

Restorative Justice in Education Monthly DIALOGUE

Welcome back and

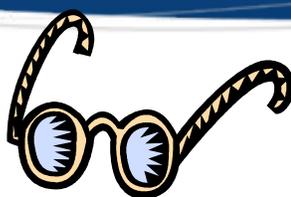
Welcome the the 4th Year of the RESTORATIVE JUSTICE Dialogue!

The 2012-2013 school year is well on its way. For most, you've been in school for about 4 weeks already. Welcome to returning readers and a special "hello!" to new subscribers!

Our readership is growing—indicating ongoing interest in the implementation of restorative justice in schools! Good things are happening.

Focused Lenses

In each issue, *Focused Lenses* is a space where we remind each other what is at the core of restorative justice in education. In the early days of its practice, coming out of a judicial context, restorative justice challenged us to reconsider how we understood harm and wrong doing. No longer would we use the questions: What rules have been broken? Who did it? and What do they deserve? But instead we would ask: Who's been hurt? What are their needs? and Whose obligations are these? (Zehr, 2005). In the decade or so since restorative justice has entered schools, educators have grappled with the foundation of this shift in thinking to the point where now, restorative justice theory has deepened substantially and we see it impacting all facets of schooling. Why?



When we focus on hurt, needs and obligations we are no longer focused on rules and policy, but on our relationships with each other. And education, ideally, is all about growing in our understanding of and engagement with the interconnected, inter-relational, AWE-filled world we live in. Thus ultimately, restorative justice is all about **Relationships First!** It's easy to focus on rules, much harder to focus on *how I am with myself and others*. And, in a school setting, as an educator, it's much easier to focus on students' behaviour, then it is to focus on *my relationship* with them or my colleagues. Think about the beginning of this school year, what are you doing and thinking that tells you, you've put **Relationships First!** In subsequent issues, we'll focus our lenses on our relationships with Self, Colleagues, and Students. Ultimately it might be best to remind ourselves that this need to focus on **Relationships First** is nothing

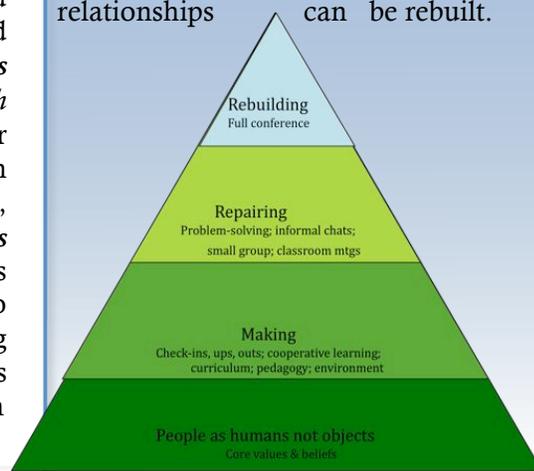
new -- after all God said it best with the guidelines established to nurture us ... Love the Lord your God with all your heart, strength and mind and Love your neighbour as yourself.



RJ Relationship Triangle

(Adapted from Morrison, 2007; Hopkins, 2011, Vaandering, 2011)

The triangle below identifies the comprehensive, relational nature of RJ – It's about making, repairing, and rebuilding relationships, all built on a foundation of core values that acknowledges the sacredness of humanity ... people to be nurtured, not objects to be manipulated and used. When this foundation is in place, then relationships grow. When things go wrong, there is a space and approach through which relationships can be rebuilt.



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)

Real teachers, real students, real stories

Working *With* Students or Battling Them: Seeing the Big Picture during Small Incidents

Early in the school year, I took a risk and brought my high school mathematics class into our school kitchen to cook waffles. I thought this would be a great way to integrate rational numbers (fractions) into life. I considered the class to have gone very well until with twenty minutes remaining, I realized that six of my 25 students were nowhere to be found. After some prodding, one student suggested that the five missing students had walked to the local corner store.



I was irate. These students had not remained to clean up, and had simply taken off without communicating to me. I asked another teacher to watch my class while I jumped into my van to go find these six students. I was thankful for the drive over, for my thoughts turned from punishment toward restoration over the three minutes I was driving (though I wasn't quite at restoration yet!). I realized that I was going to teach these students until June and this moment was going to be instrumental in determining whether I was going to work *with* them over the next ten months, or set up a situation where I was *battling* them each day. I needed to build a relationship with them, and they needed to earn my trust. I needed to hear their story. I pulled into the parking lot, parked the van, took a deep breath, and wandered inside.

My anger somewhat subsided, I walked in and said "Let's go boys". Needless to say, my students were shocked when I walked into the local pizza store to pick them up. We piled into the van. The students were very apologetic – I didn't need to tell them why I was there. They offered to pay for gas and to buy me pizza... these small gestures brightened the situation for me. When we returned to the school parking lot, I asked the boys to remain in the van for 60 seconds. I then said something like this: "Boys, I get to teach you for the next 150 days. I don't want to fight you every day, and I am pretty sure that you don't want to battle with me. I want to have a great year of teaching you, but in order to have that we are going to need to communicate with each other and trust each other. What happened out there?"

"We thought class was over, as we had done everything"

"I cleaned up my part"

"Lots of other classes were in the halls already"

"We were hungry"

I appreciated the honesty from the students. I may not have agreed with their rationale, but I also did not want to dwell on the incident. It was clear from their actions at the pizza store and by their responses, that they already were aware of their poor decisions. At this point I was not going to battle the students. Rather, I asked how we could make things right.

"Send us to the principal?" They all seemed to think that this was where this was going.

"Guys", I said, "I have five waffle irons that aren't clean yet, and I need to send them home spotless with the students that brought them. Can you do that for me?"

"That's it" one student replied.

"That's it"

"No problem", they chorused.

It is easy to feel like we need to make students feel awful about themselves, concluding that this will change them for the better. Yet, if we consider situations where someone made us feel negative about our self worth, generally we don't see that situation as having changed us for the better in the end. I didn't need anything else from these students. I had a great talk with them, they understood where I was coming from, I was looking forward to more classes with them, and the logical consequences were to finish a task they had not completed. This event kick started many meaningful conversations, and a trust that I likely may not have attained without this event.

Fast forward nine months. I asked the guys if I could take them out for pizza. I wanted to ask if that day back in September had been meaningful.



"Are we in trouble", one student asked. "We've had a great year, haven't we?"

"Yes we have," I replied.

~Owen Webb

"We are relational beings, created by relationship for relationship. It is in our DNA. We are social by nature and we have a deep need to belong."

Walter C. Wright. [Don't Step on the Rope: Reflections on Leadership, Relationships, and Teamwork. P. 80]

Real stories continued...

It was so good when ... a parent told me his Kindergarten child told him that in the library we have a circle and use a talking piece so only one person can talk and the rest can listen ☺!
~Bernice Huinink-Buiter

It was so good when... the school year opened in Grade 1 French Immersion this year with a unique twist on previous first days. This year we opened with a check-in circle. As the students sat wide-eyed and eager, Mme Winter talked with the class about the feelings that certain colours represent and how in our classroom community everyone comes to class with a colour in their heart. As we moved into circle, the students were introduced to the talking piece and the guidelines for the circle. We talked about working together as a community to listen to hear what colour was in each others' hearts and to think about what this might mean for the colour of our classroom. The students took ten seconds to think about the colour of their hearts that day and we began to hand around the talking piece. Each student held the piece tightly and carefully said what their colour was and then (reluctantly at times) passed it along. One of my favourite moments was when a student began that her colour was "yellow but with a touch of green and a drop of blue". You can imagine that this started a roller coaster ride of multi-coloured hearts!



We have since had some very interesting conversations around our rainbow hearts and what, if anything, we can do if someone's heart is a little blue that day. As we enter into the second month of school, we have been able to work out some of the kinks and we are all a little better at listening to each other. I am looking forward to working with Mme. Winter and the Grade 1 students as our circles continue to grow in creativity and as a connected community.
~Erin Power

Making hope practical!

This column is new to the RJ Dialogue this year. Through it we consider the role of hope in our lives as educators but more specifically how hope is perceived by students. How are social justice and rj related? They share a common understanding of justice as honouring the worth of all, and rj is a philosophy and practice that is meant to embody social justice and instill hope.

Educating for social justice is a practice of hope and can be a pathway to the way the world ought to be. This is about more than having a vision of social justice and imagining the way things could be in the future. It is about taking that vision of the future into the present and actively working towards social justice. Students and teachers can create spaces of hope in the present, which can then act as pathways towards a socially just and equitable world.

To make this more tangible,

- take a moment to describe your vision of a utopian world where there is justice and equity for all people.
- Then ask yourself what glimpses you have in the present of how we are moving towards or away from that vision.
- Your responses will describe spaces of practical hope or spaces that limit practical hope.

It can be challenging for educators to connect the practice of our teaching to the theory we hold for education and the way the world ought to be. How is your teaching both connected and disconnected to a socially just vision of the world? Do you view your teaching as a practice of hope? What difference does it make for how a teacher answers these kinds of questions?

By listening to the voices of six young people who participated in a research study, we will continue to explore these questions in upcoming issues of the *rj Dialogue*. Please, share your thoughts with us and with the people around you to indeed make this a dialogue.
~Sharon de Vries

Restorative Justice in Media

Restorative Justice for Bullies—TVO: Agenda
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvnfbns6AaQ>

Rethinking Ways to Discipline Students Who Act Out—CBC: Radio Noon
<http://www.cbc.ca/radionoon/2012/08/29/coming-up-on-crosstalk-wed-aug-29-2012/>

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:

- Hopkins, B. (2011). *The restorative classroom: Using restorative approaches to foster effective learning*. London: Optimus.
- Morrison, B. (2007). *Restoring safe school communities*. Sydney: Federation Press.
- Vaandering, D. (2011). A faithful compass: Rethinking the term restorative justice to find clarity. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 14(3), 307-328.
- Wright, W. (2005). *Don't step on the rope: Reflections on leadership, relationships, and teamwork*. Colorado: Authentic