive of each other, yet exclusive to the males who do not fit the popular culture that collectively chooses who is worthy of admission to the 'cool' club. It is my hope that the inclusion of circles as a proactive and restorative strategy will not only give voice to the boys who may feel vulnerable to the prevailing force of the controlling group, but also the circle process will support the boys, who demonstrate feelings of superiority, to develop empathy toward the needs of the others and to learn to contextualize themselves as individuals within the greater class community;

(d) The learning and social profiles within the class represent a vast continuum. Many of the students are supported by Individual Education Plans (IEPs) including alternative pages for social skill development; others are connected to community partners; and a few students require significant ongoing supports from resources within our school board. To support learning and behaviours, our Intermediate SERT (Special Education Resource Teacher) works closely with the Homeroom teacher. Our Student Support Worker (SST) checks in with specific students on a regular basis related to need, and we have established a program wherein she provides weekly

Restorative practices in education

social skills training to the class. The unique strengths and needs of the students in this specific class combine to make for fun, interesting, and lively moments; however, the continuous challenges with inappropriate behaviour, poor choices, and stress/anxiety student profiles create concern on collective and individual levels. It is my hope that as I develop my abilities to support the students to incorporate restorative language and actions, together with incorporating regular circles, they will feel more empowered to treat each other with enhanced respect and to solve some of their conflicts among themselves with reduced reliance on teacher or administrative support. Additionally, it is my hope that developing my skills to increase teacher confidence to understand and inherently rely upon RPs will reduce the number of office referrals involving students from this class; and

(e) The teacher and the students seemed highly receptive to my sharing my philosophy toward RPs. My approach with all students in our Grade 7 - 12 secondary school who are referred to the office for negative behaviour is restorative, and the response from the students in this specific class was especially positive. When dealing with behavioural office referrals, my practice consistently includes listening calmly to all sides, supporting students to be honest in their recounts, facilitating students to be accountable for their behaviours, assigning fair consequences when appropriate and, most importantly in the process, bringing parties together when they are ready, to guide restoration of the harm and to create a plan for moving forward peacefully (if possible) or feasibly (at the very least). Supporting the students to move forward positively was the one specific area of continued challenge that required energy, focus, and reflection; unfortunately, students whose conflicts have been referred to the office tended to present in the same or similar situations. It was my hope that supporting the Intermediate students to invest in

Restorative practices in education

RPs would help them resolve conflicts among themselves sustainably and also help them reduce the number and intensity of repeat situations.

Upon careful consideration, and with a view to creating resources specific to the needs of Intermediate students, I produced a Narrative, a two-part Resource, and a Reflection.

Resource #1: Narrative

I designed a Narrative of my professional journey as I sought to expand teacher and student capacity to understand the philosophy, and begin to incorporate the concepts, of RPs. The goal of the Narrative is to provide a practical resource for educators who endeavour to adopt restorative approaches in their own teaching practice, specifically proactive circles and responses after conflict has occurred. The Narrative is based on my past teaching practice as a Grade 7/8 teacher in one of our Board's two alternative schools, my current administrative endeavour focused on building capacity within one Intermediate class in my school, and my experience as a student myself within the Lakehead University Master of Education program.

In the Narrative, I share the specific strategies that I developed in my efforts to support past students as a classroom teacher, and present educators in my VP role, with the intention that the Narrative will serve as a practical support for educators interested in adopting and applying RPs.

Resource #2: Pamphlet and PowerPoint

I created a two-part Reference guide designed to include helpful information and practical suggestions for Intermediate students to incorporate restorative language and actions

Restorative practices in education

into their age-appropriate conflict resolutions. The pamphlet provides practical suggestions for proactive and restorative circles, together with tips and suggestions for student-led conflict resolution. The PowerPoint is an inquiry-based learning journey providing applicable research, practical applications, potential sample scenarios, and tips for restoring harm and rebuilding relationships when things go wrong. Both resources reflect my efforts to develop my skills to inspire others to adopt restorative thinking.

Firstly, I designed a pamphlet to serve as a quick reference for Intermediate students to use independently as an at-a-glance reference. The pamphlet provides an overview of proactive and restorative circles together with incorporating a step-by-step guide for conflict resolution in the form of an acrostic mnemonic device. Currently, our Intermediate students are familiar with the **THINK** device, which they are being coached to use as a guide for speaking to one another:

T - is it Thoughtful?

H - is it Helpful?

I - is it Interesting?

N - is it Necessary?

K - is it Kind?

Success with the **THINK** prompt inspired me to create the acrostic mnemonic device, **TEAMR**, which represents the basic encapsulation of restorative actions that students could be coached to apply when conflict develops.

Secondly, I created a PowerPoint that I shared with the specific Intermediate class in my school as part of the restorative learning process in a whole class setting. Thereafter, I made the PowerPoint available to students and their families through our Office 365 OneDrive platform

Restorative practices in education

for ongoing reference. The PowerPoint includes an overview of RPs at an age appropriate level, an explanation of the use of circles, sample scenarios of conflict that are representative of the types of minor social frictions within which students find themselves involved in the classroom, on the yard, and in social media platforms. I designed the scenarios in workshop style so students could break off into guided groups to practice incorporating restorative language and actions into resolving the conflicts. Finally, the PowerPoint concludes by encouraging students to consider suggestions that empower them to adopt a restorative mindset and apply their new skills to their everyday interactions.

The two-part Reference guide (pamphlet and PowerPoint) serves as a sustainable product to which students may refer for information about, and steps to take, as they become empowered to gradually take on restorative thinking, language, and action.

Resource #3: Reflection

As a lifelong learner, self reflection is an integral component of my own personal and professional growth. Pondering upon this portfolio endeavour as a practical process to develop my own knowledge, skills, and confidence to explain and model RPs for educators and teachers, I shared my concluding thoughts in a brief Reflection. My reflection serves as a helpful forum within which I acknowledge my successes, grapple with my challenges, and set new goals moving forward. I wondered specifically:

- My Goals: Did I accomplish the two goals I set out to achieve? Did I develop my skills to build teacher confidence and my abilities to empower students?

Restorative practices in education

- My Successes: Do I feel more confident applying Restorative Practices in my responses to student conflict and in my coaching of others?
- My Challenges: Did I create resources that are reflective of my thinking? Are the resources helpful tools for educators and students?
- Next Steps: I wonder if this portfolio process was a positive choice for me in my role as VP at this secondary high school? How will I move forward personally and professionally?

The reflection serves as a consolidation of my investment in this portfolio endeavour.

Through gentle self examination, I attempted to contextualize my learning with my past experiences and my current understanding of RPs at the outset of my engagement with this project. Thereafter, it was my intention that through honest reflection, I would be in an informed position to set new goals for my personal and professional growth.

Chapter 4: Products

Narrative: A Tool for Educators

The goal of this Narrative tool is to provide a practical resource for educators who endeavour to adopt restorative approaches in their own teaching practice. The Narrative is organized into three sections as follows:

Narrative Introduction: I review and further explain my personal philosophy toward restorative thinking. As I set out in the Portfolio Introduction, my history growing up in a challenging family situation resulted in my becoming the peacemaker and developing a restorative mindset that focuses on relationship building at the heart of preventing and restoring conflict. I have created this Narrative tool specifically to serve as a 'how to' guide for educators who are interested in adopting proactive circles as a preventative strategy and responding restoratively after conflict has occurred;

Proactive Classroom Circles - A Preventative Strategy: Incorporating regular classroom circles into teaching practice as a proactive strategy before things go wrong establishes a collaborative problem-solving foundation within a classroom community. In this section, I specifically set out concrete steps that educators can follow to adopt and apply proactive classroom circles into their classroom routines before conflict occurs;

Restorative Responses to Conflict - A Reactive Response: Notwithstanding educators' best efforts to lay a foundation to prevent student conflict and to empower students to sort through their own peer frictions, there are times in schools when conflicts require adult guidance to

Restorative practices in education

support moving forward. In this section, I set out steps that educators can follow when responding to students after conflict has occurred.

Introduction

In my personal life, I continue to develop a restorative mindset. For me, thinking restoratively manifests in a natural inclination to feel empathy for the predicaments that impulsive or unfortunate choices have created for my family members and friends. I feel sincere concern for a recipient of harm, but yet I also have compassion for a wrongdoer. I am confident that the empathy I feel for someone close to me who has caused harm to another stems from poor choices I've made in my own life and the resultant gratitude I've felt toward those open-minded people who have supported me through my efforts to achieve forgiveness and to restore relationships. I share this information, not as a testimonial, but in an effort to explain the foundation for my restorative approach with others.

During my past teaching practice, I spent seven years as a Grade 7/8 permanent teacher at one of our Board's two alternative Grades 7 - 12 schools where I incorporated proactive and restorative circles into my teaching practice. All of the students at the school were identified with, or fit, the LD exceptionality, and although they were not initially open to the idea of RPs and/or circles, they grew to rely upon the approach. In my program, I supported students through my own developing philosophy of RPs; I scheduled regular proactive circles as a means to build cohesion within our classroom community, and I responded to harm and hurt resultant from conflict between/among students from a restorative approach. In my Narrative, I drew upon my past professional practice and expanded my personal philosophy. In my role as VP at a

Restorative practices in education

Grade 7 - 12 secondary school, I continued to develop my skills to support the implementation of RPs into an Intermediate classroom through sharing and modeling my experiences. I was involved in meetings and conversations with the Intermediate teaching team as I guided them through my expanding philosophy of RPs, and we collaborated together to support the students' to adopt restorative thinking and language into their peer interactions. In my Narrative, I set-out my thoughts and experiences for incorporating a restorative mindset through the use of proactive circles and restorative responses to conflict.

From a professional perspective, my restorative philosophy guides my responses to conflict and supports my courageous conversations with students. As a teacher, I gravitated toward restorative approaches with my own classroom of Intermediate students because I witnessed first-hand the long-lasting positive benefits of relationship building. Previously, as an Intermediate teacher in an alternative school with my board, I taught students who were not only identified with learning challenges, but most were also from disadvantaged family situations. Incorporating proactive classroom circles and responding to conflict restoratively supported my building relationships with my students, understanding their reasoning, creating a cohesive classroom community, and establishing a safe space for all of us to learn and thrive in an environment of trust. Now in my current administrative role, my restorative philosophy underpins my relationships with students and educators in my school because I value the collaborative community culture created by restorative approaches. As a secondary VP, restorative beliefs support my approaching all students in my school with an open-minded attitude, listening to truly hear their concerns, and facilitating the resolution of disputes from an equitable and sustainable perspective. I endeavour to model my restorative approach with

Restorative practices in education

educators in the school to support their responding to students with an open mindset that moves toward supporting accountability and that moves away from applying punitive-only consequences. In this Narrative, I set out the steps that educators may follow:

- (a) before conflict occurs - in the form of regular proactive classroom circles; and
- (b) after conflict occurs - in the form of restorative responses.

Proactive Classroom Circles - A Preventative Strategy

RPs build a foundation of community building and collective problem solving before conflict occurs. In this section, I set out practical recommendations for educators who are interested in incorporating regular proactive classroom circles in their weekly routines. Establishing a regular check-in procedure that enhances the culture of a classroom is an important strategy for facilitating communication, building classroom community, and discussing potential issues. I have experienced success in my prior teaching practice through scheduling proactive classroom circles and creating space for impromptu and inclusive classroom conversations. As an Intermediate teacher, I scheduled weekly proactive classroom circles. Those circles became a foundation for building relationships, not only among all of my students, but also between my students and me, individually and collectively. We collaborated to work through any issues that affected our class, and students had the opportunity to bring forward challenges they were experiencing in the halls or on the yard. With set parameters, the circle process supports students' learning social skills, practicing problem-solving strategies, trying open-minded thinking, developing the ability to listen to each other, and most importantly,

Restorative practices in education

feeling connected to a caring community. As a concrete method to encapsulate and package my past experiences using proactive classroom circles, this portion of the Narrative serves as a practical guide for educators who desire to incorporate regular proactive circles into their classroom teaching practice.

Resulting from this past teaching experience, and my current endeavours to hone my own skills to build capacity for others, I recommend the following simple five-steps to support proactive classroom circles:

1. Establish guiding principles. As a whole class, brainstorm ideas for classroom circle 'rules' and record main themes.

When I initially began the process of incorporating proactive circles into my Grade 7/8 classroom as a teacher, I struggled to find a balance between imposing yet another set of rules onto my students and creating an environment within which they could exercise some control working through concerns. The goal of the circle process was to create an open, positive, organized forum for problem solving; thus, to begin without boundaries, I felt, might invite chaos. I was, however, hesitant to present the idea of regular, proactive circles within a framework of do's and don'ts for fear that the potential benefits might be lost in their collective thinking that the model was yet another top-down initiative. I chose to explain the reasoning and the process to my classes with the suggestion that we co-construct guidelines that would work for us. The following guidelines come from the brainstorming efforts of one of my classes. Other classes came up with extremely similar variations.

Restorative practices in education

(a) Only one person speaks at time. Initially, we chose to begin our proactive circle process by using a talking piece; however, over time, the talking piece became redundant because the students became more skilled at, and interested in, listening to one another.

(b) Listen respectfully to each other. During the first few circles, my students struggled to listen for understanding rather than waiting their turns to respond and/or talk. With regular practice, they became increasingly engaged with, and respectful of, the process.

(c) Circle discussions belong to our class. I always clarified to ensure students knew that not sharing circle discussion did not include family members and trusted school adults.

Students should be encouraged to refrain from sharing the business of the circle with other students in the school; however, they should always be encouraged to inform their family members and trusted adults of any event that affects them at school. Personally, I value the significance of a close home-school relationship to support students in a manner that is consistent and aligned; encouraging students to share their school experiences with their family members lends itself to open communication. Professionally, I have observed that all students benefit from feeling connected to at least one caring adult in a school so if something goes wrong they have a safe go-to person; reminding students that they can always discuss issues with their ‘person’ also promotes unrestricted dialogue on an individual level and creates a foundation for a student to receive support before an issue becomes significantly serious.

2. Begin with a round that sets a positive tone and encourages inclusivity. As an example, ask each student to share a compliment or give a thank you to someone else in the circle. With

Restorative practices in education

modelling and practice, the students will be able to articulate increasingly more specific thoughts (for example: less of “Thanks (name) for being my friend” and more of “Thanks (name) for helping me understand the math lesson yesterday.”) Eventually, with gentle and consistent prompting, circle participants will begin to recognize that some students may receive more recognition than others (or that a few students don’t receive any), and collectively they will evolve in a more inclusive manner naturally.

3. Ask for comments or observations about any aspect of the classroom that affects the entire class. A classroom is a communal space, and it’s important for students to feel that their input and ideas are valued. For example, a suggestion might offer that having the lights turned off during work periods makes the atmosphere in the room feel calmer or an observation might convey ideas relating to classroom desk arrangements.

4. Provide an opportunity for students to bring forward any issues that need solving. Students not only have the open platform to share their school-related concerns in a safe and supportive environment but they also have the forum within which to learn to be supportive, caring peers. From my experience, I recommend setting parameters that include:

- (a) No mentioning any specific names;
- (b) Only discuss school-related problems; and
- (c) Only offer serious solutions.

Restorative practices in education

5. Conclude with a fun, relaxing round that supports positive team building.

Some examples that I have used successfully include: Would you rather be a cat or a dog (an airplane or a train/a hero or a villain, etc.); Name your favourite sports team (pizza topping, colour, singer, movie, etc.); and/or My favourite day of the week is ** because ... (etc.). Ending with a light, inclusive round ensures that all participants have had a voice and been included in the circle process.

Restorative Responses to Conflict - A Reactive Response

RPs support repair of harm and relationship building after conflict occurs. In this section, I set out practical recommendations for educators who desire to respond restoratively to conflict between/among students. As a teacher of a dynamic classroom of busy students representing a wide-range of social, emotional, and learning needs, I often intervened when my students experienced conflict in the classroom or on the yard. Initially, I made some mistakes, some of which included: trying too hard to solve a problem on my students' behalves; jumping to conclusions about fault; applying consequences without facilitating repair of a friendship; or speaking over my students' voices and not involving them in the resolution process. Eventually, when my developing personal restorative philosophy became an integral component of my supportive approach in responding to student conflict, my confidence and skills increased. Now, in my current role as a high school Vice Principal, I am fully committed to responding from a restorative paradigm. When conflict escalates beyond students' abilities to resolve an issue and reaches the point where adult intervention is necessary, responding restoratively has the potential to support students' moving forward in a manner that may salvage the friendship, support accountability, and help participants to prevent a similar, repeat situation. Based on my past

Restorative practices in education

experiences as an Intermediate classroom teacher and my developing administrative practice, I have identified the following steps that I now feel are essential for responding to conflict restoratively.

1. Listening is the most important component of a restorative philosophy. When students experience conflict, an adult might assume details based on the profiles of the participants, most of whom become 'known' to school staff. Choosing not to jump to a conclusion can be challenging, especially during a busy day with multiple behaviour issues; however, entertaining an open mind when a conflict is reported aligns with restorative thinking and creates its own 'calm in the storm.' Try to listen to the perspectives of all of the participants without judgment.
2. Value student confidentiality by speaking separately and privately with the students involved. Each student has a unique perspective accompanied by a personal backstory of the events that led up to the conflict. I have observed that students are usually honest, forthcoming, and appreciative when they feel that their input is heard and valued. Avoid asking students for details in front of each other.
3. Pause and reflect on the details that have been shared about a conflict, and after listening to the differing perspectives, ponder which voices may be missing from the story. Often, I have gleaned that speaking with a few additional students whose involvement is peripheral has provided key information. By the time I've interviewed all of the students involved, I am usually able to piece together the genesis of a conflict and glean a sense of the manner in which the harm

Restorative practices in education

unfolded together with forming a more comprehensive understanding of which party/parties may need encouragement to accept accountability and who has been affected.

4. Encourage sincere interactions by reminding students of the value of honesty and reassuring them that if they have made impulsive or poor choices, there isn't anything we can't solve or fix so long as they move forward with integrity. From my experience, when students are supported through their mistakes, most will admit to a wrongdoing, show themselves in an honest manner, take responsibility for their actions, and voice their appreciation for the opportunity to make right the harm they have caused.

5. Consequences for negative behaviours should be appropriate and progressive. A restorative mindset to discipline is not indicative of 'easy' or 'pushover' classroom management or administration. Responding restoratively to negative or harmful behaviours involves supporting students:

- (a) to take responsibility by demonstrating integrity and honesty and;
- (b) to be accountable by accepting and serving an appropriate consequence.

Where possible, consequences should be closely aligned with the nature of the harm caused and appropriate for the age/maturity level of the students. I have noticed that natural consequences resultant from students' actions are often an effective deterrent against repeat behaviours. An example of a natural consequence is loss of time from a preferred activity; for example, if a conflict occurs during recess, time is lost while resolving the issue.

Restorative practices in education

6. Mitigating Factors are important considerations when responding to student conflict. In most schools, there are set guidelines that govern responses to wrongdoing; however, from a restorative perspective, I feel that flexibility is highly important. Mitigating factors should be considered when determining consequences, including (but not limited to):

- Does the child have special needs?
- Is the behaviour new or repeat?
- Have there been any significant changes in the child's life?
- What are the risks of repeat incidents?

I believe in the importance of considering individual circumstances and responding equitably based on students' maturity, understanding, reaction, and ability to process next steps.

7. Move forward by involving the students who were engaged in a problem in the creation of a plan, formal or informal. Depending on the nature of the conflict, students may welcome the opportunity for facilitated restoration; however, they will most likely require time apart to react, process, and reflect. I have experienced success setting a plan with students that includes their avoiding speaking to, or about each other, (especially using social media as a platform to continue an argument or to provoke a response) until the next morning when I bring them together with me for a restorative conversation.

8. Restoration of a relationship can be a significant component of forgiveness. In minor conflicts, often a confidential, supportive conversation that contextualizes the situation by asking, "What happened? Who has been harmed? What needs to happen?" (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007) is sufficient for a wrongdoer to recognize the harm s/he has caused and to want to

Restorative practices in education

restore the relationship. From my experience, bringing both sides together often results in a sincere apology, acceptance of same, and both sides making their own plan for restoration of the relationship.

In a situation where a conflict between students has been especially egregious in nature (physical or threatening), I separate the parties for the remainder of the day and propose a timeframe for them to meet with me, often the next day or after the serving of a consequence (for example: detention or suspension). When we do come together, I set the tone by ensuring the conversation is private (away from other peers), and I facilitate each party's having the opportunity to speak openly and honestly as follows:

- Recap, briefly, the reason for the meeting;
- Express empathy for the person harmed and ensure that s/he is supported to share how the harm made him/her feel, and what he/she needs to move forward;
- Give the wrongdoer time to respond, express his/her reactions, and support him/her sharing what he/she needs to move forward;
- Support the wrongdoer to make things right in a manner that honours the expressed needs of the person harmed.

From my experience, when serious or repeated harm has been caused, I strongly advocate that involving parents or guardians on both sides is extremely important. Home-school communication supports students in an enhanced manner that is continual and holistic by providing valuable reassurance for a student who has been harmed and providing helpful reminders for a student who may struggle with appropriate choices or impulse control.

Restorative practices in education

9. Rebuilding the relationship, in my opinion, is the most important aspect of RPs. Spend time focusing on the value of the friendship and help the parties collaborate on a plan to move forward together which includes how the harm can be restored and the relationship rebuilt. If the parties need more time, I set a time/date for us to come together again with an interim plan for the peers to navigate shared spaces/people/resources.

10. Restitution, when appropriate, can be factored into the plan to move forward. If a victim has lost preferred time or a privilege as a result of the conflict, the plan could involve the wrongdoer giving some of his/her own time/privilege to the person harmed. If the victim has suffered damage to, or loss of, a possession, I endeavour to connect the parents/guardians of both sides together to work out appropriate restitution.

11. Following up on minor conflict resolution may require checking in for short periods of time on the status of the relationship to ensure that the restoration process has been successful. For more serious conflicts, I touch base with each side regularly until I feel comfortable that the relationship has settled and the parties are moving forward productively. If there are signs of continued conflict, regular follow up meetings or full support team meetings may be recommended.

In summary, my philosophy toward Restorative Practices in education values proactive measures and restorative responses. From my research, I gleaned an understanding that schools are relational spaces (McCluskey et al. 2008b). Building upon the concept that school cultures rely upon relationships, my experiences support incorporating RPs as a response to student

Restorative practices in education

conflict because repairing harm and moving forward collaboratively are inherently social constructs that nurture bonds of belonging (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). By investing in regular check-ins and ongoing supportive conversations, educators have the opportunity to cultivate positive and supportive classroom communities. Proactive circles are, in my opinion, an excellent forum within which adults may model respectful relationship building strategies (integrity, openness, inclusion), and students may practice ‘walking the talk’ of restorative thinking (Hopkins, 2002). From my experiences, I have observed students’ evolving their regular proactive classroom circles from initial awkward conversations into occasions of rich problem solving dialogue as a cohesive classroom community (Zwicky, 2015). As a response to conflict, a restorative mindset supports maintaining an open attitude, listening to both sides, assigning an appropriate consequence, supporting restoration and restitution, and following up (Shaw, 2007). From my ongoing experience, RPs have the potential to create systemic change in school cultures by moving away from a top-down imposed model of managing behaviours and delivering discipline toward a collaborative and co-constructed framework that values relationships and community.

PowerPoint and Pamphlet: Tools for Students

As a practical means to apply my knowledge and to develop my skills supporting student learning around RPs, I created two resources designed to serve as references for Intermediate students: an inquiry-based PowerPoint and an at-a-glance pamphlet.

The PowerPoint is organized to align with my research in a linear manner. Working toward achieving my goal of developing my abilities to explain and model the theory, practicalities, and context of restorative thinking, I personally led the PowerPoint inquiry in the focus class in my school. By meeting with the class on a regular basis as we explored the information contained in the PowerPoint together, I honed my skills to share my thinking and to apply my growing knowledge in a realistic context.

The Pamphlet is designed as a quick reference for Intermediate students by providing prompts for applying restorative thinking to their interactions with peers at school. By creating the mnemonic **TEAMR**, my intention was to capture the essence of restorative thinking in a simple tool that can be applied to students' daily interactions:

Take time out.

Explain your side.

Ask to hear the other side.

Make a plan to move forward.

Restore the harm.

The pamphlet is a reflection of my thinking process as I endeavoured to develop my abilities to support students' independently solving typical conflicts that arise in their peer relationships at school.

Restorative practices in education

The slides for the two-page Pamphlet and the PowerPoint are both included in hard copy form at the end of this portfolio.

Pamphlet (Page 64)

PowerPoint (Page 66)

Reflection: A Tool for Growth

As I complete the formal process of my journey to explore RPs in education through this portfolio project, I embrace the opportunity to step back and reflect on my personal and professional growth. I endeavoured to continue developing my own skills to respond restoratively to student conflict together with finding methods to build capacity for educators who also wished to learn more about and incorporate RPs in their teaching practice and to inspire students to understand and apply RPs to their interactions with each other. Through the portfolio process, I had the opportunity to continue developing my own restorative growth within the context of my emerging administrative practice and to create products that addressed the gaps I observed in the research and my experiences. My goals at the outset of this portfolio journey were centered around developing my skills and abilities to: support educators to develop their confidence to incorporate RPs into relationships with students; and to extend the restorative model into the hands of students through education and practice. I accomplished my goals within this portfolio process through research and the creation of specific products, all as set out herein.

1. Literature Review of RPs Research

I set out to deepen my understanding of the theory, practicalities, and context of RPs in educational settings, specifically related to my previous position as an Intermediate teacher and my current role as secondary VP. The information I learned solidified my understanding that school cultures are strengthened when restorative thinking is embraced as a united approach in schools. Exploring the successes and challenges of RPs implementation and application by other educators through the research connected me with informed perspectives. I wondered how I could support educators to adopt a proactive mindset and develop the skills to respond to student

Restorative practices in education

conflict restoratively. This internal debate brought on by the research in the literature review led directly to the creation of the Narrative to support educators' feeling more confident to incorporate proactive circles as a preventative strategy and to respond restoratively when conflict does occur. Within my research, I noticed the absence of student voice as active participants in the restorative process. I wondered how I could empower students to take ownership for, and work toward, resolving conflicts that occur in schools focusing on restoring and valuing relationships, with decreased adult dependence and increased personal independence. This eventually led to the at-a-glance pamphlet and an inquiry PowerPoint to support students' applying restorative strategies to their interactions with each other.

2. A Narrative Tool for Educators

I chose to write a Narrative that could realistically serve as a step-by-step resource for educators to use as a 'how-to' guide for adopting proactive classroom circles and which could serve as a helpful resource for responding to students after conflict has occurred. Having been a classroom teacher, I understand the frustration when guides for educators are written conceptually, leaving the practical application up to teachers to figure out. I met with the teacher of my focus Intermediate class to discuss my restorative perspective and hear her needs for the development of helpful material. In response, I wrote the Narrative with the intention that teachers would have a meaningful and useful support. From my experience, and the ongoing feedback I gleaned from dialogue with educators, incorporating proactive circles is a more objective situation that lends itself to step-by-step directions, with the only real variables being the consolidation of the brainstorming to create guiding principles and the nature of the

Restorative practices in education

collective classroom challenges that students choose to discuss. Therefore, I wrote the section of the Narrative ‘Proactive Classroom Circles - A Preventative Strategy’ as a step-by-step guide.

Responding to student conflict after it occurs is a much more subjective process, and I believe the challenging and changing parameters contribute to a lack of confidence on the part of educators leading them to refer conflict to the office rather than attempt facilitation between students. As a result, I wrote the section of the guide ‘Restorative Responses to Conflict - A Reactive Response’ as a sequential list of recommendations to which educators can refer and apply the information as each section applies, or not, to an individual situation. To ensure the reliability of my Narrative product:

- I supported the teacher of my focus Intermediate class to incorporate regular proactive circles into her teaching practice following the five-step guide I had created; and
- I monitored my responses to office referrals for student conflict from the beginning of the school year as the basis for continually updating and revising the conflict response portion of the Narrative.

3. A Pamphlet and PowerPoint for Students

For students, I created a simple at-a-glance pamphlet and an inquiry-based PowerPoint that allows them the opportunity, either independently or with a teacher facilitator, to understand and apply restorative responses to their conflicts. To ensure the reliability of my products, I led the PowerPoint inquiry with my focus Intermediate class over the course of approximately two months. Although I had initially intended to lead them through a few slides every day for a couple of weeks, interruptions in the form of inclement weather days, school events, and days involved in professional development prevented my doing so. In retrospect, I believe that the

Restorative practices in education

forced wait time in between inquiry sessions was actually extremely helpful because students had time to absorb the material and to reflect on the concepts/activities which supported their collective realization that they have control over their responses to each other when conflicts occur. I recommend giving students time to explore the resource, ponder it, and then specifically model referencing the pamphlet when making their way through the sample conflicts in the PowerPoint resource.

4. A Concluding Reflection

In considering my experiences, successes, challenges, and next steps. I realized that I needed to focus on increasing my own capacity by developing my skills to build teacher confidence and my abilities to empower students. I am confident that choosing the portfolio process was the appropriate method through which I could experience growth in the achievement of those goals. By applying my research to the creation of practical tools, I consolidated my knowledge and experience through the process of designing tangible resources for educators and students. The added layer of personally delivering resource content provided me with the opportunity to deepen my own understanding of the material and shifted me into the position of explaining my thinking in an authentic learning environment. I entered this portfolio experience feeling that I could articulate restorative thinking with my colleagues and students; however, through the practical application component with its resultant successes and challenges, I now leave this project feeling that my skills to model and inspire others are strengthened.

My Successes: In my current role as secondary VP, I have felt pressure to jump to prescribed outcomes in response to student conflict. As a result of living the application of my research and applying my past experiences and new learning through the portfolio process, I

Restorative practices in education

notice that I am more confident layering in my restorative philosophy when responding to conflict. I still assign appropriate consequences, as I always did; however, I do not feel as rushed to hasten my way through the investigative process. I am focusing much less on who is in the ‘wrong’ and attending more to the nature and root causes when harm has been caused; thus, I feel increasingly more committed to taking the time needed to support relationship building. As my dedication to RPs has strengthened, I observe, too, that my confidence to model my responses to discipline referrals has also increased leading me to be more inclusive in my conversations with the result that my colleagues benefit from hearing/seeing me respond restoratively to students.

Collaborating through the PowerPoint inquiry and participating in the conflict scenarios with students was an enlightening experience. Having the opportunity to understand first-hand Intermediate students’ perspectives during typical conflicts has supported my developing more empathy for their school realities. The honest feedback I gleaned now informs my interactions with the students by helping me to respond to them during times of conflict in a manner that is less top-down and more inclusive of their individual circumstances. I feel more confident stepping back and thoughtfully choosing language that empowers students collaboratively to resolve an issue rather than taking over the situation and solving it for them.

My Challenges: Schools can be places of judgement. An inherent component of being an administrator includes receiving feedback that I haven’t done enough to deter negative behaviour or responded strongly enough to disruptive student conflicts. From my experience, the term ‘Restorative Practices’ in education tends to evoke images of relaxed administrative discipline approaches that do not respond adequately when harm has been caused. Although my

Restorative practices in education

research and my experience indicate otherwise, the most comprehensive challenge I continue to face from educators relates to the misinformation that a restorative approach does not include appropriate consequences. The challenge that responding restoratively negates consequences is not new to this project, but rather, it appears to be an entrenched mindset from the perspective of traditional educators. From my observations and experiences, the impetus for moving from punitive-only to restorative responses is an initiative from central administration, flowing through school administration to teachers. Supporting traditional educators to recognize that the initial requirement for extra time invested in restorative responses leads to long term gains in the form of student accountability and enhanced school relationships will, I believe, help create the culture of change required.

Although the resources I created for this portfolio supported my clarifying the theory, practicalities, and context of RPs, all of which clearly include the assigning of appropriate consequences, I continue to field similar preconceived misinformation about the effectiveness of restorative approaches from students. Students may be skeptical of the restorative process, despite appreciating the opportunity to share their perspectives during and after conflict. Perhaps sometimes students simply articulate what they think adults wish to hear in order to move on from conflict. The ongoing dialogue among the students, their teacher, and me helped me to recognize that I may use too many words and take too long applying restorative language when an office referral for our Intermediate students is for a minor matter.

I am hopeful that my increased knowledge, growing experience, and enhanced confidence will slowly mitigate the judgement that diminishes RPs in schools and ultimately encourage others to adopt a restorative mindset.

Restorative practices in education

Next Steps: At the conclusion of this process, I feel grateful not only that I opted to complete a portfolio, but also that I chose the topic of RPs in education. Through the portfolio, I had the opportunity to align my research with practical application; thus, I leave this journey feeling that my skills to support teachers and my confidence to respond to students are solidified. I realize, however, that learning, applying, and promoting RPs in schools is not an initiative that lends itself to ‘finishing’ but remains an ongoing process. Notwithstanding my coming to the end of this formal portfolio endeavour, inspiring a school culture to adopt a restorative mindset will be a continuous journey. My commitment to the value of a restorative responses supports my moving forward by staying the course. I will continue to respond to office referrals for student conflict in a manner that is restorative by assigning an appropriate consequence and focusing on supporting student accountability which includes restoring harm and rebuilding relationships. Moving forward, I have three long-term goals in mind.

Firstly, my main focus is on empowering students to learn about, understand, adopt, and apply restorative thinking to their interactions with each other. I believe that traditional responses to discipline may have created an environment that placed too much emphasis on the need for adult interference when students have conflict and removed the problem-solving aspect away from students. In the short term, during the remainder of this school year I plan to share my pamphlet and PowerPoint with all of our Intermediate teaching team, provide them with an interactive in-service on the delivery of the products, and offer my support as they incorporate the pamphlet and PowerPoint resources into their teaching practice. In this way, I will be setting the foundation for our new Grade 7 Intermediate students to receive the opportunity as they enter our school. For next year, when our Grade 8 students enter Grade 9, I will create and offer

Restorative practices in education

in-service training to our Grade 9 teachers to ensure follow up and follow through for the Grade 8 students with the RPs information. The enhanced training at the Grade 9 level will address the freedom of movement in and out of the school, the rotary system which includes accountability to four teachers instead of one homeroom teacher, and updated scenarios that reflect the life a high school student.

Secondly, I am planning to incorporate RPs information into staff meetings to share my thinking and work toward creating an additional layer of supporting students by helping the teachers to understand the research and benefits of a whole school culture that adopts restorative thinking, including teachers' feeling more confident to respond to student conflict in a manner that is streamlined and consistent. At this point, I plan to create a PowerPoint similar to the student inquiry PowerPoint (appropriate for adults) incorporating guiding questions, explaining/contextualizing the research, and setting out scenarios that support teachers' role-playing to facilitate common student conflicts that occur in their classrooms, in the halls, and online. It will be important for me to set out the differences between minor conflicts that are appropriate for educators to respond to (for example, arguments), and those that are more serious and should be referred to the office (for example, physical fighting) to ensure that there is no confusion.

Thirdly, I plan to share my Narrative, Pamphlet, and Powerpoint at a board Vice Principal meeting to glean feedback and input that will widen my lens. Our board's central administration welcomes offers to share best practices, and I am hopeful that sharing my portfolio journey with an emphasis on student empowerment to adopt restorative thinking will provide a valuable resource to my colleagues. More importantly, however, I will gain valuable

Restorative practices in education

feedback from other administrators about their experiences incorporating, modelling, applying, and inspiring RPs that will inform my own administrative practice and support my first goal of empowering students to adopt restorative approaches and my second goal of sharing restorative information at staff meetings.

My passion for, and commitment to, RPs in my professional capacity remains strong, I believe that my personal dedication to relationship building as the foundation for creating meaning in life will continue to support my perseverance and forward momentum.

Portfolio Conclusion

My Portfolio focused on my interest in RPs in educational settings. Though this project, I aligned my research with my personal and professional experiences with a view to enhancing my comprehensive knowledge of RPs together with developing my skills and strategies for restorative implementation in my own administrative practice.

As a new secondary Vice Principal, issues and challenges relating to discipline have become my responsibility. By approaching conflict and wrongdoing from a restorative perspective, I endeavour to support students not only to be accountable for their choices but also to foster a mindset that seeks to repair harm and restore relationships.

My goals at the outset of this Portfolio involved building my skills to support educators' incorporating proactive circles and responding to conflict restoratively together with developing my abilities to explain and model the theory, practicalities, and context of restorative thinking for students. Taking a practical approach, I hope that honing my own skills and increasing my own confidence through this process will lay the foundation for my moving forward to create positive change within the culture of my school by supporting the understanding of restorative thinking, language, and action.

The products I created were: a Narrative detailing my journey in a manner that serves as an effective tool for Intermediate teachers to consult; a two-part Resource which serves as a guide for Intermediate students to support their restorative thinking and progress; and a Reflection that summarizes my experience and serves as a platform for contextualizing my Portfolio experience vis-a-vis my goals successes, challenges, and next steps. I am confident that the components contained in this Portfolio process have supported my personal and

Restorative practices in education

professional growth to understand, implement, and inspire RPs. More specifically through my engagement in this Portfolio process, I have applied the concepts of restorative thinking to my own administrative practice, resulting in my forging stronger relationships with school staff and students and enhancing my own confidence to articulate, model, and apply RPs within our school community. I have a plan to move forward focusing on empowering students to adopt restorative thinking, which not only benefits them while at school, but also as they move onto post-secondary education and the workforce as responsible and mature adults. Restorative skills - accountability, relationship building, empathy - become natural extensions of a person's character and will support students' on their life path in a manner that is second nature.

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Theory

RPs focuses on rebuilding relationships as an important response to conflict.



When YOU think restoratively, your mindset shifts from following and enforcing rules, to identifying who has been harmed, what their needs are, and how the harm can be repaired.

Restorative Practices: A Resource for Intermediate Students

Prepared by Catherine English
as a component of a Portfolio
in partial fulfillment of the
degree of Master of
Education, Lakehead
University, Spring 2018.



When YOU listen to understand, you become part of any solution. Apply TEAMR to solve conflicts.

Context

RPs considers everyone's feelings, needs, and ideas for moving forward together.



**When YOU act restoratively, you think about:
What happened?
Who has been harmed?
What needs to happen?
Problems are resolved and needs are met.**

TEAMR

PROACTIVE CLASSROOM CIRCLES: Before something goes wrong, build community by fostering relationship building and creating the environment for students and teachers to come together as a cohesive, supportive community to share ideas, resolve issues, and discuss challenges:

- **Confidentiality:** topics discussed in the circle stay in the circle (always with the exception of family and trusted school adults);
- **Speaking:** only one person talks at a time (use a talking piece);
- **Listening:** tune in to the person speaking (think about the message);
- **Tone:** begin by sharing a positive thought (a compliment, a thank you, or an encouragement).

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES: When something goes wrong, support healing by providing a safe opportunity for everyone involved in a conflict to express their individual perspectives, hear the other side of a conflict, create a plan to move forward, and restore the relationship:

- **Time:** when serious conflicts occur, participants need time apart to reflect (some people need more/less time than others);
- **Talk:** when everyone involved is ready, agree to talk in a safe space. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to share their feelings, and listen to hear (consider asking a trusted peer or adult to facilitate);
- **Plan:** after everyone has been heard, work together to make a plan to move forward (even if that means giving each other more space, checking in with a designated third party, or meeting again);
- **Restore:** follow the plan to work toward rebuilding the relationship.

Take time out.

Explain your side.

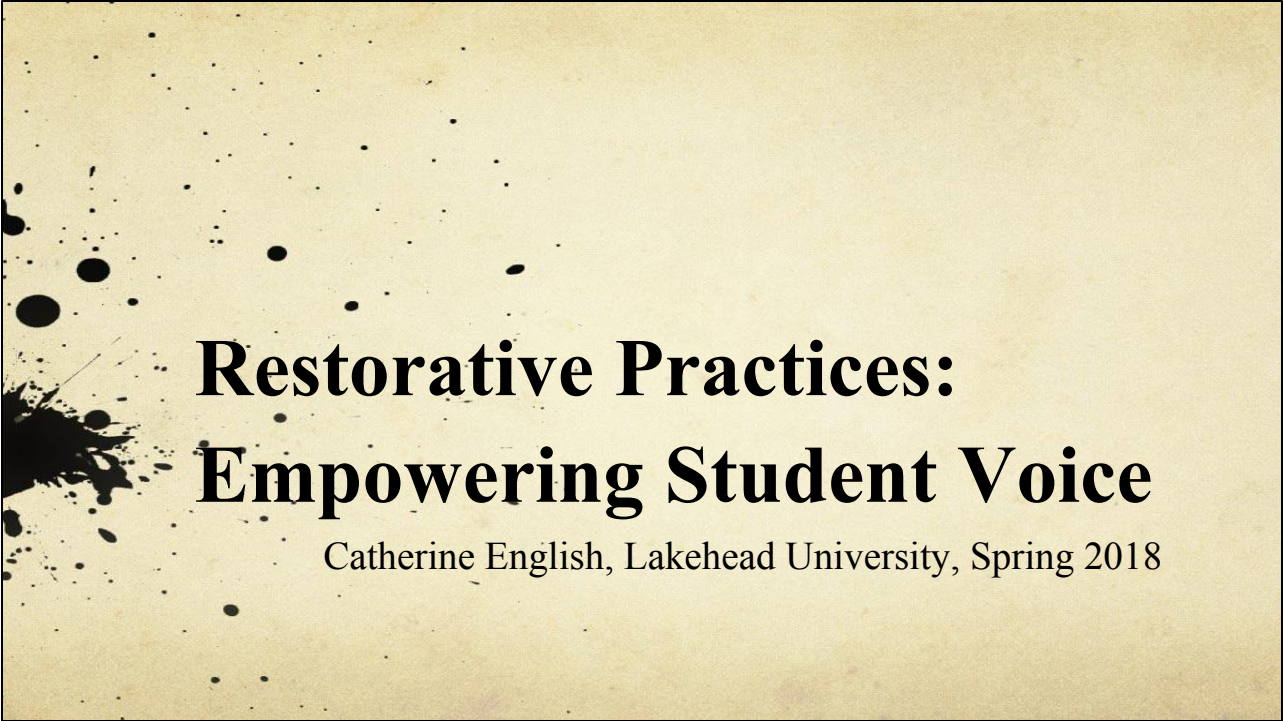
Ask to hear the other side.

Make a plan to move forward.

Restore the harm.



Put the TEAMR restorative approach in your social toolbox. If something goes wrong in a relationship, apply the TEAMR strategy and collaborate with the other person. You can solve the problem TOGETHER.



Restorative Practices: Empowering Student Voice

Catherine English, Lakehead University, Spring 2018

This resource has been created as a component of a Portfolio in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education, Lakehead University, Spring 2018.

Restorative Practices: Empowering Student Voice

This PowerPoint has been created by Catherine English:

- as a component of a Portfolio in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education, Lakehead University, Spring 2018;
- as a resource for Intermediate teachers and students to explore and practice the theory, approach, and application of Restorative Practices in school; and
- to share relevant research relating to Restorative Practices for students and teachers at the Intermediate level.

The topics and information contained on the various slides is supported by relevant research, which is presented in red text with the specific references listed in the applicable notes sections.

Restorative Practices: Empowering Student Voice

This PowerPoint has been organized as an inquiry-based learning journey to support discovery about Restorative Practices for Intermediate students and teachers, as follows:

- A Theoretical Approach: Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices, slides 5 - 15;
- A Practical Approach: Restorative Practices in Educational Settings, slides 16 - 25; and
- A Contextual Approach: Responses to Restorative Practices, slides 26 - 35.

This inquiry resource is organized as follows:
Theoretical Approach – blue text;
Practical Approach – green text;
Contextual Approach – purple text;
Supporting and relevant research – red text.

Learning Goals

Through the learning process:

Intermediate students will develop skills to: - and -

Intermediate teachers will develop confidence supporting students to:

- understand the philosophy of Restorative Practices;
- feel empowered to think and act restoratively in interactions with peers;
- practice applying Restorative Practices to everyday situations; and
- engage in Circle Processes for communication and restoration.

Learning Goals: This resource has been created as an inquiry-based learning experience for Intermediate teachers and students.

The inquiry has been designed for use as a collaborative exploration by the teacher and the students together, or if preferable as an independent study.

A Theoretical Approach:

Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices, as a supportive response to discipline issues in schools, originated from the use of Restorative Justice in the criminal justice field. A restorative approach within educational contexts supports the assigning of appropriate consequences within a progressive model with the additional and significant component of encouraging accountability that emphasizes empathy and repair of harm.

Within the Theoretical Approach component of our Restorative Practices inquiry, we will explore school relationships, responses to challenges that occur in those relationships, school discipline and consequences, together with learning how restorative thinking supports rebuilding and resolution.

Theoretical Approach Framework – overview and introduction.

Relationships: an Exploration

- What are relationships?
- Do you need relationships?
- Identify any relationships you may have in your school setting.
- Discuss any responsibilities/feelings that come with your school relationships?

Explore the wide variety of school relationships that develop over the history of students' school lives, for example: between/among peers (very close friends, acquaintances, students they see but don't know), teachers, school staff (EAs, secretaries, custodians), administrators, supportive professionals (occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, psychologists), etc.

Responses may be discussed as whole class, or students may be arranged into small groups/partners.

Record and share key ideas to the last question, for example: disappointment, forgiveness, commonalities, group cliques and dynamics, and/or peer pressure.

Relationships: an Exploration

The RESEARCH tells us:

- that schools are relational spaces;¹
- there is less bullying in schools that have more positive student-teacher relationships;²
- if meaningful relationships are already established before things go wrong, people are more likely to be motivated to work out their differences through conversation than if these relationships are absent.³

Sources:

¹ McCluskey et al. (2008b).

² Richard, Schneider, and Mallet (2011).

³ Amstutz & Mullet (2005).

Relationships: The Good, the Bad, and the ...

- Discuss the positive aspects of your school relationships.
- Reflect on any negative experiences you may have been involved in relating to your school relationships.
- In the Intermediate grades, what types of conflicts can occur at school?

How do adults in schools respond to student conflict? What do those responses *sound like, look like, feel like?*

DRAW, SKETCH, WRITE, PERFORM, EXPLAIN your thoughts.

Consider the positive and negative aspects of school relationships.

Brainstorm types of conflicts that, generally, Intermediate students might become engaged, for example: misunderstandings, changing friendships, sports rivalries, competition for teacher/peer attention, disputes over possessions/space/attention, inappropriate comments, or peer pressures.

Discuss students' perspectives of how teachers/administrators respond to conflict. Share the students' visual responses and allow time for creative representations.

Collaborate together to explore any themes that might emerge, for example: thoughts that relate to students' feeling unheard, treated unfairly, falsely accused, unjustly consequence, alleged favoritism, peers taking sides, or feeling that discipline is happening to them rather than their being active participants.

Specifically listen for and draw out similarities/differences among the students' responses and note the strategies that support students' feelings of fairness and equity vs. feelings of resentment and hurt.

*Remind students not to name any specific names.

Relationships: The Good, the Bad, and the ...

The RESEARCH tells us that:

- **the traditional model within school cultures that focuses on third party intervention and removes responsibility and accountability from those directly involved, increases anger and alienation, and perpetuates further harm.¹**

Source:

¹Christie, in Vaandering, 2013.

Restorative Justice

- What do you think ‘Restorative Justice’ could mean?
- Peruse the stories located at “The Forgiveness Project”

<http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/>

After browsing through the real life narratives about forgiveness during challenging situations, your initial ideas about ‘Restorative Justice’ may or may not have changed. Share your thoughts with a partner, then join with another group to create a working definition of ‘Restorative Justice.’

In a whole class setting, brainstorm the term “Restorative Justice.”

Record visible jot notes of students’ responses on chart paper or in a new slide within this file.

Encourage students to peruse ‘The Forgiveness Project’ website (or any similar site).

Ask groups to share their working definitions, and support students to recognize themes, for example: consequences, restitution toward the victim, restoring harm, forgiveness, moving forward, support for the victim and the perpetrator of harm, rebuilding relationships or peer pressure.

Restorative Justice

Discuss the Katy Hutchison/Ryan Aldridge story at

<http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/katy-hutchison-ryan-aldrige-canada/>

- Do you feel that Ryan Aldridge served an appropriate consequence? Why/Why not?
- What do you think Katy means by, “*Whether victim or perpetrator, part of being human is rolling up our sleeves and taking an active part in repairing harm.*”
- What does Katy need to move forward?
- What does Ryan need to move forward?

Read the Katy Hutchison and Ryan Aldridge story at “The Forgiveness Project.” In the alternative, read excerpts from the book, *Walking After Midnight: One Woman’s Journey Through Murder, Justice and Forgiveness* (Hutchison, 2006). Support students to make connections that may be reflective of the needs of both a victim and a wrongdoer in any situation, for example: time, appropriate consequences, making amends, remorse, forgiveness, facilitation, sincerity, resilience, or social justice.

Restorative Justice – the Research

The RESEARCH tells us that:

- Restorative Justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible;¹
- Restorative Justice is an alternative paradigm, one where the focus shifts from following and enforcing rules, to identifying who has been harmed, what their needs are, and how the harm can be repaired.²

Sources:

¹ Zehr (2002).

² Vaandering (2013).

Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices

- Could the philosophy of Restorative Justice be applied to conflict in school settings?
- What if, in response to conflict at school, adults responded to students with a restorative approach?
- What if, in response to conflict at school, students responded to each other with a restorative approach?

What might Restorative Practices used in your school *sound like, look like, feel like?*

DRAW, SKETCH, WRITE, PERFORM, EXPLAIN your responses.

Discuss students' responses to the guiding questions as whole class, or in small groups/partnered situations.

Post the students' visual responses and collaborate together to unpack any themes that might emerge, for example: students' feeling supported/treated fairly, increased accountability, relief, increased involvement in the discipline process, friendships remain intact or stronger, positive school culture, less conflict, or enhanced student/teacher confidence.

Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices

Reflect on a time when you may have been harmed, or involved in causing harm. Take a quiet moment to replay the situation in your mind, and reflect on how you might have responded to the following questions.

What happened?

Who has been harmed?

What needs to happen?¹

Consider how the outcome might have been similar, or different, if you or others had responded restoratively?

Source:

¹Johnstone & Van Ness (2007).

Personal reflection opportunity.

Focus on the outcome (not the details of situations – avoid students’ rehashing past events).

Guide students to recognize the significance of having a voice to share their personal experiences (as a victim or as one who caused harm), being supported to take accountability, and feeling empowered to make things right.

Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices

The RESEARCH tells us that:

- Restorative Practices is an approach that shifts the traditional focus of following and enforcing rules to considering the needs of the person who has been harmed and restoration of that harm;¹
- the aim of Restorative approaches is to build positive affect (empathy, interest, and excitement) and discharge negative affect (anger, humiliation, fear and disgust).²

Source:

¹ Vaandering (2013).

² Morrison & Vaandering (2012).

A Practical Approach: Restorative Practices in Educational Settings

When Restorative Practices become integrated into school settings as an integral component of progressive discipline, the school culture fosters accountability, restoration, and relationship building.

Within the Practical Approach component of our Restorative Practices inquiry, we will explore responses to harm including school discipline and consequences, together with learning to understand how proactive and restorative circles support community thinking, relationship building, and restoring harm.

Practical Approach Framework – overview and introduction.

A Practical Approach

Harm

Think of a time when you have been harmed, or you have caused harm, related to school.

- What are the ways in which harm can be experienced at school?
- How do adults in the school usually respond?
- How do students usually feel when they
 - have caused harm; or
 - been harmed?

Working in small groups, students discuss/share conflicts they have experienced previously and/or may currently be experiencing in school.

Students who have been harmed at school will require understanding and support – it will also be important to provide appropriate guidance to remind students not to name names.

Support students to recognize that sometimes they are involved in harmful behaviours in an indirect manner, for example: excluding others, laughing when someone is teased/hurt, speaking out inappropriately in class, not taking responsibility for actions/language, entitlement to or overuse of limited resources, crowd mentality thinking, being a bystander.

Harm

The RESEARCH tells us that

- a restorative model considers the person harmed, the reasons or mitigating factors that may have led to conflict, and empowers the people directly involved to restore the relationship in conjunction with holding the wrongdoer accountable.¹

Source:

¹ Amstutz and Mullet (2005).

Models of Discipline

- When you have been harmed:
 - how did you feel?
 - what did you need to move forward?
- When you have caused harm:
 - how did you feel?
 - what did you need to move forward?

Care should be taken to ensure that the classroom and the groups are safe and inclusive.

Record key words from responses and work together as a cohesive group to identify themes, for example: feelings and needs from both perspectives could be similar; someone who has been harmed may have contributed to the conflict; a wrongdoer could also be a victim/a victim could also be a wrongdoer; both the wrongdoer and the victim may have been manipulated by someone else; mitigating circumstances should be factored into all responses to discipline; each participant in a conflict has his/her own perspective; people need time to process their reactions; there shouldn't be a winner or loser; everyone needs to be heard; or both sides coming together can be healing and/or uncomfortable.

Models of Discipline

The RESEARCH tells us that

- a more comprehensive approach does not ignore harmful behaviour, but shifts the focus from managing behaviour to honouring dignity and humanity, through relational practices that focus concurrently on individual and community well-being and responsibility.¹

Source:

¹ Morrison and Vaandering (2012).

Consequences

- Are consequences necessary?
- Discuss the consequences that are typical in your classroom and school.
- Should everyone be treated the same?
- Share some examples of responses to conflict when students were treated differently and/or the same.

Through guided discussion, support students to recognize that mitigating factors are important considerations when responding to conflict, for example: special needs students; students who are under pressure/anxiety; new vs. repeat behaviours; baseline behaviour or change in behaviour; differing personal situations; history of similar behaviour; or potential/risk for escalation of behaviour.

Guide students to recognize that restorative approaches do not negate consequences, rather wrongdoers are still consequenced, but also supported to take responsibility for their actions and restore relationships.

Models of Discipline

The RESEARCH tells us that

- supports are put in place, often in the form of a mutually agreed upon plan, focusing on restoration of the harm and follow-up meetings;¹
- within a restorative framework, consequences assigned to a student follow a progressive discipline model that takes into consideration students' previous behaviours, personal circumstances, learning/social profiles, and assessment of future risk.²

Sources:

¹ Hopkins (2002).

² Ontario Ministry of Education (2016).

A Practical Approach

Circles

Consider the benefits of, or concerns about, participation in circles ... to you, to your class, to the school community.

- Proactive Classroom Circles build community: they foster relationship-building and support students to come together as a cohesive, supportive community to share ideas, resolve issues, and problem-solve challenges – **before something goes wrong**;
- Restorative Circles support restoration: they provide a safe opportunity for everyone involved in a conflict to express their individual perspectives, hear the other side of a conflict, create a plan to move forward, and restore the relationship – **when something goes wrong**.

Refer to the “Restorative Practices: A Resource for Intermediate Students” pamphlet (Portfolio Resource #2) for a more in-depth explanation of potential formats for circles.

In small groups, discuss the potential benefits of, and concerns about, participation in circles.

Come together as whole class to make a Pro/Con list and debrief.

Circles

Complete individual, confidential reflections to the following questions...

- before participating in classroom circles; and
- after engaging in classroom circles:
 - before participating in a classroom circle, I thought...
 - now that our class regularly participates in classroom circles, I think...

Consider these guiding questions to support students' recognizing and monitoring their feelings: both before the class begins classroom circles, and after the class has been participating in regular circles.

Continue to check-in with students to support their feelings regarding their collective and individual responses to their participation in circles.

Look for students' reactions that may reflect any uncomfortable feelings and confidentially support students to feel engaged in the process, for example: keep questions impersonal/generic; remind students that they may pass if they choose; support strategic seating in a circle; and monitor peer relationships.

Circles

The RESEARCH tells us that:

- circles aim to create a space where participants are safe to be their most authentic self, share stories, and develop understanding of self and others;¹
- circles support students' understanding that community is learned and reinforce the concept of perspective as multidimensional rather than singular.²

Sources:

¹Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge, in Morrison & Vaandering, (2012).

²Amstutz & Mullet (2005).

A Contextual Approach: Responses to Restorative Practices

Through a contextual lens, we begin to understand our personal and collective responses to the application of Restorative Practices, and we have the opportunity to apply our learning to our relationships at school.

- **Within the Contextual Approach component of our Restorative Practices inquiry, we will explore the successes and challenges of a restorative approach in schools and practice applying our learning to conflict scenarios that are representative of situations when**
- **Intermediate students' relationships go wrong or when harm is caused.**

Contextual Approach Framework – overview and introduction.

A Contextual Approach

Theory into Practice

Consider your own personal reactions.

When things go wrong in your relationships at school, how do you generally respond:

- with your friends?
- with your teachers?
- with your administrators?

Reflect on your own responses and decide what has worked well ... or not so well ... for you.

Students may choose to collaborate with a partner or reflect independently.
Volunteers may choose, or not, to share their thoughts.

Theory into Practice

When things go wrong ...

- **What happened?** Take some time to walk away, and reflect. Think about sharing your own side, and listening to the other perspective;
- **Who has been harmed?** You may be feeling hurt; usually the other person feels badly, too. Think widely about who else might be affected by the conflict;
- **What needs to happen?** Talking it out between yourselves, or with the support of an adult, could help. Think about the the actions you might need to take, or ask for, to restore the relationship.

Whole class discussion.

Students are encouraged to reflect upon their personal responsibilities in their school relationships.

As whole class, make a visible list of responses, on chart paper or in a new slide in this presentation, in response to each question.

Theory into Practice

When relationships break down, could this restorative process be helpful?

- **T** – take time out;
- **E** – explain your side;
- **A** – ask to hear the other side;
- **M** – make a plan to move forward;
- **R** – restore the harm.

TEAMR is a tip for your toolbox.

Refer to the “Restorative Practices: A Resource for Intermediate Students” pamphlet (Portfolio Resource #2).

TEAMR is a mnemonic device that packages a restorative approach upon which students can rely to work through conflicts with peers.

Debrief with students: work through each letter and ask for volunteers to provide examples.

Successes and Challenges

Reflect upon any conflicts that you may have experienced personally or have witnessed/heard about among other Intermediate students. Identify the challenges and successes that would result from those situations being handled using the **TEAMR** restorative approach:

- Challenges
by adults / by students
- Successes
by adults / by students

Begin by having having a whole class discussion. Make a list of common conflicts that Intermediate students share.

Students break out into groups to choose one challenge and one success. Ask each group to brainstorm and share responses with the class. Support students not to name names.

Compare/Contrast the challenges that adults and students might experience if/when they attempt to incorporate the TEAMR restorative approach into their responses to conflict, for example:

Challenges - teachers may feel they don't have enough time to listen to both sides of an issue, students might feel that a peer will refuse to share his/her perspective, both teachers and students might feel that the parties won't want to come together to talk through a problem; Successes – teachers might feel that restorative practices create a more respectful classroom environment, students might feel that arguments are resolved more quickly, and both teachers and students might feel that they experience less conflict at school.

Successes

The RESEARCH tells us that

- successes were identified through the positive changes to school culture and included: use of restorative language by staff and students, calmer school atmosphere, feedback from students indicating that teachers were fair, improved morale, development of conflict resolution skills, and some decreases in suspensions;¹
- there is some evidence that Restorative Practices in schools can increase students' feelings of safety;²
- Restorative Practices can be an effective process for repairing relationships, acknowledging consequences of behaviour, and solving disputes.³

Sources:

¹ McCluskey et al. (2008a).

² Rigby (2004).

³ Shaw (2007).

Challenges

The RESEARCH tells us that:

- **challenges were identified as teachers experiencing difficulty when reconciling Restorative Practices with traditional discipline/compliance methods and results;¹**
- **challenges implementing Restorative Practices related to lack of time, the personal style of individual educators, and sustainability.²**

¹ McCluskey et al. (2008a)

² Shaw (2007)

Theory into Practice - Workshop

In small groups, discuss, consider, and role-play responding to the following scenarios using **TEAMR** mindset:

1. You are in the cafeteria having lunch with some of your friends. An acquaintance whom you nudged accidentally on your way into the school after recess this morning throws French fries at you, and now you have a grease stain on your new hoody. You are feeling very angry and yell a nasty name across the cafeteria.
2. You and your friends are playing football on the yard during recess. A student you don't normally hang with, intercepts a pass that was intended for you. The student is always interfering in your fun, and this time, you've had it.

Students collaborate in groups to discuss one of the scenarios on this, and the next two slides.

Each group role plays its scenario using the TEAMR restorative approach.

Debrief as whole class by asking the participants how they felt through the process and asking for feedback from the class about what they heard, saw, felt through the role play of each scenario.

Theory into Practice - Workshop

3. You are in your math class feeling frustrated by the concepts that the teacher is explaining. Everyone is being asked to try out some questions to apply their learning, but you just don't get it. Another student, who always seems to understand the math, makes a comment about how easy the questions are.

4. You have some free time and your teacher allows you to go onto your personal device. You check one of your social media accounts, and you see that one of your friends in your on-line group posted an unflattering image of you. You jump in and retaliate, and before you know it, the online back and forth is really intense.

Students collaborate in groups to discuss one of the scenarios on this, the previous, and the next slides.

Each group role plays its scenario using the TEAMR restorative approach.

Debrief as whole class by asking the participants how they felt through the process and asking for feedback from the class about what they heard, saw, felt through the role play of each scenario.

Theory into Practice - Workshop

5. When you were in elementary school, you were always on the junior grade sports teams. Now that you are in an Intermediate grade in the high school, you try out for the basketball team. You missed two practices because you didn't hear the practice schedule over the announcements so you didn't make the team. You blame the teacher coach for not making sure you knew about the practices.
6. You're always getting into trouble on the yard for hands-on behaviours, sliding on the ice, or taking the other kids' hats. The VP has been calling home to speak to your parents and now you're not allowed to have the Internet this weekend. It's just not fair!

Students collaborate in groups to discuss one of the scenarios on this, and the previous two slides.

Each group role plays their scenario using the TEAMR restorative approach.

Debrief as whole class by asking the participants how they felt through the process and asking for feedback from the class about what they heard and saw.

Next Steps

Reflect on your experiences using the **TEAMR** approach with your peers at school.

DRAW, SKETCH, WRITE, PERFORM, EXPLAIN your responses.

How do we move forward ...as individuals, as a class, as a school community?

Record, and keep posted, students' responses.

Guide students to recognize that a Restorative approach is a mindset, not a prescribed set of rules.

Be open to ideas, collaborate as a whole class, and co-construct guiding principles, restorative approaches, and/or classroom agreements.

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Sources Page.

For more information, see "Restorative practices in education: Building teacher capacity and empowering student voice" portfolio by Catherine English.