



## Practicing Restorative Justice in School Communities: The Challenge of Culture Change

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**Key words:** restorative practices, school-wide implementation, culture change, educational reform, behavior change

### *Abstract*

The practice of restorative justice in schools has the capacity to build social and human capital through challenging students in the context of social and emotional learning. While restorative justice was originally introduced in schools to address serious incidents of misconduct and harmful behavior, the potential this philosophy offers is much greater. The conviction is that the key challenge for schools is addressing the culture change required to make the shift from traditional discipline, driven by punitive (or rewards based) external motivators, to restorative discipline, driven by relational motivators that seek to empower individuals and their communities.

### **Civil society**

A current theme of social theory is that the development of social capital is essential to our capacity to build and sustain a civil society. In Australia, this was recognized by a number of social commentators in the 1990s, paralleling the initial insights of why the use of restorative justice in schools offered a clear and effective alternative to the use of traditional discipline (Australian commentators: Cox, 1995; Krygier, 1997; Malouf, 1998). The early trials of restorative justice in Australian schools followed in 1995 and 1997 (see Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). Reflecting on these trials, Cameron and Thorsborne (2001, p. 193) suggest that restorative practices "... focus our attention on relationships between all members of the school community and teaches us the value of relationships in achieving quality outcomes for students". Through focusing on relationships,

the practice of restorative justice has the potential capacity to harness the development of social capital, hence maximizing quality outcomes for all members of the school community, in particular students (Morrison, 2001). Australia did not stand alone in these developments; the importance of building social capital was advancing internationally in countries as different as the United States and Russia (see Putnam, 1995; Kawachi, Kennedy & Wilkinson, 1999; Kennedy et al., 1998). The United Nations was also turning to social, as well as economic, indicators of national development and social health. Likewise, the practice of restorative justice in schools was developing across a range of countries (see Morrison, forthcoming, for an international review of restorative justice in schools).

Social capital has been conceived as "... the social glue, the weft and warp of the social fabric which comprises the myriad of interactions that make up our public and private lives—our *vita activa*" (Cox, 1995, p. 18). This conception of social capital captures the regulatory power of a web of positive social relationships in the maintenance of a civil society. Further, Selznick (1996) argues that the development of communal bonds through a participatory regulatory framework is central to the development of personal responsibility:

Personal responsibility is most likely to flourish when there is genuine opportunity to participate in communal life. These conditions require substantial investment by the community and its institutions. At the same time, how much the community invests, and what kind of investment it makes, will depend on the prevalence of a sense of personal responsibility for the common good. (p. 14)

Strong institutions that develop genuine positive relationships within the nexus that sustains individual and collective life seem essential to our capacity to build a civil society. Within society's web of regulatory frameworks, the school system provides a solid foundation on which to build, as it is a central institution in the development and education of all citizens. Given Selznick's (1996) emphasis on the reciprocal process of individual and collective life in building responsible citizenship, if we fail to invest in the development of social capital in our schools we may miss a significant opportunity to nurture the development of a responsive civil society.

Social capital is then built and regulated through strong and effective developmental institutions, such as schools, that not only acknowledge and inform the development of individual responsibility, but also the reciprocal processes of upholding the responsibilities of institutions that represent us as collectives and the claims they have on us. In other words, given that macro-social processes of institutions inform and nurture the micro-psychological processes of individuals and vice versa, what we know about the underpinnings of social life at the micro level should reflect practice at the macro level. Our regulatory institutions have mostly assumed that individuals are solely motivated by individual self-interest.

In line with this thinking, rewards and punishment have been the dominant mode of regulation. However, if we understand that individuals are also motivated by the need for affirming social relationships (or to simply find meaning for themselves as group members), institutions should acknowledge and carry the responsibility of nurturing positive relationships. Institutions, in regard to the latter, would then need to develop the social glue that Cox (1995) speaks of; that which binds us and defines us in terms of personal and social identities. It is these emerging personal and social identities that schools nurture during significant developmental periods.

When social institutions deliver the message that we don't belong, our pro-social attitudes and behaviors can quickly become anti-social. Thus, institutional frameworks can bring us together in terms of shared social identities (and collective goals) or they can disenfranchise us to the extent that individuals come to define themselves in terms of anti-institutional identities. As a simple example, within the institutional framework of the school, students can take on the responsibilities of a good citizen and identify as one; or take on delinquent social identities, if they are not given the opportunity to find a respected place within the school community (Emler and Reicher, 1995). To this end, the school system plays a significant role in developing the capacity for responsible citizenship.

### **The emergence of restorative justice in schools**

The practice of restorative justice in schools has flourished since the first school based conference was held in a Queensland (Australia) school in 1994, (see Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). Since this time, several studies in Australia (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002), Canada (Calhoun, 2000), England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2005), and the United States (Ierley and Ivker, 2002; Minnesota Department of Children, Family and Learning, 2002; O'Brien, 2005) have demonstrated that restorative justice conferencing can be a highly effective process for responding to inappropriate behavior of a serious nature in schools (see Morrison, 2005b; Morrison, forthcoming, for review). While there is mounting evidence of the potential effectiveness of restorative justice conferencing in responding to harmful behaviour, what has become clear is that the use of conferencing itself is not enough to achieve the sorts of positive changes to school behavior management policy and practice that was hoped for in the early studies.

In recent years, to overcome the limited impact of conferencing on school policy, a range of practices have been developing which take a more comprehensive approach to implementation by focusing on the integration of restorative philosophy, practices and principles into the wider school culture (see Morrison, 2005b, for review of practices). The development of this more proactive approach has encouraged the implementation of processes and practices that aims to develop healthy relationships across the school community, a critical

factor for the delivery of improved student learning outcomes (see Lingard et al., 2003; Blum et al., 2002; Weare, 2004).

Schools that have adopted a restorative philosophy have discovered that most of their restorative activities fall within a continuum of practices which range from formal (e.g., restorative conferencing) to informal responses (e.g., classroom & corridor conferences, peer mediation, etc) (Wachtel and McCold, 2001). This continuum assists schools to more effectively manage conflict and disruptions in corridors, playgrounds and classrooms. However, these practices, while extremely effective in their response to wrongdoing, are inherently reactive. What has more recently emerged is the recognition that restorative practice also needs to be proactive, immersing the school community in a pedagogy that values relationships and a curriculum that values social and emotional learning (Morrison, 2002). These proactive practices recognize that managing relationships and resolving conflict are important life skills which assist in the de-escalation of conflict before serious incidents arise.

Restorative practices, proactive or reactive, emphasize the importance of relationships, in other words, social capital. This marks a shift away from punitive practices, which isolate individuals following wrongdoing, to relational practices, which bring individuals together following wrongdoing. The aim of restorative practices is to create a context wherein individuals can take responsibility, learn from and support each other through building on the ties of social capital. Given this pedagogical shift in praxis, one of the critical issues for successful implementation and sustainability of a restorative philosophy is the realization that this means organizational and cultural change. This requires a thoughtful approach to issues of implementation and development of restorative practices in schools in order to maximize sustainable outcomes.

Such sustainability represents a transformational shift in the way school communities think about discipline. Traditionally, discipline was thought of as an individual's ability to adhere to a set of school or classroom rules that were put in place to maintain good order, necessary for effective teaching and learning. Administrative responses to violations of school rules are traditionally regulated through external sanctioning systems which isolate the wrongdoer, appropriate blame, and hand down appropriate punishment from a higher authority. Building on the foundations of social capital, restorative discipline holds that individuals have the ability to be thoughtful and considerate about how their behavior is affecting themselves and others. It is the responsibility of the community most affected by the harmful behavior to listen, learn and respond appropriately. Central to the restorative process is the maintenance of individuals' dignity and self worth. These processes aim to harness the capacity to strengthen internal sanctioning systems through building a community of care around the individuals involved, while instilling accountability and responsibility. This involves building collective understanding about: what happened, how people were affected, determining appropriate responses to repair the harm done and

ways to decrease the likelihood of further harmful behaviour. In summary, traditionally, school order is maintained through establishing school rules and appropriate punishment for violation of school rules, by way of hierarchical accountability mechanisms; restorative processes maintain school order through building a web of relationships throughout the school community that supports individuals in making responsible decisions and holds individuals accountable for harmful behavior.

Transforming the mind-set associated with traditional discipline, to one associated with restorative discipline is critical to the achievement of a culture change within a school. This is challenging work for these cultural traditions go back centuries to the time of Thomas Hobbes and the Norman Conquest, to name but two influential periods (see Braithwaite, 2002). Culture change requires school communities to re-think behavior problems, be it school bullying, vandalism, or failing grades. The first step to addressing the problem is building understanding, which in turn facilitates an appropriate response. Indicators of the cultural understanding of the problem can be found in the language that is used to describe the problem, as well as how it is communicated to others. For example, is the problem described at an individual or the collective level; is it our problem or their problem? A shift in mindsets around problems, and how to address them, raises significant challenges for schools. These challenges become more manageable once the shift in culture begins to become embedded; that is, there is a collective understanding of what restorative practices means in terms of understanding and response (Ouchi and Johnson, 1978; Simpson, 2004).

### **The challenge of culture change**

Restorative practices focus our attention on the quality of relationships between all members of the school community. Hence, harmful behaviour reflects harm to relationships. Through this lens, repairing relationships necessarily forces the school community to learn from the harmful event and examine attitudes, beliefs and behaviors which have contributed to it (Zehr, 1990). This challenging of mindsets (and then behaviors) is where true culture change begins. When traditional practices are deeply embedded in schools, it is difficult for the school community to recognize the cultural cues from within. These cues are often more apparent to new members of the school community or observers. These cultural cues include: how management speaks to, and about, staff; how staff speak about the management, particularly in their absence; how management and staff speak to, and about, students and parents; the patterns of communication within staff meetings and what is said immediately after meetings; how criticism and disagreement are handled; how the school invites, promotes and supports initiatives and vision; how the school responds to identified needs amongst students or staff (see also Simpson, 2004). Culture reveals the value

base of schools; simply put the rules of relationship management or the hidden social and emotional curriculum of school life. To assimilate into school culture requires the assimilation of school values. Conversely, to challenge school culture requires the challenge of school values. This concurs with Taylor, who argues that culture change is achieved through message management (Taylor, 2004, p. 3):

Culture is the result of messages that are received about what is really valued. People align their behaviour to these messages in order to fit in. Changing culture requires a systematic and planned change to these messages, whose sources are behaviour, symbols and systems.

Executive staff, and other leadership figures within schools, establish and legitimate the messages sent within the school community. Their actions send messages to people about what is expected around the school through symbolic actions (and non-actions) and decisions (and non-decisions). These actions and decisions convey meaning to the community at large. Even small events can send big messages. For example, what meaning is conveyed when a student is sent to an administrator by a classroom teacher; likewise, what meaning is conveyed by the response (or non response) to that action; further, what meaning is conveyed through the behaviors a teacher or administrator responds to (and doesn't respond to) in hallways, lunch rooms, and play areas. Symbolic interaction conveys what is important within the school community and conversely what is not.

Building on the seminal work of Durkheim, Collins (2004) argues that our social lives are driven by a common force: interaction rituals. He proposes that successful rituals create symbols of group membership and pump individuals with emotional energy, while failed rituals drain emotional energy. Each person flows from situation to situation, drawn to those interactions where their social capital gives them the best emotional energy payoff. Thinking, too, can be explained by the internalization of conversations within the flow of situations; in this sense, individual expression is thoroughly and continually social; that is, constructed from the outside inward. The communication patterns by which school authorities engage members of the community allow particular members to participate in some interaction rituals and not in others; thus, determining group membership and the management of the emotional energy of the school. School leadership has the ability to use these interaction rituals, and communication patterns, to pump up emotional energy or drain emotional energy. The challenge for transformational leadership is to harness successful interaction rituals that build emotional energy around the change process. Consistent with the practice of restorative justice, the transformational process must be about empowerment of the school community to embrace the change process. The emotional energy to change has to be harnessed through a successful, often transformational, interaction ritual (see also Morrison, in press-b). The essence of restorative justice at an individual

and an institutional level is about harnessing the emotional energy that empowers, such that individual and institutional integrity and development can flourish.

### **Leadership and empowerment**

Leadership has been identified as the single most critical aspect of school reform, as it influences every aspect of what it takes to enhance student achievement in schools (Marzano, 2003). Leadership, like restorative justice, is about empowerment of the school community. As previously addressed, this is particularly important for managers:

... transformational process will change mind-sets, target values and build a culture which can truly support new strategies and organisational aspirations. However it can only be driven by passionate and persistent leadership at the top. Therefore, transformational change begins with transforming the mind-sets of managers. (Lee, 2004, p. 39)

While having executive staff on board is important, leadership can not be confined to this level. A reciprocal relationship between leadership and empowerment must be developed: leadership leads to empowerment, and empowerment leads to leadership. To be effective, both must permeate all levels and domains of the school community. This resonates with Lambert (2003), who argues: “leadership needs to be embedded in the school community as a whole [because] leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively” (p. 3). At all levels of leadership and management “walking the talk” and “building bridges” is important, in that they enhance the development of a productive learning community. Effective leadership must shape the development of five key elements of productive and professional school communities: shared norms and values, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, and collaboration (Louis et al., 1996). The development of restorative justice within the school community touches on each of these elements when driven through effective leadership.

These elements align with the characteristics of productive leadership outlined by Hayes et al. (2001), who concur with the conclusions of Louis et al. (1996) that “the most effective administrative leaders delegated authority, developed collaborative decision-making processes, and stepped back from being the central problem solver” (p. 193). This is the essence of processes that affirm and restore relationship within the school community; in other words, this is the essence of restorative justice for the membership of the school community. The process of leadership must go beyond the procedural aspect of engagement to the emotional aspect of engagement. Not only do leaders need to “walk the talk”, they need to create the safe spaces where others can be engaged socially

and emotionally. Lingard et al. (2000) have identified this as building the emotional economy of the school: "Leadership in schools needs to give effect to a new emotional economy that supports teachers and the school's learning community" (p. 105). The development of the emotional economy must be balanced with the economies of human and social capital. Each are important, yet getting the balance right is the key to developing a learning process that produces just outcomes for all students. To do this, schools must become learning systems themselves to address the inequalities that will continue to bubble up within their own community. Schools must have a strategic development framework to regulate themselves, or else risk being victims of the ills of wider societies. To this end, Lingard et al. (2000) suggest that educational systems: learn to be more reflective on the impact of their policies and funding arrangements; enhance accountability from top-down to two-way; support capacity building; support innovative practice; support systematic professional development that enhance outcomes for both teachers and student, and does not marginalize productive pedagogy for the sake of standardization. In other words, schools need to invest in a regulatory framework that empowers all member of the school community to engage in productive pedagogy.

A regulatory framework, based on restorative justice and responsive regulation, has been developed that goes a step in this direction (Morrison, in press-a; Braithwaite, 2002). In the context of social and emotional learning, the framework recognizes the five school level factors that are indicative of productive pedagogy: guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parent and community involvement, safe and orderly environment, collegiality and professionalism (see Marzano, 2003). Yet, as Marzano (2003) emphasizes: "Just because the research indicates that a particular school-level factor is important to student achievement doesn't mean that it is important in a given school . . . In the new era of school reform, schools will look carefully at the research, but then determine which factors apply to their particular context" (p. 158). This too is the aim of the framework provided; in that, the framework provides a structure for thoughtful implementation and development that is relevant to a school culture as it currently stands. Cultivating responsible leadership and participation is the primary goal, as schools activate and sustain the development process of a committed and caring community of learners. Creating this culture requires school communities to invest in:

- practices that restore individuals to communities when challenges arise
- evidence of what works, what doesn't, and what's promising within communities
- building bridges with community representatives and organizations within and alongside the school community to establish a diversity of pillars that secure a strong foundation to the social fabric of school life
- collaborative policy and curriculum development that embraces a strong vision for the future.

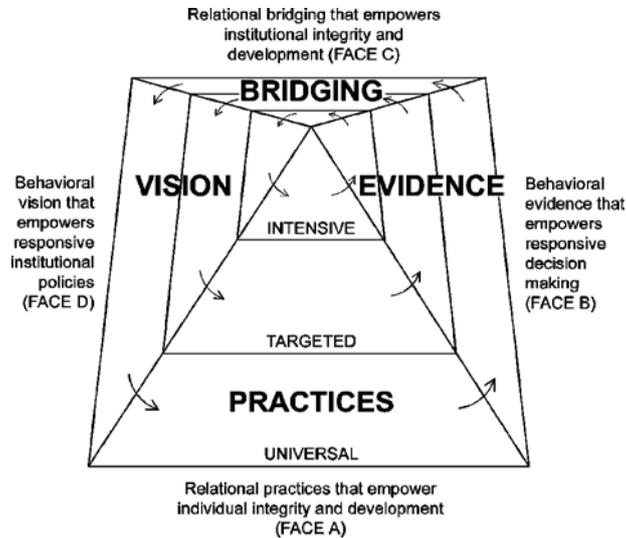


Figure 1. Regulatory pyramid.

In the context of sustaining school wide behavioral change, it is important to invest in ongoing system of growth and development, in other words an organization and learning community, at both the individual and the institutional level. How might this be realized? Perhaps through an interlocking system of responsive regulation that capitalizes on the investments of the organization and the learning community, outlined above:

- relational practices that empower individual integrity and development
- behavioral evidence that empowers responsive decision making
- relational bridging that empowers institutional integrity and development
- behavioral vision that empowers responsive institutional policies

This responsive framework is developed through the use of a regulatory pyramid (see Figure 1), with four faces (or sides). Two faces of the regulatory pyramid focus on behavior, in terms of outcomes sought and outcomes achieved (the behavioral pair), while the other two focus on relationships, both individual and institutional (the relational pair). This regulatory framework outlines a process through which schools can be *responsive to behavior* and *restorative to relationships*. Hence, behavioral policies are not forgotten but imbedded in a broader framework that recognizes the importance of relationships to individuals. For each pair (two behavioral and two relational), the two faces stand opposite each other, supporting opposite sides of the pyramid (opposed to standing adjacent to each other). Thus, as one moves around the pyramid, the

behavioral and relational faces alternate, tapping both institutional and individual needs and concerns.

### Implementation: A five stage model

The following stages (see Table 1) of implementation are intended to assist schools with working through the regulatory framework provided above. The idea of five core stages draws on the work of the former Restorative Justice Group, New South Wales (NSW) Police Service in the development of the Behavior Change Program, a major reform initiative for the NSW Police Service (Ritchie et al., 1997, subsequently developed and contextualized by Blood and Thorsborne, 2005).

Table 1. Stages of implementation.

Stage 1: Gaining Commitment— Capturing Hearts and Minds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making a case for change               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Identifying the need (the cost of current practice)</li> <li>1.2. Identifying learning gaps</li> <li>1.3. Challenging current practice</li> <li>1.4. Debunking the myths around behaviour management and what makes a difference</li> <li>1.5. Linking to other priorities</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Establishing buy-in</li> </ol>
Stage 2: Developing a Shared Vision— Knowing where we are going and why	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inspiring a shared vision</li> <li>2. Developing preferred outcomes aligned with the vision</li> <li>3. Building a framework for practice</li> <li>4. Developing a common language</li> </ol>
Stage 3: Developing Responsive and Effective Practice—Changing how we do things around here	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a range of responses</li> <li>2. Training, maintenance and support</li> <li>3. Monitoring for quality standards</li> </ol>
Stage 4: Developing a Whole School Approach— Putting it all together	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realignment of school policy with new practice</li> <li>2. Managing the Transition</li> <li>3. Widening the lens</li> </ol>
Stage 5: Professional Relationships— Walking the talk with each other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting open, honest, transparent and fair working relationships</li> <li>2. Using restorative processes for managing staff grievance, performance management and conflict</li> <li>3. Challenging practice and behaviour—building integrity</li> </ol>

The central point for school communities to recognize is that, with literally centuries of investment in the traditional culture of discipline, cultural change will not happen quickly, a long term strategic approach must be taken as school communities work their way through the stages outlined. Schools should envision a three to five year overall implementation timeframe to consolidate the change process (see also Promising Practices Network, 2005), with shorter timeframes marking important milestones. The proposed structure provides an ongoing development process, as the community addresses a range of issues that will continue to emerge, and are inherent to the creative tensions of social life. While acknowledging that the process will be ongoing, the hard work will occur in the initial years. Further, the following proposed stages are not necessarily linear, but recursive, in their implementation. Often as school communities move from one stage onto the next, the distinctiveness of each stage will become less apparent, as boundaries become grey and overlap through an integrated approach to implementation. For example, Stage 5—Developing Professional Working Relationships—runs concurrently with all other stages. One last important point, before moving onto the model: transition from one culture to another can be fraught with frustration, anxiety, confusion, cynicism and resentment. Schools need to recognize that change processes will necessarily invoke anxiety, as one interaction ritual chain is dismantled and another built; with this, emotional reservoirs will be challenged and defended. The challenge, and the key, is for the new communication chains (or interaction rituals) to produce better emotional outcomes than those lost. Managing the emotional impact of change will be as important as putting new structure and practices in place.

#### *Stage 1—Gaining commitment: Capturing hearts and minds*

The first stage to any change process requires gaining a certain level of commitment from the school community. This process requires establishing a good case for change, as well as buy-in by key members of the community. The case for change can be made in many ways; for example, data can reveal rising office referrals and suspension rates; best practice research and development can reveal holes in curriculum; parent and teacher groups can reveal lapses in the communication process; and the policy manual might need dusting off. Often the case for change is built across a number of these areas. The place to start is where the energy exists, and where buy-in can be established. As schools move forward, a range of reactions can be expected in the way a school community embraces change. The styles and needs of individual staff will need to be respected along the way. For some teachers, the last thing they will want to change is how they manage their classroom; for other teachers, they will be the first to take something new on board. In the context of restorative justice, the change process is about capturing hearts, as well as minds (Morrison, 2003).

To capture both hearts and minds schools will need different types of data to make their case for change. Some people will be moved by stories (akin to qualitative data), and some people will wait for the hard evidence (akin to quantitative data). The nature of the data will be determined by availability and priorities, and will vary from school to school. Often quantitative data helps to systematically highlight areas in *need of attention and change*. At the same time, this data will provide the evidence base that schools are achieving strategic goals, short and long term. Office referrals, suspensions and expulsions are the most naturally occurring types of data available to schools, and are important measure of how discipline measures are functioning (Morrison et al., 2004). Beyond these, other measures are important as well. Attendance records are also an important measure of school climate and health, particularly as this relates to victims of harmful behaviour. School wide climate and safety surveys are also important to assessing well-being, mental health, student engagement and connection. This data can also be an important measure for the safety and wellbeing of the adults in the school community.

To this end capturing the voice of teachers is also important, as they are often an underutilized source of information and inspiration (Finley, 2004). Indeed, it is important to raise the voices of all stakeholder groups across the school community (i.e., student, teacher, parent, administration and union), and have these voices listened to in thoughtful ways. Story telling and listening are important aspect of restorative process that seek to empower individuals and communities (Pranis, 2001). Further, raising the voices of the school community is important to *identifying learning gaps* within the school community. Stakeholder groups within the community should be involved in the mapping of current policy, practices, data and professional development systems onto a strategic framework. The mapping process may reveal that schools have good practices in place at the high end level of behavioral management, but nothing in place at the whole school level. They might have good data on suspension rates but little understanding of the school wide climate. In general, it is not unusual for schools to be top heavy in their understanding and response to behavior; that is, more reactive than proactive.

This mapping process also enables school communities to challenge current practice productively, through using the evidence base that the data provides. For example, does current practice have any effect on the suspension rate; or with less serious behaviours, detention rates? It often takes hard data to *debunk the myths around behavior management* and what makes a difference in delivering hoped-for outcomes. The process also allows schools to examine the congruence between the areas mapped out. For example, does current practice at the universal level complement practice at the targeted and intensive levels; and are values and practice congruent, building skills and resources, from grade to grade? Looking through the lens of congruence, schools can begin to link priorities. For example, the congruence between how the bullying policy integrates with mental health policy and practice. Typically, even small schools,

have a range of initiatives underway at any given time. Some initiatives, when seen through a common lens, have more in common than initially may be apparent (Zehr, 1990). School communities can also address questions such as: given restorative values and practice at the top level of the pyramid, is there congruence between current suspension rates and the hope-for outcomes specified within the vision. Finally, where learning gaps are identified, schools need to identify what professional development practices are in place, both in-house and elsewhere. In terms of the whole regulatory structure: does the vision reflect the data on the opposite side of the pyramid, and do gaps in practice reflect the professional development opportunities in place.

This close examination of current practice, achieved through mapping, combined with new ideas collected in networks and professional development opportunities, can serve to help the school community to make the case for change. It may be that these initial steps only involve a small leadership team within the school. The next step is to share these initial steps with the wider school community, to begin the process of wider engagement and influence. An important step is having senior administrators on board, as they are the gatekeepers to all change processes within schools, including disciplinary matters. The support of these managers is vital to the long term development and sustainability of the change process. They may not be on board initially, but a critical number will need to come on board at some point for the process to be sustainable. And this support may need to be more than verbal. Senior managers need the same exposure to professional development as other key players. It is also important to build bridges that recognize the diversity of interests within, as well as along side, the school community. For example, it is important to build bridges with parent associations, school boards and student government (i.e., student council). Along side the school community, it is important to build bridges with district wide student support services, alternate education providers, universities, welfare services, police, local government, even courts and probation (see also Goldring and Sims, 2005).

#### *Stage 2—Developing a shared vision: Knowing where we are going and why*

Once the case for change has been made and commitment is being established, the next stage is about *inspiring and developing a shared vision*. The school community, particularly the key leadership figures, must be clear about the institutional vision and goals—short, medium and long term. There must be clarity about what the school is endeavoring to achieve, why this is important, for the students and the community; how the school aims to deliver these goals; and data to measure if institutional goals are being met. In line with micro-institutional change, driving macro-institutional change, institutional development must go hand in hand with individual development (Braithwaite, 2002). Given that restorative practices are value based, building a restorative culture must also be value-

based, grounded in best practice and built on understanding of local needs. To this end, schools often bring in facilitators to guide the process, and ensure the voices of all members of the community are heard. This parallels the role of a facilitator in restorative community conferences.

At the same time the process is more complex at an institutional level, so it is important to *develop preferred outcomes aligned with the vision*. These outcomes become markers for schools to know when they are accomplishing their goals, enabling schools to celebrate their success and identify the gaps that remain. Goals may be oriented across a range of measures: data (e.g., reducing suspensions or office referrals by 10%), policy (e.g., balancing prevention, intervention and crisis management), staff development (e.g., increase support for staff struggling with discipline) and everyday practice (e.g., increasing the use of dialogue and problem solving circles). These goals need to be realistic and build on each other across time.

It is important for the school community to share a *simple framework for thinking about and practising restorative discipline*. Building on Wachtel's (1999, adapted from Glasser, 1969) two-by-two social discipline window, Blood (2004; see Figure 2) has more recently adapted it to a framework for developing social capital (see also Morrison, in press-a.). The vertical axis refers to the structure and boundaries necessary to maintain the social order of the whole school community, including classrooms and playgrounds. The horizontal axis relates to the nurture and support that all members of the school community need. The four quadrants describe a range of disciplinary practice, as outlined below: practice which lacks both structure and support is seen as neglectful—(NOT engaging at any level); practice which is high in control and low on supportive relationships is experienced as authoritarian and punitive— (doing things TO people); practice which is low on control and high on support is experienced as permissive and disempowering—(doing things FOR people); practice which maintains high standards and boundaries at the same time as being supportive is experienced as firm and fair—(doing things WITH others). The model allows

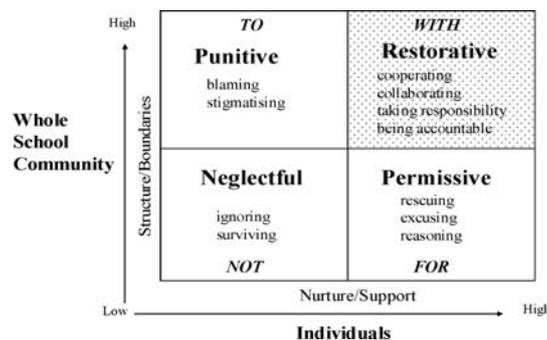


Figure 2. Social capital as a basis of social discipline.

schools to identify current practice and confirm restorative practice, providing direction to efforts for organizational change and achieving preferred outcomes. This framework also dispels a common misconception that restorative practice is a soft option; in contrast, restorative practices seek to be firm and fair, strong on accountability and support.

This framework assists schools in *developing a common language* based on restorative justice, as one of the most recognizable aspects of any organisation's culture is the language used by management and staff about their work, their clients (students and parents) and each other. The development of a common language shapes the culture and climate. The use of restorative language becomes an indicator of organizational movement towards a restorative culture, as the community moves away from using blaming, stigmatising, excusing, rescuing, helpless language and move towards more relational language which will in turn influence practice. Language is vital to the process but means nothing without congruent behaviour; that is, "practicing what we preach" or "walking the talk".

### *Stage 3—Developing responsive and effective practice*

The development process must include building understanding and practice for all staff to respond effectively to classroom disruptions, playground incidents and conflict in a way which minimizes the need to refer to a third party, often a more senior authority. The embedding of restorative practices aims to empower classroom teachers, given office referrals can undercut a teacher's authority within the classroom and become a bone of contention between managers and staff. This requires a clear understanding of who owns the problem and how it can be resolved before it escalates to a higher level. Once a problem is passed to a third party, punishment is often the typical response, as ownership for the problem has begun to erode and with this, effective responses. Having said this, schools do need to *develop a range of responses*, as some conflicts will escalate beyond initial efforts. Continuums of restorative practices now include preventative or proactive strategies, as well as reactive strategies (for overview see Morrison, 2005b). Morrison (2005a) has defined a three level approach based on a health care model, delineating universal, targeted and intensive responses (see Figure 3):

These levels of response form a continuum of responses, based on common principles. By way of analogy to a health care model, the universal level of intervention targets all members of the school community through an 'immunization' strategy; such that, all members of the school community develop social and emotional skills to resolve conflict in caring and respectful ways. The targeted level of intervention addresses conflict that has become protracted such that it is affecting others within the school community, as such a third party is often required to help facilitate the process of reconciliation. The intensive level of intervention typically involves the participation of an even wider cross section of the school community, including parents, guardians, social workers, and others

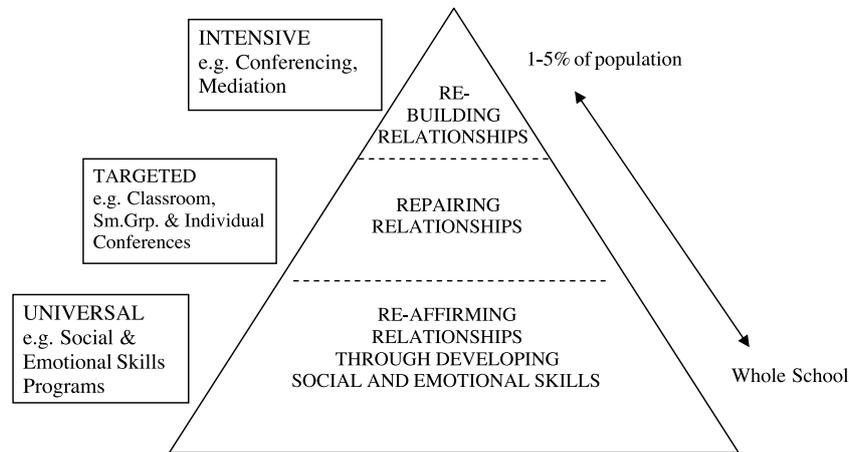


Figure 3. Hierarchy of restorative responses.

who have been affected or need to be involved, when serious offences occur within the school. A face-to-face restorative justice (community) conference is a typical example of this level of response. Taken together, these practices move from proactive to reactive, along a continuum of responses. Movement from one end of the continuum to the other involves widening the circle of care around participants. The emphasis is on early intervention through building a strong base at the universal level, which grounds a normative continuum of responsive regulation across the school community (pp. 105–106).

In essence, these interventions define the social and emotional curriculum of school life. The aim is to bring the often hidden social and emotional curriculum sharply into focus (see Morrison, in press-a). Given this understanding and framework, these practices are closely tied to the wider curriculum, as well as pedagogy. Thus, understanding the linkages between these three issues will become a critical part of implementation of restorative practice based on relational values. Many of the problems encountered in a typical school day are frequently misdiagnosed if not viewed through a relational lens and an exploration of factors contributing to relationship breakdown. For example: problems on playgrounds can often be personalised and viewed as non-compliance and defiance. Restorative dialogue with the ‘offending’ parties often reveals factors which can be remedied without resorting to punishment (eg., a lack of social skills, not knowing the game rules, boredom, poor allocation of play space or the lack of equipment etc).

Engaging all staff at this level and maintaining an ongoing dialogue about the issues which emerge will assist in the development of a climate of cooperation and collaboration, so necessary for culture change. Part of the leadership commitment to change must therefore be to provide adequate resources for high quality *ongoing training, maintenance and support*, recognizing change is resource intensive. Schools must consider a range of factors when considering the

development process. These include the model of training to be used; who gets trained and in what order; costs of training and funding sources for training. While initial training does not have to include the whole school community, it should represent a good cross-section of the school community. As practice develops training should also include new staff, students, non-teaching staff, parents and relief teachers. Once initial training is in place, support and supervision must also be established to maintain the integrity of the process. This includes collegial support for preparation, facilitation and debriefing for high level interventions (such as conferences) as well as more informal interventions. Networking with other schools and districts will also be important, as well as accessing the latest research and reading materials.

At the same time, schools need to take responsibility for themselves through internal *monitoring for quality standards* to maintain the integrity of their vision. Without in-house management systems it is difficult to sustain new practice and it is easy to slip back into old habits, particularly when something doesn't work the first time. In line with the problem solving approach of restorative practices, the preference is to learn from the experience. Some of the learning will be at an individual level, and some will be at a systems level. The acquisition of new skills requires coaching in a climate of encouragement, honest feedback and support particularly when shifting from ingrained traditional approaches to restorative practice. Data collection is helpful in driving the learning process at both levels.

#### *Stage 4—Developing a whole school approach*

There is convergence from a range of sources that educational reform call for holistic thinking and practice, as well as whole school approaches (see Lister-Sharp et al., 2000; Catalano et al., 2002; Wells et al., 2003; Weare, 2004). For example, Weare (2004) states that: "The call for holistic thinking is based on a growing realization across a vast range of social, health and educational challenges, which is that the analyses and solutions that work in practice are usually holistic ones. [A range of large scale reviews have] concluded unequivocally that whole-school approaches are essential when attempting to tackle emotional and social issues in schools" (p. 53). The regulatory and strategic framework proposed herein seeks to develop a whole school approach. This transition must be thoughtfully managed such that restorative practices are not just tacked on to existing school policy, but become integrated into whole school policy.

*Policy development must be closely aligned to restorative practice, process and values*; that is, the educational vision must be congruent with the everyday practice of restorative philosophy. There is often a risk that if the policy review process relies on tradition (punitive) thinking that has not been effectively challenged through earlier stages of implementation, there will be ongoing conflict between practice and policy. Hence, it is productive for policy development to be a product of evidence based restorative practices, rather than having en-

Table 2. Timeframe & indicators of change.

12–18 months	Gaining commitment. Changing dialogue. Pockets of practice. Improved statistics. Increased options for managing behavior.
12–24 months	Altered dialogue & processes. Alignment of policy & procedure. Increased skill development. School community commitment.
24–36 months	Embedding of practice at all levels. Altered operating framework. Reviewing policy and procedure. Creative solutions continue to emerge.
4–5 years	Best practice. Behavior change embedded. Cultural change across school community.

forced policy, often handed down from a high authority, driving new practice. In other words, it must be a product of the collective understanding of restorative practices within a school.

*Managing a whole school transition* from traditional to restorative discipline is a challenging process for school communities. This can not be underestimated. A long term strategic approach is necessary, while identifying milestones towards preferred outcomes in the short, medium and long term. The timeframe below (see Table 2) lists some of the indicators of change and an approximate timeframe in which these might be observed. It is not intended as a prescriptive list, as schools have different priorities and progress at differing rates; but is intended to be reassuring when progress seems slow.

One way of thinking about the implementation and development process is as a continual process of *widening the lens* of restorative philosophy, as more individuals and stakeholders come on board. Through this process understanding will become more deeply embedded and practice will develop. Indeed, through practicing restorative philosophy the lens becomes wider by virtue of the process. This is the essence of empowerment. As more individuals and stakeholders come on board diversity also increases. It is this diversity of perspective that breeds awareness and innovation. Through this process, schools have developed restorative parenting workshops, whole school forums for students, teachers and parents, community based partnerships with local health services to address substance abuse issues, as well as local businesses such as liquor outlets and bus companies (see Morrison, in press-a). The aim is to develop a wide range of professional relationships within the school community, and with those who stand alongside the school community.

#### *Stage 5—Developing professional relationships*

All four stages will be limited in their effectiveness unless there is a concerted effort to develop healthy professional relationships within the school community, particularly at a staff level. Challenging the hearts and minds of staff is the essence of culture change. This involves individual, as well as institutional, journeys. There are many cross roads that will have to be laid in the collective

journey of culture change and educational reform. At both levels, it is easy to avoid self reflection, and a willingness to change, by suggesting that *it is all too hard*. Teachers often become the scapegoat for implementation failure, when there are many layers to the challenges of educational reform. Lingard et al. (2003) capture this in relation to student learning outcomes: “We caution against blaming teachers because there are obvious structural reasons for the apparent lack of productive pedagogies . . . while changes are required in pedagogies, so are complementary modifications to school and systemic structures, and support for teachers’ professional learning communities” (p. 33). Again this reflects the structure of the framework proposed above, where individual development must go hand and hand with institutional development. Staff and administrators are not perfect, make mistakes, and need guidance and encouragement, as much as students. Staff may be aggrieved by the behaviors of students or colleagues; yet as members of the school community, they need to be accountable for their own behaviours which may have had a negative impact on other members of the school community. If schools are to develop a restorative culture, the professional working environment must also be underpinned by restorative philosophy and practice. This would be reflected in the structures, communications and processes that engage staff in the everyday life of school.

## Conclusion

Restorative justice grew from dissatisfaction with aspects of juvenile and criminal justice, typified by punitive and adversarial court process. Yet courts have a very different mandate than schools. **Schools are developmental institutions. Because of this, the practice of restorative justice in schools is much broader, and the challenges of implementation distinct. In school settings, the implementation of restorative practices is not simply a case of overlaying the justice model of conferencing and achieving sustained outcomes. As well as being microcosms of society, schools are discrete face-to-face communities made up of complex sets of relationships.** Unlike the criminal justice setting, where ‘victims’ and ‘offenders’ may not know each other or see each other again, in schools these same individuals will most likely see each other the next day. In the context of these tightly meshed communities, harmful behaviour not only has implications for the individuals directly involved, it has far more direct implications for the wider web of relationships within schools. As a consequence, minor incidents can quickly escalate if not addressed fully, and within the full context of the relational dynamics. To this end, restorative practices must be embedded within the culture of the school as a continuum of practices, such that conflict escalation is minimized when differences first arise.

Beyond a continuum of restorative responses, the embedding of restorative practices within the culture of schools raises the question: what is the present culture and is this conducive to repairing and strengthening relationships? The

practice of restorative justice has the potential to be more than a mechanism that repairs the harm done following harmful behaviour. It is also a means by which we can protect and enhance the social capital that school communities create. But in an even more far reaching way, the process forces us to reconsider the way we go about the organisational business of learning. The authors of this paper, working with education departments and schools in a range of international settings have come to understand that this is about cultural change. It is important that linkages are made between the core priorities of the school and the ways in which restorative practices can assist in achieving these ends. Because this vision requires a pedagogical shift from the punitive to the relational, it will have an impact on the school community that needs to be managed effectively for successful and sustainable implementation to occur. The framework and stages of implementation outlined aim to assist schools in developing an environment which is not only respectful of relationships, but one which is dynamic, challenging and contributes to the core business of schools, that of productive and responsible citizenship. Even taking away the fundamental notion that restorative justice heals harm and encourages responsibility, we are left with a process that is built around dialogue, understanding, tolerance, responsibility, openness, negotiation and above all else, one that is firm and fair in terms of its expectations of each of us in our school community.

To this end, personal and institutional empowerment and integrity is the outcome restorative justice seeks to achieve. Embedding the practice of restorative justice in schools strengthens the developmental objective of effecting responsible citizenship, moving beyond traditional skill based objectives that ground human capital. Education for empowerment also weaves and strengthens the fabric of our social life, our *vita activa* that nurtures collective understanding and meaning. Education for empowerment challenges schools to shift from an emphasis on individual development, to collective development, from social adaptation to social transformation. These are significant cultural challenges; as such, the practice of restorative justice in schools requires a significant emphasis on culture change if it is to offer hope for schools, and the communities they hold.

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