

Restorative Justice in Education

Monthly DIALOGUE



'Let peace begin with me'---peace on earth!

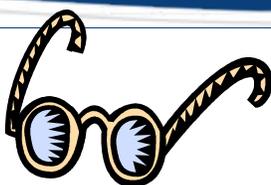


This month's RESTORATIVE JUSTICE Dialogue is full of beauty in that adults share their awakenings to a need to be at peace with self if they wish to encourage peace and restoration in others. Thanks to all contributors.

We wish readers a blessed Christmas of discovering 'God in relationship *with us*.'

Focused Lenses

"WITH"



After a recent session in which restorative justice was briefly introduced to pre-service teachers, one participant responded saying, "I've always thought that punishment was an important part of teaching, but what you've led us through is giving me some answers."

The response was startling to me. Is this thinking real? Then I came across a book written in 1920 called "A Primer of School Method". The first chapter was entitled *Discipline*; first sections were *Maintaining Discipline in school ... by proper use of punishment* and *Kinds of punishment available for the Young Teacher*. Subsequent chapters dealt with subject teaching methods. In both examples, education is situated in a paradigm of punishment. I reflect on my own early experiences of teaching and realize that my default position also was (and still can be) to control students with punishment. Restorative justice challenges me to rethink this default position, to recognize that engagement WITH is much more helpful than doing things TO or FOR others; that punishment usually comes from a desire to control. In so doing I risk turning my students into objects to be manipulated rather than human beings to be honoured (see Relationship Window, p. 2).

For a transformation in thinking to take hold, however, we need to look inward before we attempt to look outward to others. Take a moment and

reflect; write down your answers to challenge your own default perspectives: What is my relationship with myself? Do I really know myself? How do I honour who I am? How do I measure myself and find myself to be lacking? What past experiences and perceptions shape my current thinking and actions? What really guides my relationship with myself and others? How do I really value myself and others as human beings?



In this season of Christmas, Christ's birth challenges and reminds us "...and he shall be called, Immanuel, God WITH us ... for God did not come into the world to condemn the world but to save it." Do I really believe this? Do my actions show it?

The participant in the workshop after the session, obviously moved, came and said, "It's amazing to think about how Jesus lived His life in community, and now we can walk that journey *with* our students when we use restorative justice in our schools."

Thank you, young aspiring teacher for being open to reflecting critically and discovering the joy of change. It won't be an easy journey, but you've taken the first step. ~D. Vaandering (NL)

Restorative justice acknowledges justice as honouring the worth of all and being enacted through relationship. When something occurs that affects the well-being of some, a space is provided for dialogue whereby the dignity of all involved and affected can be restored so that each can once again become a contributing member of the community of which they are a part. (D. Vaandering, 2011)



Making Hope Practical



This regular column for 2012-2013 explores young people's perspectives of hope and its place in their lives.)

Putting Hope into Practice: Critical Pedagogy

“You spend so much of your life getting to the point of your life that you want to get to, and you kind of miss what’s all there when you’re trying to get there.” Anna (age 16)

Joe Kincheloe (2008) challenges that “a practical hope doesn’t simply celebrate rainbows, unicorns, nutbread, and niceness, but rigorously understands ‘what is’ in relation to ‘what could be’—a traditional critical notion.”

In the brokenness of the world around me—in children who are hurting, in broken relationships, in disease, war, and poverty—in that brokenness, I ache for wholeness and healing.

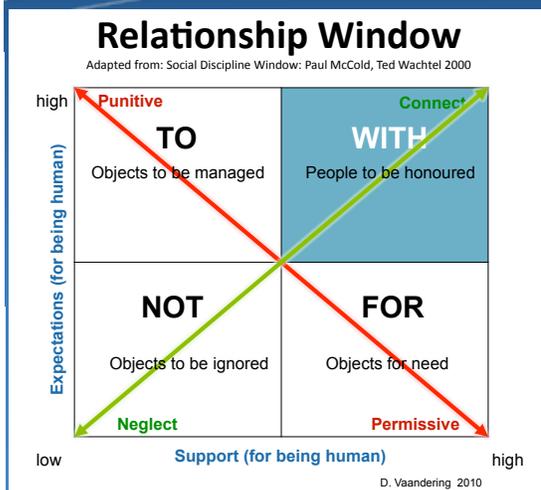
As both a parent and a teacher, it is my understanding that the raising of my own kids extends far beyond the parenting of my home, and that their education reaches far beyond the formal curriculum of their schooling. I am drawn to the collective efforts of raising students—our children—to be people of compassion and love, people who seek justice.

A critical pedagogy encompasses the whole of how we raise our children. With its roots in understanding the relationships between power

and oppression, and with its branches reaching for transformation towards equity and justice, critical pedagogy is a whole way of raising and educating our children that is nurtured and sustained by the love and compassion we have for one another.

This brings us back to the question that began this column in the September issue of the *ry Dialogue*: How is your role in education both connected and disconnected to a socially just vision of how the world ought to be?

Lawrence Grossberg (2005) suggests that “we need a conversation that moves between imagination and strategy.” To create a space for such a conversation in upcoming issues, we’ll continue to listen to the voices of six young people within the theoretical context of critical pedagogy. This is a dialogue and we encourage you to discuss your thoughts with your family, friends, and colleagues. If you have questions or comments, we’d love to hear from you.
~Sharon de Vries (ON)



Relationship Window--

This 4-quadrant matrix illustrates types of relationships. The vertical axis identifies low to high *expectations for being human* and the horizontal axis identifies low to high *support one gives for being human*. High support and high expectations results in restorative relationships where we walk WITH each other treating each other as worthy human beings. The other quadrants describe relationships where we use each other (usually unconsciously) as objects in selfish pursuits and neglect, or do things TO or FOR people. The arrows identify continuums of engagement (a) punitive-permissive or (b) neglected-connected. For in depth description see: <http://www.iirp.org/pdf/Hull-2010/Hull-2010-Vaandering.pdf>



Real Teachers, Real Students, Real Stories



Relationships first!

I graduated from my undergrad in 2009. Just over one year later in fall 2010, I obtained a position to be an English Instructor at a university in South Korea. I felt polished and sophisticated, being only 22 and already I had an 'important' job! However, I didn't want my students to know anything about me, especially not my age. As Korean culture places a huge amount of respect on a person's age, I tried my best to keep this a secret. Some of my students were a year or two older than I was at the time. The greater distance I could get between my students and myself, the more they would respect me, right?

In my first semester, I tried to be old. I didn't share my personality nor did I give students a chance to participate. I spoke only textbook content. I didn't learn my students' names and there was no time for questions.

Did they respect me? Did we have rapport? It's no surprise that the answer to these questions was a resounding NO!

I gave them a chance, however, to tell me what they thought in an anonymous feedback form during our last class. There were almost no positive comments. Mainly, they wanted to participate, they were disappointed to not develop any friendly relationship with me, and they were also frustrated that I never learned their names.

At this point, I thought about teachers who I grew the most from when I was a student.

I contacted two of my past teachers who I saw as wise, hard-working, creative, interesting, enthusiastic, and caring – I explained my situation to them and asked them for any suggestions. I learned many things from their responses, but especially the importance of relationships. I pondered my students' feedback together with the wisdom of my past teachers, and I was eager to try again and do better my second semester.

I am now in my third year at the university. I try hard to connect with my students by sharing about myself first. I want them to see me as a human – a real being with likes/dislikes/strengths/weaknesses/stories/embarrassing moments. I now seek to learn my students' names and unique things about each one. I begin each class with a short discussion question based on the topic of the day: "Everyone turn to your partner and ask them this question: "_____". I have grown into my role, but it took me realizing that my students are humans, as opposed to robot-like-text-book-absorbing-sponges and they want to be treated as such. They want relationships, they want to be known. I also want the same with them. When my mind shifted, everything changed.

~Miranda Niezen (Korea)

I am responsible...

Restoring harm- rebuilding relationships- we ask kids to do it. Yet when we are called to acknowledge our brokenness and own our actions, we balk. Asking myself the questions today (What happened? How did it make me/them feel? Who were impacted? What do we need to move forward?) I was struck between the eyeballs! Yes, I had made a bad decision. Yes, it did frustrate, anger and inconvenience others. Yes, lots of families were impacted. And yes, I had to ask for forgiveness and make it right. It would have been so easy to pass the responsibility on to someone else, to blame others, to let them live with my decision. After all, as the vice-principal of an elementary school, I am always right, aren't I? Acknowledging my failing and asking for understanding and forgiveness, led to a feeling of lightness, a sense of peace, a feeling of 'This is the place where wrong and right meet'. So powerful, so healing, so "I am walking in the kids' shoes now", so humbling. No more anger, just peace.

~Bernice Huinink-Buiter (ON)

The Little Things ...

Restorative justice culture has slowly evolved in my school this year. It is interesting that the moments that make you think restorative justice is growing are not these blow-your-mind experiences. They are however, small, yet highly significant changes.

- A child raises his hand to be the next person to bring in a talking piece;
- A young person passes for the first time because they feel the right to do so;
- A child apologizes for something in a circle check-in, out of the blue;
- A child's eyes open up when she hears the teacher talk in a way about themselves that makes the student realize the teacher is a human being.

~Educator, NL





A bit of background ...



****THE RJ MONTHLY DIALOGUE IS BROUGHT TO YOU THROUGH A COLLABORATION BETWEEN SHALEM MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK (SHALEMNETWORK.ORG) AND DOROTHY VAANDERING (MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND)****

Co-editors: Sharon de Vries; Bernice Huinink-Buiter; Dorothy Vaandering; Mark Vander Vennen

As the readership of the RJ DIALOGUE grows, for those new to it, a note explaining its origins and original audience is warranted. The first issue of RJ DIALOGUE came out in October 2009 for those who had taken rj training workshops through Edifide and the Shalem Mental Health Network in Ontario, Canada. Set in the context of a faith-based independent school system, the connection of rj to indigenous and spiritual traditions was made with a particular focus on the Judeo-Christian perspective. This focus is also the context of the RJ DIALOGUE. If you are receiving this e-newsletter, your contact information was provided by yourself or someone who thought you might be interested. **If you wish to be removed from the list, please reply to this email with a subject line stating: Remove me from e-list.** If you are enjoying the newsletter be sure to contribute your questions, stories and resources. And if you know of others who might benefit from it, by all means pass it on and/or send me their email address to add to the mailing list.

Need more support or ideas? Looking for an idea you read in past RJ Monthly DIALOGUES?

Back issues of the RESTORATIVE JUSTICE in Education Monthly DIALOGUE are available on-line at http://www.shalemnetwork.org/?page_id=243

WE NEED YOU!

This newsletter is unique because it carries your thoughts, questions, ideas, concerns. Thus to keep it going, we need your input regularly. Do you have:

- a story to share?
- a question you *wonder* about?
- a great *idea* for integrating rj into your curriculum and pedagogy?
- a quote or insight that will *focus* our restorative justice lenses?

If you do, email it to: dvaandering@mun.ca

Remember this is a *talking circle* DIALOGUE. Don't fret too much about format or style ... just get your thoughts down in writing and send it my way. If necessary, I'll edit it, ask for your approval, and add it to an upcoming issue. When necessary, it's possible to not have your name attached to it if identifying you will impact your school, colleagues, or students.

References:

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