

# Restorative Justice in Education

# Monthly DIALOGUE

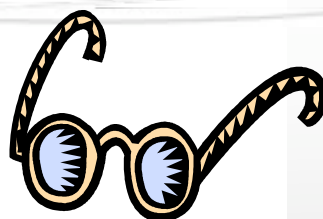
## “HAPPY” New Year!

2013 has arrived! A fresh start, with hopes, anticipations, fears, concerns. We trust that as we continue to engage with rj in education, that you will find the RJ Dialogue a resource that supports you in your personal and professional lives. In this month’s issue we springboard off the word “happy,” looking at the lighter side of rj. Thanks to all of you who contributed! ☺

## Focused Lenses

### The lighter side—‘happy’

The words ring out, “happy new year”! What is wrapped up in that word “happy”? What are we really wishing each other as each new year dawns?



“...but I don’t have time...”

In examining again that rj is grounded in a perspective of each other as worthy human beings whose lives are valued, and in relationships where we look after each other’s well-being, we realize that happiness is dependent on how we accept and interact with ourselves, each other, and even our physical environments. Wrapped up in the new year’s blessing then is encouragement and a challenge to uphold our interactions with each other with integrity! Though this is not always easy, we can discover laughter and joy in doing so. In this month’s Dialogue we focus on the lighter side of rj, all the while realizing that our ability to laugh and smile heartily comes out of confidence and security in being cared for and respected.

Some may wonder how many times we need to be reminded of this relational root of rj. Given that rj requires a paradigm shift the magnitude of the round/flat earth theories, and given that almost monthly I get asked by people quite grounded in rj for reminders of its foundation, I imagine it will need to continue. To that end, a few analogies to guide our experiences of implementing and engaging with rj in a school context:

*Rj is like learning to write with my non-dominant hand.*

*Rj is like immigrating to a new country.*

*Rj is like eating spaghetti with my hands.*

*Rj is like ...*

Time that is ‘wasted’ in dialogue is only an apparent waste of time, for in the long run one has gained a lot in certainty, self-confidence, trust in each other—things that we can never attain when there is a lack of dialogue.

~Freire (1973)



*Restorative justice acknowledges justice as honouring the worth of all and 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.)*

## A practice of hope



A compassionate sense of love challenges the way we educate our children. What does that mean?

Last month in the *RJ Dialogue*, we looked at critical pedagogy as the theoretical context of the

study that this column draws from. Critical theorist Joe Kincheloe declares that “love is the basis of an education that seeks justice” (2008, p.3). This is not an easy, feel-good declaration. Think of the implications when we ask along with theorist Peter McLaren “what love might mean at the level of the whole society” (1994, p.160).

Through the voices of six young people in a study on hope in education, I heard a yearning for what could be. The participants recognized the power of unjust patterns of the past and they could imagine what could be in the future, but they live in the complicated present. Aware, but often overwhelmed. Hopeful, but often feeling helpless. I heard them reaching out, trying to find pathways to move from *what is* towards *what ought to be*. Listen to their words:

*We need to...*

Care.

Love.

Trust people.

Share.

Slow down.

Accept people.

*What are we working towards?*

Beauty.

Love.

Joy.

Mercy.

Peace.

Justice.

*What does a community of justice look like?*

Like a family, but bigger.

No one exploits.

Inclusion.

Acceptance.

A place to belong.

These words create a picture of possibility. The young people were not confident in how to move in this direction, but they spoke with a strong sense of desire. Consider how you are connected to young people and education. How can we respond?

~Sharon de Vries



## Surprising Circle Responses



*Circle question: what age would you like to be?* Grade 4 boy: I would like to be 24 years old, because I would have a job, a car, and I'd be a professional wrestler.

*Circle question: what is your favorite Christmas song?* Grade 5 girl: well, I would like to sing mine. So she sang I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. The other kids had never heard her sing by herself before, and they were all super impressed!

*Circle question: what would you like to be when you grow up?* Another grade 5 girl: I want to be a music teacher because you get to learn all the instruments, sing all the time, and it means I'd be really pretty too (flattery will get them EVERYWHERE!)

~Kathy Conway Ward

# Real Teachers, Real Students, Real Stories



## Frosty experiences harm

A challenging RJ moment mixed in with a bit of poetic justice and natural consequences occurred recently. Here's the narrative:

This year, we have three lovely international students—two from Brazil; one from Mexico. They are fitting in beautifully, and it is an absolute joy to teach them. The day of their first ever truly significant snowfall arrived. Packed, wet, fresh--beautiful for sculpting!



Camilla-our student from Mexico, was in first period English with us in the Library. She and her group had finished their work, so we asked the group if they wanted to take her out to the courtyard and help her make her first

ever snowman. They had a great time and did a beautiful job. The girls came in to warm up, and we all admired their handiwork. Camila was grinning from ear to ear—even more than the snowman.

Then..."Noooooooooo!" I screamed (in a not very restorative voice, I might add). Quicker than a flash, a first year student dashed across the courtyard, and leaped-ninja style-onto the snowman.

Having identified the culprit, [ahem, the person causing harm] we chased him down—[I mean-sought out his company], and explained the situation. Honestly, he showed no remorse about breaking a snowman!

"Snowmen," he explained, "are meant to be smashed and, if you leave one unguarded, tough luck!" We asked him if he would like to have a little chat about the incident and, in another obvious ploy to get out of class, he agreed.

Of course, the snowman was our true victim, but he's not allowed in the school due to his inability to control fluid loss. We felt the snow sculptors would be the next best option. The young lad who had caused the harm

remained steadfast in his beliefs, and was going to tell the girls about having to guard their man, until he met Camila. Upon hearing that this was her first snowman ever, we saw genuine remorse for her. "If I'd known it was your first snowman ever," he allowed, "I wouldn't have stomped it. I'm impulsive, though. If I see a snowman, I stomp it. But, seeing as how it was your first..." He shook her hand, and apologized. (Though we believe it was really genuine, he did do the "call me" gesture when she turned away). As for the rest, well, baby steps, right?

As a post-script, I must say that after the initial "NNNOOOOOOO!" we became quite restorative. The boy did, somewhat, see the error of his ways. Not fully, however, as apparently you only get one "snowman knockdown" pass or tough luck! The natural consequences? Well, the impulsive teen went back to class, and had to deal with his art teacher (who is not well-versed in RJ) as well as all his classmates who had seen the dastardly deed. And there is a plan to erect a threatening snowperson army outside the boy's house. But as the saying goes, "It's all fun and games until someone loses a carrot." Should further infractions occur, we'd like to take the more reasonable approach and have a formal circle...with Frosty as support.

*Thumpity  
thump  
thump!*



~Kelly Jespersion, Alison Edwards

## ☺ Two chucklers...☺

**Q. How can you tell when your colleague has been up all night thinking about rj?**

**A. They come to work with circles under their eyes.**

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**Q. How can you tell when you've been dreaming about rj all night?**

**A. When the alarm goes off you sit up straight and ask, "What happened?"**

~Anonymous



## 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)\*\***

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(Unless otherwise indicated, content has been written by D. Vaandering)*

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 the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and 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 in 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](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](mailto: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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[images courtesy of Microsoft clipart]