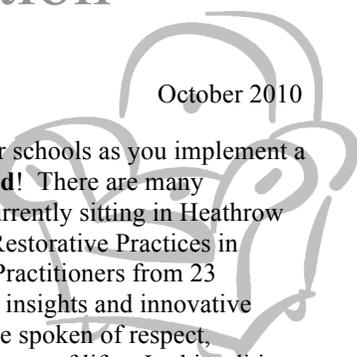


Monthly Restorative Justice in Education DIALOGUE

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Restorative justice practices in education are global! Though you may often feel alone in your schools as you implement a relational approach to working with students, colleagues, and your curriculum, **be encouraged!** There are many educators around the globe who share your desire to honour the worth of all in education. Currently sitting in Heathrow airport, I am reflecting on the many people I met this week at the 13th World Conference on Restorative Practices in Kingston-upon-Hull, UK, sponsored by the International Institute for Restorative Practices. Practitioners from 23 different countries were represented, each alive with stories of successes and challenges, new insights and innovative ideas for nurturing the growth of rj in schools. Particularly striking was the common language spoken of respect, restoration, relationship and hope pointing to the fact that rj is far more than a strategy. It is a way of life. In this edition of the DIALOGUE, along with some of your comments and questions, we share ideas gleaned from the conference.



Focussed Lenses

Familiar to most of us are the four responses to behaviour – punitive (TO), permissive (FOR), neglectful (NOT) and restorative (WITH)—that come about with different combinations of support and expectations we have of people. Various interpretations of the original IIRP discipline window (1999) are emerging that bring a clearer focus to the underlying relational principles of restorative justice. One that caught my eye in particular that was developed by our colleagues in the Netherlands to guide people in working cooperatively and solving problems, echoes Paul’s words to the Philippians: “each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” *Philippians 2:4*

OWN INTERESTS →	TO Against Make decisions for own good; Push through your own opinion; Bribing, backbiting; Fighting, swearing, bullying.	WITH Working Together Planning together; Hold others & self responsible for own task; Help only when needed; Tell others how you feel; Take responsibility to restore.
	NOT Do Nothing Do it yourself; I don't care; Avoid each other; Sighing, giving up.	FOR Take over Finish the other's work; Admit to having no opinion of your own; Justify & pity others; Put yourself down.
	INTEREST OF OTHERS →	

Oostrik, H. (2010)

By using “interests of others” and “own interests” as axes the *relational* foundation of restorative justice becomes clearer and more relevant for students. But perhaps more importantly as educators this cooperation/problem-solving window explicitly challenges us to first reflect critically on our own ability

and willingness to cooperate or problem solve in our relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. Have we balanced our own interests with the interests of others? This perspective is another reminder that restorative justice is a new/old approach that has its origins in spiritual traditions.

Wondering

I have a student of a racial minority in my class this year who has been picked on over the past 2 years by another student plus some of her friends. Racial comments have come into play and the student has lashed back in return. The parents of this child are supportive but concerned. I think they are not convinced that things are being handled in the best way possible. I'd like to hold a circle with the students involved and their parents. The problem is, this is not based on a specific incident, and I don't think anyone has clear details of the last 'incident'. Is it appropriate to hold a circle regarding a history of difficulty? Gr. 6 teacher

Great question as rj is often only understood as means for addressing specific harmful incidents. However, the wonder of restorative justice practices that seek to repair harm is that the ultimate goal is to address relationships so that all those affected recognize how interconnected they are. Specific incidents can serve as the vehicle through which that can occur; but so too can on-going general difficulties like the one you describe. With that in mind, the answer to your question is that it is very appropriate to hold a circle in this situation. In fact, it is important to keep in mind that a rj circle can be used at any point in relationship breakdown, including those situations that have occurred years ago.

As always, your approach will need to be considered carefully. Remember that a circle such as the one you are anticipating still needs to be invitational at all levels.

As this situation has a history, consider speaking with former teachers first to get a clear picture of past events. Then it may be wise to speak to the parents explaining carefully how you feel a talking circle may be beneficial especially as it would be a positive way to begin the new year. When parents are convinced of its potential, it is important to remind them that it is the students who will finally decide if the circle will occur. Then engage the students, inviting them to be part of a conversation that you feel will help them enjoy the school year more. As always be alert to power imbalances. If you detect serious bullying attitudes, do not proceed with a circle till you have done enough preconference work with each and you know it will not result in further harm for any of the participants. If students do not wish to participate, do not give up. Consider holding a talking circle with the parents and perhaps a few teachers so that together you can consider how to support and set expectations for students as they go through the new year.

RJ, Curriculum and Pedagogy

Two quotes:

"If we are not modelling what we teach then we are teaching something else." [Helen Flanagan]

"The most effective ways to change behaviours are:

- 1. Using noncoercion,***
- 2. prompting the person to self-assess,***
- 3. and if authority is necessary have the student own the consequence.***

When a consequence is imposed, the student feels the victim. When the consequence is elicited, the student owns it and grows from the decision".

[Marvin Marshall, "Promoting "Responsibility"]

Resources

As more and more educators engage with restorative justice, resources are being produced. Circles as pedagogy are becoming prominent in rj schools and classrooms. *Restorative Circles in Schools* published by the International Institute for Restorative Practices is an excellent book that presents a vast array of practical ideas for how circles can be used in classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and staffrooms. Written clearly and with lots of examples, it is the type of book you can pick up and skim as you look for ways to nurture a relational culture. For those of you attending the OCSTA convention at the end of October,

look for it at the Redeemer University College bookstore. Or else order it from www.iirp.org.

Forthcoming in Spring: *The Restorative Classroom* by Belinda Hopkins.

Websites:

Check out videos, resources, stories of colleagues in the UK [www.transformingconflict.org] and Nova Scotia. [<http://tricityrestorativejustice.com/>]

**A picture is worth a thousand words,
a word is worth a picture ☺**



You are invited!

For those going to the OCSTA convention, be sure to join the round table sessions [4.17 and 5.17] to discuss your experiences with implementing restorative justice practices in your school or classroom. Owen Webb will be facilitating these. Thanks Owen!

International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) **14th World Conference is coming to Canada in June, 2010.** Send a delegation from your school or district to Halifax, Nova Scotia and engage in the global dialogue that is growing. You will return amazed and motivated. See www.iirp.org for more information.

Do you have a story to share, a question to ask, a great idea for integrating rj into your curriculum and pedagogy? If you do, email it to: dvaandering@mun.ca Remember this is a 'comfy chair' DIALOGUE. Don't fret too much about format or style ... just get your thoughts down in writing and send it my way.

*****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)*****

Rj acknowledges justice as honouring the inherent worth of all and is enacted through relationship. When something occurs that undermines 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 fully contributing member of the community of which they are a part. (D. Vaandering, 2009)