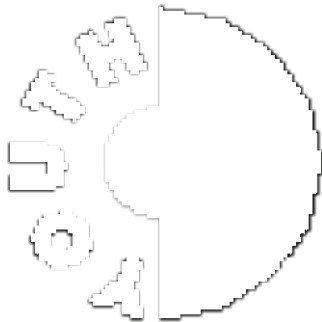




Restorative Practices / Community Conferencing Pilot 2002

Evaluation

Final Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an evaluation of a nine month Pilot of Restorative Practices / Community Conferencing in Victorian schools during 2002.

The Pilot was designed to support and evaluate the application of restorative practices as a strategy in the management of incidents and in order to reduce the number young people at risk of being alienated from mainstream education.

This Pilot provides sufficient evidence to suggest that restorative practices / community conferencing can be a highly effective way to manage incidents in Victorian schools. The experience of the staff, students and parents from 23 government and Catholic schools and from 16 regional support staff involved affirmed results of other reviews in Australia and internationally.

This **Executive Summary** highlights a number of factors that contributed to the impact of the pilot, and provides some indicators for any future directions in Restorative Practice.

Whole school approach required – Many participants reported on the need to adopt a whole school approach to achieve more effective implementation of restorative practices. Tensions with traditional methods, contradictions in the management of incidents and lack of staff awareness and understanding were cited as adversely affecting the impact of the strategy.

Involvement of school leadership – Where school principals and / or their assistants have been trained there appears to be a more interest and uptake of restorative practices. Conversely, participants reported a perceived lack of interest or awareness from school leadership as a barrier to implementation.

Collegiate support – Pilot schools had between 2 and 6 staff trained. Most participants felt it was important to have other trained people in the school. This support was highly valued as was the opportunity to use a fellow participant to debrief following management of an incident.

Time – One of the most significant challenges for Pilot schools was that of time. This was reported on two fronts. The first was the lack of time available in the Pilot to establish and implement a restorative approach in their schools. The second concerned the time required to run any formal conferencing.

Incident management using a traditional approach was also reported as time consuming. A consistent view expressed was that a conference could save time overall because it had a greater potential to resolve issues. It was felt that other approaches did not always deal effectively with other issues surrounding an incident particularly for the victims.

Training – An overwhelming majority of the cohort reported on their training with a high degree of satisfaction in both quality of teaching and course content. The two training modes employed for the project had a different emphasis on restorative practice but it was not the brief of this evaluation to compare them. There is therefore a need to further examine the role and type of professional training used in relation to any future strategies.

Confidence and experience– Many participants reported that they were in the early stages of developing expertise in using restorative strategies and were more confident practicing ‘mini-conferences’ or simply using restorative language and principles than running a ‘formal’ conference. This again points to the need to properly assess training needs and the appropriateness of more formal accreditation / monitoring over time.

Appropriateness of conferences – Conferences were seen at the extreme end of restorative practices, to be used selectively for serious incidents. Not all incidents suited conferences nor do they suit all people.

High levels of satisfaction with conference process – Participants have generally reported positively about the process and initial outcomes of mini-conferences and community conferences. Overall this evaluation received favourable reports about the scripted process as a guide to convening and structuring conferences.

High level of satisfaction with outcomes – Facilitators of conferences and those using ‘mini conferences’ reported favourably on the benefits of restorative practice compared to other means available to them. Evidence was also found that most parents and students were also satisfied with outcomes of conferences.

Regional and District support –The emergence of an ongoing network of trained facilitators in each of the pilot clusters was reported as a positive and important. There was strong support for the maintenance of these networks beyond the Pilot phase.

Involvement of community

Restorative Practice has its origins in the community. It is worth noting that Pilot schools had insufficient time to build the necessary connections with parents and the general community that would lend support to the initiative. This is another area where further investigation and support are required.

Involvement of students

It is essential to the success of restorative practices in schools that opportunities are provided for students to acquire specific social competencies that will allow them to engage in a community of constructive and empowering relationships.

Systems support - National and international literature suggests that the proactive role of education systems is critical in the uptake and imbedding of restorative practices. The Pilot revealed the intention and philosophy of restorative practices were consistent with

Victorian policy frameworks in both Government and Catholic schools. It also has potential to be an important strategy in terms of student well-being.

Three questions emerged through the course of the evaluation and will be useful in framing any future directions;

What would be different if schools adopted restorative practices?

Schools are complex organizations so it is difficult to describe an ideal approach that would suit all. In general terms the best advice concerns the development of a whole school approach in which restorative practice is imbedded in both curriculum and welfare. School organization, practice and policy would then reflect the skills of conflict resolution and intellectual debate, and a clear and consistent system of dispute resolution. Many schools currently aim to work in this way so the step towards restorative philosophy may not be huge. The greatest challenge is in schools where offending students encounter a tradition of impersonal, bureaucratic and retributive practice.

What would effective use of restorative practice in schools look like?

Restorative Practice offer a means of developing collective responsibility for well-being and problem solving strategies to repair harm associated with incidents. In other words, they focus on teaching and modelling ways in which young people can be effective citizens. Such a school environment offers concern for the welfare of victims and offenders, with a focus on the use of formal and informal, non-punitive approaches and wide community participation. Students are more likely to remain connected to networks of support and take greater accountability for their actions.

What would it take to effectively implement restorative practices in Victorian schools?

Future directions could include a range of strategies at four levels;

1. A response at government level could include:

An Interdepartmental Working Party being established to prepare a Position Paper and strategic advice on the use of restorative practices / restorative justice. This could be circulated for responses from Education, Justice, Police, Health and Community Services.

2. A response at systems level could include:

- An extension of the Pilot project to allow for continued implementation, documentation and evaluation. Focus of this next phase should be on the development of whole school approaches.
- The development of an implementation strategy and resource base to support whole school change in each trial school.
- The provision of a State wide manager/s to monitor progress and report.

- The cross sectorial working party to be maintained to provide ongoing advice on the establishment and delivery of restorative practices.
- The provision of time release for each Pilot school to allow for more effective establishment.
- The maintenance of a viable pool of trained district or regional staff to work with the schools as required.
- The maintenance of network support for ongoing school cluster meetings.
- Any review of relevant policy initiatives, particularly the DE&T Code of Conduct, Social Competencies Pilot and CEO Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools to make reference to current Restorative Practice literature / evaluation advice.

A response at school level could include;

- The continued promotion of the Pilot and associated philosophy of Restorative Practices including the use of mediation, circles and conferencing through state and regional professional development.
- A small expansion of the number of pilot schools to other diocese / regions. Such schools would need to demonstrate a commitment to dedicate internal professional development funds / time to be involved in pilot.

Further research and writing

- A cost benefit analysis of restorative practice compared to other practices currently employed by schools. The aim to provide evidence of comparative costs in terms of time, resources and outcomes.
- An investigation into the models of training / professional development and resource base available with a restorative framework. The aim would be to identify future training options.
- An investigation into the role of parents and parent organizations in relation of the introduction of Restorative Practices at school level.
- Compilation of resource kit to support Pilot schools.

There is no doubt that there is growing interest and enthusiasm for the restorative approach nationally and internationally. This evaluation is mindful of the limited time available to the Pilot to bring to light the challenges and benefits this approach. In order to capitalise on the momentum it is important to invest further in our understanding of Restorative Practice and its application in Victorian Schools. Given time and support to allow an appropriate implementation phase Restorative Practice has the potential to add enormous value to our understanding of well-being in our schools.

BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

Background

In April 2002 the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) in collaboration with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) initiated an investigation into Community Conferencing in Victorian schools. This pilot, in schools from the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors concluded in November 2002.

A small number of trials already conducted in some Queensland and NSW schools over the past decade have had some promising results confirming that conferencing can be a highly effective strategy for dealing with incidents of serious harm in schools (Cameron 2001).

A number of Victorian schools had already initiated training based on the work of *Transformative Justice Australia*. This interest, plus the growing body of evidence around restorative justice elsewhere in the world suggested the need to investigate the merit of Community Conferencing in the local context.

Victorian education authorities were particularly interested in the use of Restorative Justice practices in the management of drug related incidents as an alternative to other measures such as suspension or expulsion. Current initiatives and approaches to student wellbeing used by Victorian schools; *The Student Code of Conduct* and *The Framework for Student Support Services* in government schools and *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools* advocate for an increased focus on prevention and where possible, maintenance of student connection to educational pathways. In practical terms retention of students involved in 'serious incidents' has proven difficult, particularly those involving drugs.

The Pilot was therefore designed to support and evaluate the application of restorative practices as a strategy to assist in the management of young people who are at risk of being alienated from mainstream education.

In broad terms the Pilot is designed to assess the climate of change required for effective implementation of restorative practices and provide evidence of change, i.e. :

- How are things different in comparison to situations before the project?
- Has the capacity of schools to plan appropriate pathways and management regimes for young people altered as a result of the introduction of Community Conferencing?

A senior education officer from both DE&T and CECV jointly manage the pilot in collaboration with the School and Community Development Division of DE&T Victoria. Funding for the Pilot has been provided by the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (Commonwealth) through the National Drug Education Strategy.

PARAMETERS OF PROJECT

OBJECTIVES

- An investigation into the appropriateness of *Community Conferencing* as a strategy to assist the retention, reintegration and pathway planning of young people in school settings.
- Development of a pilot program incorporating schools from across all sectors.
- An evaluation of pilot including the dissemination of findings.
- Development of strategic advice to appropriate authorities in each education sector.
- Collaboration with parent organisations, police, juvenile justice, youth and drug agencies.
- Development of a training strategy and program to suit current Victorian welfare and drug initiatives including *The Framework to Student Support Services*, *Individual School Drug Education Strategies* and *Catholic Education Youth Services*.
- Establishment of a network forum for the promotion of best practice in relation to the management of at risk young people in school settings.
- Enhanced capacity of schools to plan appropriate pathways and management regimes for young people through the establishment of partnering arrangements with community agencies and training providers.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Evidence based on the effectiveness of *Community Conferencing* as a way of retaining, reintegrating and pathway planning for students.
- Enhanced links between community and schools. e.g. parent associations, school councils, police youth and drug agencies.
- Community Conferencing training package adapted for Victorian schools.
- Improved capacity for school communities to respond to and manage serious incidents including drug related incidents.

This evaluation has been able to provide evidence and advice on the use of Restorative Practices in Victorian schools. There is less evidence of enhanced links between community and schools at this point of time. More time is required to develop such links and to further investigate the nature and extent of training.

METHODOLOGY

Cohort

This trial involved a cohort of 53 participants from 23 schools; 14 secondary schools, 8 primary and one alternative school setting. A total of 16 support staff; Senior Program Officers and Student Welfare Support Staff from both Catholic and government sectors also participated in the training bringing the total cohort to 69.

Schools were selected, based on expressions of interest from four regional clusters, one in a regional centre, one rural, one metropolitan and one outer suburban.

Training

Two forms of training were incorporated into the trial.

Three clusters (N = 55) undertook training **Mode 1**, delivered by *Transformative Justice Australia Queensland* (TJA Qld). This training consisted of a three day program providing background and theory in restorative practices and practical use of community conferencing in school settings.

The other group (N = 14), the metropolitan cluster, undertook training **Mode 2** delivered by Department Learning Education and Development (LED) of Education Faculty at The University of Melbourne as an accredited unit, *Managing Conflict in Educational Settings* from their Masters of Education course. Restorative practices were framed within a philosophical and practical framework for managing conflict in schools. Participants were equipped to use conferencing as one of a range of tools.

An evaluation of the two modes was conducted at the completion of training using pre and post training self-administered surveys identifying satisfaction levels and skills gained.

Evaluation tools

The evaluation team attended cluster meetings held in each region shortly after the conclusion of training and invited schools to be involved in three forms of data collection:

1. The use self reporting tools: (see Attachment 2)

- Incident Reports used for describing action taken to manage general incidents not proceeding to a formal conference;
- Conference Reports used for describing incidents warranting community conferencing and their subsequent outcomes;
- Post Conference Participant Surveys used at the conclusion of a conference to gather immediate feedback;

- Conference Participant Surveys used up to two months after a formal community conference;
- End of Pilot School Review

2 - Case Study Schools (see Appendix 3)

Four schools, one from each cluster, volunteered as case studies for the pilot phase of the project. This involved visits, up to one and half days, for the evaluation team to collect qualitative data, primarily through interviews with staff, students, parents and school leadership.

Data was collected on administrative guidelines and principles that inform school practice in regards to the management of student discipline and welfare. The evaluation assessed the impact of restorative practices / community conferencing and where possible compared the approach with other forms of incident management.

The four case study schools are;

Metropolitan secondary college (7-12)	Holdsworth College
Country primary school (P-6)	Smith St. School
Outer suburban Secondary College (7 – 12)	Stokes. S.C.
Regional Secondary College (7 – 12)	North Tyler SC

Please note pseudonyms have been used for participant schools, parents, staff and students who have contributed towards this evaluation.

3 - Systems consultations (see Appendix 2)

A cohort of systems level representatives were involved in consultations regarding policy and procedures used to guide and govern school practice (N = 6).

Key questions guiding these consultations included:

- What policies and principles currently guide school practice regarding the management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing?
- How is current practice measured / monitored / reviewed / resourced?
- How is this practice evaluated or reviewed?
- What is working well? Not so well? What is likely to change?

WHAT IS THE LITERATURE SAYING?

A review of literature, particularly evaluated studies of restorative practices in schools was conducted throughout the project. This review is attached in full to this report. (see Attachments)

The following is a summary of the key points.

National and international literature on restorative practices in school settings suggests a growing interest in alternatives to the way discipline and punishment are managed. The growing body of research evidence is reasonably consistent in its assessment of the use of restorative practices in schools.

First there is a general recognition that restorative practice has merit and that it presents a viable alternative or adjunct to current punitive based approaches. Studies tend to show that there is a high satisfaction with the process and outcomes of such strategies as conferencing. Researchers have also reported low rates of re-offending and high rates of compliance with conference agreements. School administrators in some studies indicated that conferencing had reinforced school values and a significant number of schools reported they had changed their thinking about managing behaviour from a punitive to a more restorative approach.

Why is it then there are very few reported examples of restorative practice sustained over time? One reason put forward is that the approach is relatively new and there is little longitudinal data to measure impact over time. Another is that rather than reinforcing school values restorative practice can threaten current values about discipline. A number of schools reported to have enthusiastically embraced the approach initially gradually reverted to a more mainstream approach over time. The literature reveals that it is rare for schools to fully embrace restorative practice (Department of Education Queensland 1996) and that schools, or rather those responsible for discipline tend to be highly selective about the use of restorative justice.

The dominant approach to discipline in schools has historically been punitive. Use of detention, suspension and expulsion are widely reported as the main deterrents to student misbehaviour. The literature highlighted the difficulty many teachers had in using restorative practices because management of student behaviour is essentially framed around control paradigms therefore making restorative strategies difficult to use. Even in trial schools teachers reported that it was often easier to suspend than to set up a conference or spend time talking to students. Australian researchers and writers in the field such as Cameron & Thorsborne (2001), Morrison (2001) and O'Connell (2002) all refer to the need to bring about a culture change to properly introduce restorative practices in schools. As O'Connell reported;

"I no longer just offer training to schools in how to facilitate community conferences, but rather seek to challenge school about their 'normative' practices so that the elements of what make community conferences work

might be reflected in the full continuum of practices from the informal to the formal. Importantly, we view problematic behaviour in a very different way, as an opportunity for insight and learning, rather than seeking compliance as an end in itself.”

A restorative approach represents a major change in attitude and culture for many schools and accordingly needs to be addressed through school change paradigms. There are therefore key questions around what skills, knowledge and processes are required to adequately support culture change in the area of Restorative Practices. While the literature points to the need to adopt whole school change with associated community support there appears to be little research into how this could be achieved.

Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) go further and suggest that there also needs to be like investments within pre-service teacher education and state policy development. Again there is little advice on what these investments should look like.

Linked to these issues was time required to establish and implement restorative practices. Research consistently indicates that lack of time to properly implement at a school level and a lack of time to properly assess impact at a broader level have been critical factors in judging the impact.

“All the sites noted that it takes time, usually two to three years, to fully implement restorative practices, both classroom management and interventions.” (Riestenberg 1998)

The public face of restorative practices has tended to be conferencing. While the literature consistently reports on the time taken to set up and run conferences they also report favourably about outcomes in terms of prevention – saving time in the longer term. While it has been more difficult to assess the impact and effect of circles, mini-conferences or the use of language to create a climate of restitution research tends to rely on quantitative data such as reductions in suspensions or expulsions.

It is noted that the current Victorian Pilot has a trial phase of less than 9 months. It is reasonable, given the experience of similar studies, to assume that it will be difficult to assess impact or change in terms of qualitative data in this time frame.

The literature overall indicates significant interest in restorative practice and an increasing movement focusing on associated school change. The potential benefits of the effective application of restorative practices have been evaluated and highlighted in national and international studies. The challenges relate to how schools interpret restorative philosophy and respond. There appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that restorative practices could make a difference in the ways schools do business and in particular the way adults treat and relate to the young people in them.

EXPERIENCE OF PILOT

23 schools, 69 trained staff, and hundreds of students have now been involved in this pilot, alongside parents, supporters and community members. On the basis of nearly all evidence - from pre-training and post-training surveys, post-conference-surveys, documented incidents, case-studies, interviews, observations, and student essays - it is clear that the trial has been, for most, a rewarding and awareness-raising experience. The trial has also highlighted frustrations and challenges. The key frustrations have been associated with time (or the lack of it) and also the need to have whole school approaches in place for restorative practices to work well. The key challenge relates to creating and maintaining sustained support for the application of restorative practices in schools.

Training

The first group of trained practitioners (N= 55) attended course 'mode 1', facilitated by Transformative Justice Australia. This was a three-day course, which focussed upon practice and equipping staff to engage in restorative practices (eg. conferences and dialogues) in their schools. The second group (N = 14) attended course 'mode 2', run through Melbourne University. This was a six-day course, which focussed on equipping staff with a sound theoretical understanding and basis for restorative practices, as part of applying a wider conflict resolution framework.

Post-training Feedback sheets from both modes of training indicated *extremely high levels of satisfaction with both courses* (see Appendix 6).

This has been a short pilot, and not all 'fruits' of the training process will be visible yet. In terms of developments during this year, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who had practice in conferences and in using the 'dialogues' were better equipped to ground their training in their school settings, and were able to 'hit the ground running'. This, in turn, has kept the issue 'live' for them, and inspired others within their networks.

All involved in the training were able to express their pre-training hopes and expectations (see Attachments - Tools). This feedback could also act as a guide when structuring future training.

Systems / Network Support

System and network support have been foundational to the operation of this pilot. Interview and survey responses indicate that this type of support will be equally necessary should Restorative Practices become part of an ongoing strategy for student discipline and welfare.

Throughout the pilot, regional support staff made themselves available to conduct briefings and training in schools. Half-day PD sessions were held in two clusters. These briefings and training sessions have heightened the awareness of Restorative Practices in the schools concerned.

Network support occurred through four clusters. Each of the four clusters met 3-4 times during the year, with the support of regional support staff. Feedback from trained staff highlight that these gatherings were vital, not just to their own uptake and initiation of Restorative Practices in their schools, but to sustaining these practices. The network meetings provided a space where stories could be told, questions asked, issues workshopped, resources shared, frustrations aired and victories celebrated. Their value was not simply in the gathering of like minds, but in the way that people were able to further their own awareness, and to resource each other. Essentially this was about engagement in a learning community.

The cluster-meetings fostered the continued grounding of restorative principles and of the languages learned in training. The stories of people who had just initiated restorative practice in another school would often provoke the response: 'I'd never thought of doing that' or 'we could do that.'. We observed that stories would encourage others to share: 'Oh I'd forgotten we did that', and that there was an exponential (or self-multiplying) effect within clusters as people saw easy, practical ways to apply the things that they had learned. A common discussion point was the 'mini-conference', or impromptu dialogues based on restorative principles, and the use of restorative language in school settings.

The contrast between the clusters, and the ways in which these functioned throughout the year, highlight some of the dynamics of a sustainable process. Where people had little practice to draw upon, they felt that they had nothing to contribute, and they were less likely to attend meetings. When they did not attend meetings, they were less likely to have the tools at hand to apply restorative principles in their school settings. The clusters that had people arrive for the first meeting, enthusiastic, with stories of things that they had already tried, continued to gather momentum. Meanwhile those who had more trouble grounding what they had learned continued to struggle.

The other significant function of cluster meetings was to provide a forum for connection with the wider community around the issue of restorative practices. One example of this was the involvement of police in both Frankston and South Gippsland cluster meetings.

School / participant experience

Over the nine-month trial of Restorative practices in Victorian Schools, 14 conferences and 23 mini-conferences were recorded, and these occurred in 8 schools. These conferences and mini-conferences involved incidents ranging from truancy and theft, to harassment and fighting. (For samples of conference 'cases' see appendix 6). Data was collected from participants (school staff, offenders, victims, supporters and observers) via self-administered surveys, in the week immediately following a conference. Case-study schools were also involved in follow-up interviews approximately two months later.

For those running the conferences the experience has been predominantly positive. All pointed to the fact that conducting a conference properly is very time consuming. They also emphasised that a conference is not a process to be entered 'lightly'. The process extended school staff beyond their 'comfort zones', and they have needed the support of regional staff and networks. *The information collected through this evaluation affirms that if a conference is selected well, approached thoroughly by a team who are prepared to do the groundwork, and carried out within the spirit of Restorative Practice, it can be a powerful tool for exploring and managing school discipline issues.* This pilot has seen several of the trained staff become advocates of the process, equipped with a growing base of experience and many compelling stories.

The data from this study also re-affirms that conferencing is a victim-centred process. Although not all victims were sure that offenders would be able to keep to their agreements, surveys reveal high levels of victim satisfaction. Their comments included:

“I felt much better after. When Larry gave me the note I felt better. It was very nice.” (grade 3-4 student)

and

It has been unreal. There has been no more trouble. There has been nothing like this before and it has worked out well. The boys have complied with the agreement and have been perfect gentlemen. (teenage girl, victim)

Probably the most compelling story of student satisfaction with the conferencing process is that when an 'offender' at an earlier conference requested another conference to deal a new incident where he has become the 'victim'. Early in the pilot, this happened at Wyn primary school (see appendix 6 –Case 1). The student, in grade 3-4, explained that he had been really impressed with the way that the earlier incident was managed. This also highlights issues of student understanding and awareness. A key feature of both written responses and conversations within networks has been stories about students' own interest in this process, the restoration of relationships, issues of fairness and justice, effective dispute resolution, and growing awareness of their own responses.

Comments from family members included:

By the way, I've told quite a few people (parents and non parents) about the successful conference I witnessed and contributed to last Thursday. The

parents I told all said they wished their child's school could adopt the same system principles. Thank you again for that! (mother of victim)

Finally, and importantly, in both surveys and interviews, offenders have reported satisfaction with conferences as a process of school discipline. Several of the conferences have had profound impacts on offenders and their relationships. 'Jay's story is one example. Jay's conference was his 'last chance' to stay at school. 'Carol', the regional support worker conducted the conference, and spent days beforehand interviewing everyone involved (see case 2 in appendix 6 for full details). The conference was powerful, leading to changes not only in Jay but also within a whole community and their response to him. In the final days of writing this report, we received word that Jay had become involved as a key player in another conference, this time as a supporter and advocate of the process. In the conference he told the offender that his own conference had been a significant changing point in his own life.

I feel different. I feel better and happier, and more secure because there is a routine I have to stick to. I also feel more understood. (Jay – Year 8 student)

On this occasion, Jay advised the offender that it was important to '*get back to school as soon as you can!*'.

What did Restorative Practice look like in Pilot schools?

The following summary of findings blend the End of Pilot Survey (representing 42 of the cohort of 69) with four Case Study schools' experience, self reported evaluations and reports presented at network meetings.

In general terms the questions related to the areas of interest highlighted in bold print.

Use of school wide approach related to restorative practice

How have other staff mostly been informed and involved?

Ten of the twelve schools indicated in responses End of Pilot Survey (see Appendix 5) they had presented information through staff meetings. In general terms schools reported that they had limited opportunities to inform staff.

Only four schools reported more extensive staff professional development. One secondary Catholic school had managed a one and a half hour presentation to all staff in which they presented a 'mock' conference. The primary Case Study Catholic school held a school closure day in November to discuss the language used and approach used in Community Conferencing. The outer suburban secondary college incorporated whole staff briefings into their implementation while a regional primary school made use of ongoing reports and briefings to staff following any conferences. In the latter three examples members of the school leadership team had attended the TJA training.

Introducing people to these ideas and practices needs to be an intentional process. We have 3 staff trained as facilitators. All staff have been e-mailed general info re community conferencing and in-service activities. Where there is PD we like to see the information - as a kind of accountability. So the e-mail was to let everybody in on it. Following that e-mail, full staff meeting with (regional support worker) explaining community conferencing. So when we went to run a conference they knew about it. (Secondary Assistant Principal)

A number of comments were received about the value of non trained staff acting as observers in conferences as a way of involving and informing other staff.

How have parents mostly been informed / involved?

In general terms schools have used the traditional methods of involving parents, newsletters and bulletins. In a majority of instances parents' first contact with restorative practices has been through involvement with a conference. A number of schools reported this was an area in need of attention.

The issue of parent involvement in conferences emerged in some schools. Inability to contact parents, their unavailability or lack of interest in attending were the cited as the most common reasons. One Case Study school offered to pick one mother up in the school car as she had no way of getting to the conference.

In some instances it was reported that parents had not been informed or invited to attend a conference. Staff in one school suggested it was more expedient in the circumstances of the incident not to involve parents. In this case, the students, both victims and offenders were scheduled to go on camp together the following day and staff believed a conference offered the best way to ease any tensions.

Although only a small number of parents provided responses during the pilot there is some evidence to suggest that parents were very satisfied with the process and outcome of conferences.

One Case Study school reported a language barrier. This was overcome by involving a staff member to act as an interpreter.

How have students mostly been informed / involved?

There appears to have been little formal planning about the role and education of students in restorative practices. While there have been a number of trained staff having discussions about restorative practice and modelling the practice in their classroom it is evident that students were more likely to be informed through their involvement in an incident leading to a conference.

One teacher reported on the use of conferencing to resolve and manage a classroom incident. (see Appendix 4 Case 3) Another teacher used Restorative Practices particularly to manage *conflict* between groups of students, conflict between individual students and staff members and bullying. As part of a Year 8 anti-bullying program “Dealing with Feelings” she used a community conference role play to show the impact of bullying across the school community (see Appendix 1).

A Regional support staff member, who had been trained prior to the Pilot and had conducted a conference in a remote P-12 college early in 2000, (see Appendix 4 Case 6) tells a lovely story of co-facilitating a more recent conference in which the offender, Jay’ was invited to speak. This was some 18 months after Jay was involved in a conference focussing on his poor attendance record and his disruptive classroom behaviour. He and his mother were invited to give his perspective of going through difficulty in school.

“I had only seen Jay once in the past 18 months and I couldn’t get over how much he had changed. He was confident, his demeanour and outlook had changed. He spoke well and talked about how his life had changed.”

How have outside agencies / support staff been informed / involved?

While there was little reported use of outside agencies in the End of Pilot Survey, schools did make extensive use of support staff. Both Pilot managers were called upon to provide significant advice and support as were a number of trained District and Regional staff. In three reported cases support staff facilitated conferences in pilot schools.

On the question regarding the use of external or internal facilitator for conferences, most participants reported that it was better to have a facilitator based in the school, someone familiar with the culture and the students and could monitor progress or contracts. However some schools also reported on the value of having trained external people who could co-facilitate, provide advice or help debrief. This would suggest the need to have experienced staff available to schools, mostly in a support capacity but with the ability to facilitate or co-facilitate conferences according to circumstances.

In what ways has conferencing / restorative approach impacted on practice?

Pilot schools responding to evaluation measures all reported using restorative practices in dealing with incidents generally. That is, they reported using restorative language and philosophy to help guide, behaviour management plans and interviews with students, staff and parents. The majority of Pilot schools are using mini restorative conferences to manage minor incidents while nine schools reported the use community conferences for serious incidents.

There was less reporting of supporting curriculum measures such as the use of restorative approach in social skills programs.

A number of people reported evidence of culture change suggesting that restorative practice has had a some impact on the way which some schools manage incidents.

The Regional Director made comments to the effect that 'Stokes SC' and 'Outfield Special' have done complete turnarounds in terms of behaviour problems. Both are implementing Restorative Justice. (Regional support staff)

All schools indicated that more time was required to properly implement the approach. Some schools reported on the difficulty they had in making other staff or school leadership more aware of restorative practices. Some schools reported meeting and addressing resistance.

Overall impact of conferencing / restorative approach

Most schools felt the use of restorative practices had impact on school climate. It is difficult to judge what this means in terms of behaviour change. Staff in Case Study schools reported improved relationships with students and reductions in confrontation using restorative language. Further evaluation, over time is required to assess the direct and indirect affect of using restorative practice.

Worth investing time and money in CC. It is not a panacea, but when used within the context of a sound School Behaviour Management Policy, it becomes a very worthwhile exercise. Fits in beautifully with the Catholic ethos. Catholic teacher

Schools reporting on their use of conferences and mini-conferences also supported the view that restorative practices / conferencing has been effective in holding offenders accountable.

On the question ‘*Restorative practices / conferencing has made the school safer?*’ the majority of schools were undecided. Four schools reported that it had. Again the evaluation was not able to go far enough to determine or assess measures of school safety.

In terms of the effectiveness of restorative approach / conferencing over more traditional methods all but one school strongly supported the view that it was. While the sample is small the indications are that pilot schools would continue to use restorative approaches in combination with traditional approaches.

There was a mixed response concerning how effectively schools had been able to implement a restorative approach. Only three schools reported effective implementation. Case study schools reported a lack of time to implement the approach as a key impediment to its effectiveness.

A majority of schools were undecided about reduction of rates of suspension, expulsion, and detention as a result of the pilot. A number of primary schools commented that it really didn’t apply to them as suspensions and expulsion were rare in primary schools. Schools again reported a lack of time as an impediment to the collection of these quantitative measures.

Most schools using conferencing felt that offenders were complying with the terms of conference agreements and that offenders experienced increased empathy as a result of the conference?

What were some of the challenges or difficulties associated with the use of restorative approaches?

- **Time**

One of the most significant challenges was that of time. This was reported on two fronts. The first was the lack of time available in the Pilot to establish and implement a restorative approach in their schools. The second concerned the time required to run a formal community conference. There is no doubt conferences take time and resources. The largest conference reported consisted of 25 people and took 4 hours. Regional staff, as external conference facilitators have reported taking up to 14 hours in visiting, interviewing and facilitating a single conference. Participants reported on the challenges associated with bringing offenders, victims and supporters together at a common time and venue. Even small scale conferences could be time consuming. According to participants school support and flexibility were required to effectively run conference.

Regarding conferences, the main issue is time. Time involved in preparation. Large numbers of staff are involved. If this is in class time, we need to cover classes. If it's after school the cost of staff staying back (costs for them and their families). (Assistant Principal)

Incident management using a traditional approach was also reported as time consuming. A consistent view expressed was that a conference could save time overall because it had a greater potential to resolve issues. It was felt that punitive approaches did not always deal effectively with other issues surrounding an incident particularly for the victims. This could lead to additional time and effort not necessarily accounted for.

- **Confidence and skill of facilitators**

Many participants reported that they were more confident practicing ‘mini-conferences’ or simply using restorative language and principles than running a ‘formal’ community conference. Some expressed concerns about their ability to manage potentially emotional conferences. There were also concerns about which incidents would best suit a restorative approach. While it was recommended, through training, that participants start with ‘safe’ or ‘straight forward’ incidents to build experience and confidence this did not happen in all Pilot schools.

Adopting this approach means that you have to pull yourself up from adopting the position of a benevolent dictator... Anyone who comes from authoritarian stand will struggle, to relinquish their position of power... Doing this is a mammoth power struggle and you have - I've had - to unlearn some things that I have been doing for years (Principal).

Inexperience of facilitators or inappropriate use of conferencing emerged as issues in some schools suggesting the need to consider further training or support through an implementation and monitoring phase.

- **Whole school change**

Many participants reported on the need to adopt a whole school approach to achieve a more effective implementation of a restorative practices. Tensions with traditional methods, contradictions in the management of incidents and lack of staff awareness and understanding were cited as adversely affecting the impact of the strategy.

Many schools had not been able to adequately brief staff or provide information to parents during the course of the trial. Some participants suggested the importance of involving ancillary staff in any briefings or training.

Participants reported that where restorative practices could be integrated with existing initiatives such as pastoral care or ‘Tribes’ it was likely to be more successful.

- **Parent involvement**

Schools reported little proactive involvement of parents. One primary school, where the principal was a key driver, reported briefing school council. Other schools mostly reported contact with parents through the school newsletters. Some difficulties in contacting or convincing parents to attend a conference were reported anecdotally.

- **Timing of Pilot**

There were a number of schools that commented on the lack of time to effectively apply their training. This was clearly a major challenge and in evaluation terms is a weakness in the Project methodology. There was insufficient time to effectively assess implementation and impact.

- **Role of systems**

A number of views were expressed about the role and support of DE&T. Some participants reported that current policy advice was in need of review – particularly the Code of Conduct and Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools.

There was an acknowledgement expressed through the evaluation that the Pilot was a first step and further support and promotion was required.

The extent of support required varied from provision of a state wide mandate for use of restorative justice (that currently remains subordinate to more traditional punitive measures) to more promotional materials in the Education Times.

Government schools reported on the use of current DE&T guidelines for management of responses for student behaviour well-being suggests there is inconsistency in interpretation and implementation. This may account in part for the wide variation in implementation of restorative practices in Pilot schools.

Ask the system, “What body of research supports the approach currently taken?”
(Secondary SWC)

Both systems have supporting policy documents however survey data and observations from the Pilot showed up uneven and different responses to policy in both Government and Catholic schools.

What have been the most useful supports / resources associated with the use of conferencing / restorative approaches?

- **Networks support**

The emergence of an ongoing network of trained facilitators in each of the pilot clusters was reported as highly positive and important.

Between three and four network meetings were held in each cluster. These were supported by DE&T and CEO Project Managers and enabled opportunities to report on progress and debrief.

The role of DE&T and CEO Project Manager and other District and Regional support staff was clearly important in the maintenance of the Pilot phase. Schools reported the link to these staff provided confidence in the Pilot because they knew they could get advice or support if needed.

- **Resources**

A number of participants expressed the view that having a script was important resource. One primary school had provided a summary version of restorative questions for all teachers to use in and out of class. Further resources particularly in terms of whole school change were suggested.

I think to introduce change we need interest the staff slowly, enlighten them with the positive feedback by these few and will escalate. I have regular emails, the script has been passed around school staff areas – photocopies in staff room and toilets (female). (Catholic secondary YLC)

- **Value and quality of training**

Overwhelmingly the cohort reported on their training with a degree of high satisfaction of both quality of teaching and content.

Both training modes were exceedingly well regarded, but participants reported a need for further training during the course of the pilot. The training provided an initial enthusiasm and starting point but once back in schools further training needs were identified. These included skill booster sessions, in-school support from an experienced facilitator / trainer and the need for whole school professional development.

It was difficult to make a comparative assessment of the different training modes in the parameters of this pilot. Those who participated in the Transformative Justice Australia training reported more instances of using restorative practices including conferences. This group was larger and completed training earlier so effectively had more opportunity to practice the approaches.

It was not the brief of this evaluation to compare the two training modes.

The initial training was excellent and the follow up meetings kept the impetus going. The option of 'experts' being able to come and speak with staff has also been beneficial.
(primary principal)

- **School teams**

Pilot schools had between 2 and 6 staff trained. This was a deliberate strategy to develop a collegiate support base in each school. Most participants felt it was important to have other trained people in the school. There were examples where participants supported each other running a conference. This support was highly valued as was the opportunity to use a fellow participant to debrief following management of an incident. There was less evidence of 'collegiate time' being factored into school implementation. That is, contact between participants was more likely to be incidental rather than planned and ongoing.

Summarise any benefits you or your school have noticed through the use of community conferencing / restorative justice.

- **Evidence of outcomes**

Facilitators of conferences reported favourably on the benefits of restorative practice compared to other means available to them. Some wonderfully positive stories were recorded in terms of benefits to both victims and offenders (see Appendix 4).

While not all outcomes were positive there is evidence that staff in pilot schools have become more selective use of community conferencing – it does not suit all incidents or all members of the school community.

The process of making offenders more accountable for their actions and seeking restoration requires acceptance of fault, some degree of remorse and the development of empathy. Reports from conferences suggested that where offenders are able to realise these feelings they are more likely to be genuine in their apologies and attempts at reparation. In turn victims and their supporters have reported feeling better and more able to 'move on'.

Too early yet, however I believe that it will have a bigger impact as we use it more often over time. Secondary YLC

- **Parent support**

Parents were generally positive about their participation in community conferences. Although there have been limited responses from parent their comments reflect and appreciation for the intention of a restorative approach. Further investigation is required in this area.

Level of parental satisfaction, victim support, offender support was very high.
(Secondary AP)

- **Personal and professional enhancement**

There were a number of positive comments regarding the impact of restorative practice in terms of personal and professional enhancement. One House Manager suggested that it had increased his capacity to respond to more positively to students.

More conscious of different available options for managing misbehaviour. Listening skills have certainly improved. Willingness to wait until all the info is in before making a judgement about issues. (Secondary teacher)

I find the students respond better than punitive discipline only. (Secondary House Manager)

'I've stopped calling in witnesses. I've stopped asking people about what they think happened. So now I'll get those experiencing the problem to tell their stories in turn - they will say what they want. After everyone's had a talk I'll say: 'We seem to have solved this - are you prepared to do that?' and see if there's a problem. Adapting the language often fixes the problem.' (Principal)

- **Improved student outcomes**

Student awareness and understanding of restorative practices coupled with appropriate skill development may enhance outcomes. Students reflected a generally positive view of the conferencing experience however because there have been few students reporting directly it is difficult assess impact over time

Students have since made positive choices when pressured by their peers. Disconnected students have made reconnections and are happier at school. Students who saw themselves as victims tend to realise they also made bad choices and adopted bullying behaviour. (Primary Senior School Co-ordinator)

Better relationships, relationship based discipline, so less re-offending, better restoration of relationships and understanding, willing compliance on most occasions although we know that misbehaviour and conflict will arise. So the support will be the stuff encouraging and inspiring others. We are just beginning to see that. I then need to organise a big CC, then get onto admin and staff training. (Secondary Student Welfare Co-ordinator)

Children have an increased ability to see other's points of view and reasons for certain behaviours. Closure seems to be more possible after an issue. (Primary teacher)

District / regional staff comments on benefits

- Works well with Tribes.
- Some change in the way people speak to students. More use of script.
- Useful when school doesn't want to suspend.
- Gives teachers and schools another tool.
- Students accountable for their actions.
- The chance to repair, let go and move on – prevents issues simmering
- Giving the victim a voice.
- Allowing parents the opportunity to participate.
- Teaching to become a necessary part of behaviour management.
- An opportunity for schools to question / reflect / challenge the underlying philosophy and rationale of their whole school approach to discipline/welfare practices and structures (and for individual teachers to reflect on their style of communicating/responding/relating to students).

What advice would you give other schools contemplating the use of community conferencing / restorative justice?

- Worthwhile initiative - *Just do it.*
- Adopt a whole school approach
- A better way of managing student discipline than a authoritarian punitive approach

What advice would you give your education system regarding future investments in community conferencing / restorative justice? e.g. training, resources, networks, discipline frameworks

- Provide adequate training, work to integrate conferencing into the overall discipline structure.
- Consolidate in the schools that started this year.
Train more people in these schools to create a critical mass
Conduct Pd in these same schools for all staff.
- Run a training course again in 2003 (TJA).
- *If restorative practices are implemented well, eventual community benefits must result. It is fair to ask for government investment in training and resourcing.*
- Increase time allowances for a co-ordinator of the approach.
- Maintenance of network support
- Systems support needs to recognise and place value on the approach
- Any strategy must be constructed as Whole school Approach integrated with other like initiatives
- Increase involvement of outside agency support.

Further advice from Regional / District staff

- *Go for it but be clear that it is a big and ongoing commitment and that it would take a number of years before it really becomes part of school based culture. Choose carefully when to conference (and when not) so as to maximum benefit and not overload staff. Make sure leadership team is trained to.*
 - *Get involved, observe a conference if available.*
 - *Look outside the box.*
 - *Question the relevance / appropriateness / effectiveness of current practice.*
 - *A critical part of the process is the need to invest considerable time and energy into intensive groundwork in the school before implementing restorative practices i.e opportunities to question current practices that may then lead to the whole school identifying the need for change (readiness) and acceptance of a better way!*
 - *Hands on involvement of principal class i.e the movers and shakers who have the power to make things happen in schools!*
 - *Budgetary commitment to continue the necessary level of support to implement restorative practices in the long term*
- More resources are needed for***
- *Staff to be trained. Needs a whole school approach so all staff are familiar with conference speak*
 - *To cover staff to organise and facilitate a conference*
 - *Venue hire other than school*
- Education of the community***
- *Difficult to make a judgement in such a short time frame - need for a longitudinal study to show whether the project has made more than an initial impact on managing difficult incidents in school communities*
 - *Continues financial support for participating schools*
 - *Rewriting of Guidelines for developing the Student Code of Conduct to encompass the philosophy of restorative practices*
 - *Supporting schools with examples of good practices to assist in infiltrating restorative practices into the whole school culture ie not seen as an add-on*
 - *Professional development for all teachers, parents and students to create common beliefs, understandings, expectations and intended outcomes of restoratives practices*
 - *Restorative practices incorporated into school policies*
 - *Finding opportunities to profile the successes of restorative practices so that the momentum builds within the pilot schools and other schools are encouraged to adopt restorative practices.*

APPLICATIONS

During this trial of Restorative Practices in Victorian schools, the principles, skills and ‘language’ learned in training have demonstrated their usefulness in many ways: Conferences, mini conferences, classroom circles, dialogues, and as thought-provoking material within the curriculum. The previous sections of this report reveal how schools have been using Restorative Practices in order to effectively manage ‘incidents’ and deal with discipline issues. There are other ways in which Restorative Practices can be used to address lingering issues and repair harm. Below are three examples, sent in by one staff member who had used Restorative Practices in creative ways within their school setting:

- Resolving conflict within the school community; and
- Within the curriculum

She writes : ‘The conferencing process is an extremely valuable one and it gives participants many skills:

- creating a vocabulary for talking about thoughts and feelings
- listening and empathizing with people we would normally oppose
- opportunity to reflect on how our actions impact on others
- opportunity to repair *relationships*’

‘The language used in the community conferencing process is easily transferred to a variety of contexts in the school community. It is particularly useful in conflict situations that demonstrate bullying type behaviours, as well as potential conflict situations where there maybe communication breakdown.’

The three applications described below also show how Restorative Practices can be used to effectively address some of the most ‘live’ issues within school settings:

- *conflict* between groups of students, and
- conflict between individual students and staff members
- *bullying*

Example 1 - Using Mini-conferencing to resolve conflict between students

Bullying Conflict Mini-Conference

As a coordinator, I have had the opportunity to use the conferencing language to mediate in a number of conflict or potential conflict situations. One of these situations was a bullying conflict between a large group of friends. The questions included:

- *Take us back to the start; tell us step by step what happened?*
- *What were you feeling/thinking at the time?*

- *What have you thought about since?*
- *Who do you think has been affected by your actions?*
- *How do you think they were affected?*

Allowing people to tell their story step by step gives them the opportunity to convey their perspective and, most importantly, it allows their opposition to see things from the other person's point of view. It was often at this point that both parties realized that they often shared the same feelings and were reacting to misunderstanding and/or misinformation. In a few incidents, students learned that they had been manipulated by peers, but because they did not feel "blamed" as they shared their story, they were much more willing to take responsibility for their actions, apologising and coming up with strategies to avoid further conflict in the future. The results have been very positive and the students felt surprised about how effective "simply" talking things through could be. One particularly students commented that "you've done this before", and the students were further encouraged when I spoke to them about the conferencing training I had undertaken; it seemed to reinforce their confidence in the process. (feedback sheets attached – see Appendix 8))

Example 2: Student teacher Mini-Conference:

The conferencing process was also used in a mediation conferencing between a student and teacher who were not communicating effectively. The student was struggling with the subject and was too intimidated to ask the teacher for help. The student's need was masked however by her disorganized approach and "cool" attitude. The teacher was unaware of the student's worries and was under the impression that the student wasn't very interested in improving her skills. We adapted the language to suit the situation

How do you feel in this subject? Who is affected? What can do to repair the situation?

The result was very satisfactory and both the student and the teacher are working together cooperatively. The student's mother was also very happy with the outcome and relieved that the teacher did not see her as a whining parent. In following up the student some weeks later she happily reported, "I understand everything". This is a great result, not only because of the repaired relationship between staff and student and the student's improved academic performance, but both participants felt positive about the mini-conferencing process and will be comfortable using it again if needed. (feedback sheets attached)

Example 3: Community Conferencing in the Curriculum: Role-play: Bullying

As part of the Year 8 anti bullying program- "Dealing with Feelings", I used a community conference Role Play in the classroom to show students the impact of bullying across the extended school community. Students were thrown in at the deep end with little preparation besides a basic scenario to follow. I deliberately chose a student who had been a victim of bullying as the offender so as to give her an understanding of the offender's experience. Similarly, I chose a confident, popular student to be a victim so as to give her a look at life from a different perspective.

The students did really well and the class was completely focused on the activity. The conference brought together all that we had examined in the "Dealing with Feelings" program and reinforced the important role bystanders play in bullying situations (expressed through the supporters of both victim and offender). Before the Conference role-play, students had not considered how bullying affects parents and staff. Students wrote very insightful reflections about the community conference (see sample responses in attachments) and had learned more in those 30 minutes, than in a week's worth of English lessons!

The following interesting observations were made:

- The offender instantly started off defensive and underplayed the situation
- The victim's body language showed that she still felt victimized
- Both supporters of the offender and the victim felt at the end of the conference that they needed to take some responsibility and should have intervened in the incident.
- Role-plays can lead to startling moments of self-reflection and revelation!

The student who played the victim in this role-play was quite upset by the end of the conference. At first it appeared that she needed to be debriefed, she did but for different reasons. As we briefly discussed people's reactions and experiences, this student publicly apologized to the class. She said that she realized that she had been a bully all her life and now she knew how it felt- awful.

I spent time in a debriefing with this student one to one. She was crying and upset but grateful that she had had this opportunity to "walk in someone else's shoes". She was very eager that everyone in Year 8 should see this, as it was her belief that this was the only way to stop backstabbing in the level. I suggested that we could show a conference to the level and the student wanted to help in any way she could. She even volunteered to introduce the concept of conferencing to Yr 8's and explain why it was so important to experience the process.

As a result we are now implementing her suggestion. She, along with the other students from the original role-play, and I are developing and rehearsing another community conference roleplay to show to the rest of Yr 8. The students have improved the scenario and wanted to introduce a father to make the families more balanced. This is currently being undertaken and should be finished by the end of term 3. We are also complementing this with some of the *Mind Matters* material on bullying and resiliency.

For more details and tools see (see Appendix 8 - Applications: Classroom Role Play: Bullying)

6 weeks later

As a result of the community conferencing role play done as part of "The Dealing With Feelings" Program completed in term 2, we have made the effort to perform the role play to the entire Year 8 level. Student responses indicate that they think that conferencing is a

very effective way of dealing with conflict. Students really valued that each person involved was able to tell their story.

The student who initiated the idea of showing the role play to the year level (who admitted to bullying behaviour) is still concerned that for some students it is still 'Just words'. This is true to a certain extent. As a result, an alternative to having one group perform for others, it may be more valuable in the curriculum. for each student to experience playing a role in a community conference so as to experience for themselves how it feels to walk in another's shoes. We will now try to adapt the devised role play into a lesson guide which will allow all teachers across a variety of key Learning Areas the opportunity to access the language and benefits of conferencing in their own classroom.

DISCUSSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is no doubt there is growing interest and enthusiasm for Restorative Practices nationally and internationally. This evaluation is mindful of the limited time available to the Pilot to grapple with and bring to light the challenges and benefits this approach. In order to capitalise on the momentum developed through the Pilot it is important to invest further in our understanding of Restorative Practice and its application in Victorian schools. Given time and support to allow an appropriate implementation phase Restorative Practice has the potential to add enormous value to our understanding of well-being in schools.

Findings from this Pilot reveal that Restorative Practices have merit as an alternative and / or adjunct to existing strategies used to manage incidents in Victorian schools. The evaluation found widespread support for the underlying philosophy that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the person(s) they hurt, the community and themselves. There was also agreement that restoration of well-being and relationships was consistent with current systems level advice to schools regarding student welfare.

Schools in the Pilot undertook a restorative approach with a mixture of caution and enthusiasm. The evaluation identified a number of factors that are likely to influence further interest and uptake. These were;

Whole school approach required

Many participants reported on the need to adopt a whole school approach to achieve more effective implementation of restorative practices. Tensions with traditional methods, contradictions in the management of incidents and lack of staff awareness and understanding were cited as adversely affecting the impact of the strategy.

Restorative Practice blends well with key school welfare policy frameworks. It should not be seen as ‘an add’ on although a system’s response is required to take account of the current fragmented response to student welfare and behaviour management in this state.

Hargreaves, in his work ‘Rethinking Educational Change with Heart and Mind’ compiled a list of factors from writers in the school change field which best describe the reasons why school change falters or fails;

- The reason for the change is poorly conceptualised or demonstrated.
- The change is too broad or ambitious so that teachers have to work on many fronts.
- The change is too fast for people to cope with or too slow so they become impatient and bored.
- The change is poorly resourced or resources are withdrawn as soon as the first flush of innovation is over.
- There is no long term commitment to the change to carry people through anxiety, frustration, and despair of early experimentation.

- Key staff who can contribute to change, or who might be affected by it, are not committed.
- Parents oppose the change because they are kept at a distance from it.
- Leaders are either too controlling, too ineffectual or cash in on the early success of the innovation to move on to higher things.
- Change is pursued in isolation or conversely the change may be poorly co-ordinated which makes it hard for teachers to focus their efforts.(Hargreaves 1997)

The research raises questions about the framing of any future efforts at whole school change. Clearly there are issues about Restorative Practices being marginalized if it is not connected to other school endeavours. The role and commitment of school leadership is crucial for longer term impact.

The Health Promoting Schools Framework was highlighted by stakeholders as a useful model of school change in the Mental Health arena. The focus here is on three key areas that are interrelated and connected.

- 1 ethos, organization and environment
- 2 curriculum, teaching and learning
- 3 partnerships and services

Within such a framework schools can audit, plan and implement health promotion inclusive of structures, policies and activities.

Any school change is complex and according to Fullan (1997) small groups of self selected reformers seldom influence their peers. He argues that for whole school change to occur it is better to incorporate difference and diversity into the change process and to concentrate on people and the quality of their relationships for longer term success.

In taking note of current research and past efforts at whole school reform it would appear that Pilots such as this can quickly lose impact unless there is a commitment to long term planning and implementation.

Involvement of school leadership

Where school principals and / or their assistants have been trained there appears to be a more interest and uptake of restorative practices. Conversely, participants reported a perceived lack of interest or awareness from school leadership as a barrier to implementation.

What do managers do to effectively facilitate the change process?

- Analyse change capability
- Manage organisational learning process
- Facilitate change capabilities
- Gather necessary resources
- Map external resources (Dalin, Rolff et al. 1993)

At 'Smith St Primary School the principal was trained by TJA and while he was promoting a cautious view of the school's progress there was evidence that his role was significant in bringing about a more widespread change to school practice. Smith St was the only Pilot school to allocate time at a staff professional development day to better examine Restorative Practice. The school is currently writing its behaviour policy and as the principal points out.

This fits in nicely with a non-punitive approach. We are drawing upon a whole range of things; notions of all behaviour being chosen, purposeful, that there might be a better way to act but they might not know it, learning a better way to act, all problems having solutions, understandings habits and control, expectations and consequences.

The principal in this example is managing the change process by auditing current practice and providing opportunity for staff to engage in relevant professional learning.

Collegiate support

Pilot schools had between 2 and 6 staff trained. Most participants felt it was important to have other trained people in the school. This support was highly valued as was the opportunity to use a fellow participant to debrief following management if an incident.

If we take Fullan's point that it is difficult for a small group of self-selected reformers to bring about change without taking account of difference and diversity then it is useful to look at the experience of 'North Tyler Secondary College. Six staff were trained, most were in positions of middle management such House Managers or co-ordinators. They were selected as a school team, not self-selected, and some were not keen to attend training. While not all members of the team were Restorative Practice 'converts' following the training there was a reported sense of collegiality and support for each other – 'a better and shared understanding of the approach'. As House Managers they reported their dealings with students had altered and they briefed other staff about restorative approaches. The school administration demonstrated support but remained 'gatekeepers' in decisions regarding conferences essentially controlling the initiative. This was a cause of frustration, particularly for staff who were advocates of conferencing.

With the understanding the change takes time, the team initiated a strategy at another level with the introduction of a new behaviour management model. The model had two components, one for use 'in the classroom' and one for 'out of classroom'. and was consistent with a restorative approach in terms of being based on rights and responsibilities and students owning behaviour. A fortnightly Review and Issues Forum was established to give other staff the opportunity to discuss the initiative. This was an important element of the strategy because it helped develop a sense of school ownership of behaviour management and to further the discussion of restorative practices. School leadership endorsed the approach and were then engaged in conversations, at both a practical and theoretical level, about the use and place of Restorative Practice at the school.

This experience highlights the importance of the school as a learning community. A great deal of literature points to the value of learning teams. Such teams require a reason to learn and collaborate professionally. Team learning can tap the potential of many minds and provide a vehicle for innovative and coordinated action (Retallick 1997).

Sergiovanni contends " that developing a community of practice may be the single most important way to improve a school."(Mitchell and Sackney).

Time

One of the most significant challenges for Pilot schools was that of time. This was reported on two fronts. The first was the lack of time available in the Pilot to establish and implement a restorative approach in their schools. The second concerned the time required to run any formal conferencing.

Incident management using a traditional approach was also reported as time consuming. A consistent view expressed was that a conference could save time overall because it had a greater potential to resolve issues. It was felt that other approaches did not always deal effectively with other issues surrounding an incident particularly for the victims.

This evaluation advocates for an extension of the Pilot Phase to allow for adequate implementation and program review. Research indicates that it takes about three years to achieve successful change in primary schools and about six years in a secondary school (Fullan 2000).

Training

A majority of the cohort reported on their training with a high degree of satisfaction in both quality of teaching and course content. The two training modes employed for the project had a different emphasis on restorative practice but it was not the brief of this evaluation to compare them. There is therefore a need to further examine the role and type of professional training used in relation to any future strategies.

Throughout the Pilot, schools advanced the view that further professional development was required. The use of Restorative Practices require teachers to redefine their role from behaviour management to 'relationship management'. Teachers will need time and support to grapple with questions about the impact of punishment and potential alternatives based on a restorative philosophy. These are not small shifts in thinking as we have found in our work with teachers and others like Ritchie and O'Connell (2001) also discovered in their work in schools. Alongside philosophical issues sit the suite of skills that teachers need to possess to be able to comfortably engage in restorative approaches. The development of such skills requires time for teachers to practice and refine new skills and to reflect upon one's own style in a challenging yet supportive context. The onus is also on school systems to ensure that teachers have access to substantial professional development that allows for progressive skill development with the aim that teachers will be able to confidently apply and model effective relationship management skills (Marshall 2002).

Involvement of students

It is essential to the success of restorative practices in schools that opportunities are provided for students to acquire specific social competencies that will allow them to engage in a community of constructive and empowering relationships. These opportunities may be provided formally within the school curriculum or informally in co-curricular and other experiences. A range of social competencies is seen to be the key to successful engagement in problem solving and conflict management by students (and, as indicated earlier, by teachers) (Marshall 2000).

Comments from teachers and principals involved in the Pilot have characterised the view that restorative practice is highly relevant to students today. A climate in which reconciliation and restitution are realistically viewed by young people as legitimate alternatives to extreme measures have tempered the need to 'punish' people. Schools are looking for ways to better manage incidents and to retain students in educational pathways. Concerns about restorative Practices being a 'soft' option did not materialise in the Pilot. Staff reported some satisfaction with the level of student compliance with agreements made at conferences suggesting that behaviour had changed as a result of the intervention.

Suspension and expulsion remain the most extreme options available and in a number of reported incidents, conferences were held to determine the use of these sanctions. Conferences, as a means of reintegration following suspension also provided a means of placing realistic boundaries and supports around students.

Restorative Practice would appear to offer a means of developing collective responsibility for well-being and problem solving strategies to repair harm associated with incidents. In other words, teaching and modelling ways in which young people can be effective citizens. Such a school environment offers concern for the welfare of victims and offenders, with a focus on the use of formal and informal, non-punitive approaches and wide community participation. Many schools currently aim to work in this way already and are looking for strategies such as class circles, conferencing and mediation.

Confidence and experience

Many participants reported that they were in the early stages developing expertise in using restorative strategies and were more confident practicing 'mini-conferences' or simply using restorative language and principles than running a 'formal' conference. This again points to the need to properly assess training needs and the appropriateness of more formal accreditation / monitoring over time.

Underpinning the approach is the way people relate to each other in a school setting. Restorative measures allow for all members of a school community to come to terms, on a personal level with harms done. All can play an active role in the process. When adults see young people as resources rather than problems and change the approach to violations from punitive to restorative success is more likely.

In basic terms an incident may involve a discussion between a teacher or student that follows a line of questioning;

- What happened?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- Who has been affected?
- How have people been affected?
- What do we have to do to repair the harm?

The emphasis here is on the behaviour not the person. The student may assume accountability and responsibility. A resolution may include empathy, an apology or some other form of restitution.

While teacher confidence may grow as a result of experience unless the thinking or the framework behind the experience is truly based on restorative principles then not much may really change. A number of staff (not trained) reported they were already using restorative approaches. While is not entirely clear what this meant there is an issue of consistency and common understanding of approach. There is also a need to more thoroughly examine current approaches to punishment and discipline in schools.

Appropriateness of conferences

Conferences were seen at the extreme end of restorative practices, to be used selectively for serious incidents. Not all incidents suited conferences nor do they suit all people.

While most Pilot schools organised conferences with a high degree of planning and thought some inexperience was evident in the processes used to decide what should be taken to conference and who should be involved. Inadequate investigation and preparation or uncertainty about blame or guilt could easily lead to more harm. This suggests that conferences should not be undertaken lightly and with some cautionary warnings take account the expected benefits to all concerned including the offender/s.

A restorative approach encourages students, parents and staff to develop together a relationship code whose inherent logic is obvious because the criterion is the consolidation and maintenance of relationships and community (Marshall 2002). This thinking should be at the forefront any conferences.

High levels of satisfaction with conference process

Participants have generally reported positively about the process and initial outcomes of mini-conferences and community conferences. Overall this evaluation received favourable reports about the scripted process as a guide to convening and structuring conferences.

This finding is consistent with other evaluations where conferencing has been a key restorative strategy. It was not everyone's experience but in highlighting the negatives, reference needs to be made to previous comments about conference suitability.

Community Conferences are generally emotional and uncomfortable. It is not uncommon for a box of tissues to be passed around as people share their stories. It is not uncommon for people to get angry or to walk out. What was noted in the evaluations however was participants reference to having a chance to tell their story or to have a chance to hear other peoples stories. ‘Genuine’ opportunities to present experiences and feelings in such ways are rare in schools according to some staff. People consistently reported satisfaction with a process that provided an opportunity to ‘sort things out’.

High level of satisfaction with outcomes

Facilitators of conferences and those using ‘mini conferences’ reported favourably on the benefits of restorative practice compared to other means available to them. Evidence was also found that most parents and students were also satisfied with outcomes of conferences.

In the course of this Pilot, students from Grade 2 through to Year 12 have effectively engaged in restorative practices. Schools have noted that the approach has complemented existing programs, improved relationships or helped resolve an ongoing issue. This has been particularly true of the Catholic sector with a number of comments pointing out compatibility with the pastoral care ethos. Restorative language and strategies are equally at home in any classroom in any system.

I feel privileged to have been part of this. My respected for these kids has multiplied hugely. Their handling of things was sincere and showed a strongly developing maturity. The positive outcomes would have been damaged by the application of more punitive sanctions. They would not have been appropriate. (Teacher involved in a conference as a result of brawl between two girls at a pilot school)

Regional and District support

The emergence of an ongoing network of trained facilitators in each of the pilot clusters was reported as a highly positive and important forum. There was strong support for the maintenance of these networks beyond the Pilot phase.

Government and Catholic systems already have a small number of staff trained in Restorative Practices available to provide both network and school support. The stakeholder consultations revealed a strong interest in maintaining and if possible expanding this support base.

“The Regions and regional staff should be resourced and supported to assist schools that are interested in using restorative approaches”. (DE&T staff)

A view was expressed that the training and network support provided by Pilot Managers have been essential to the success some schools have already experienced in the Pilot. A further focus on possible future directions suggested the engagement of school leadership was critical in further efforts at promoting a whole school approach.

DE&T have a significant network of staff working in student well-being, Middle Years Aboriginal Education and curriculum who could lend weight to further network support to Restorative Practices.

The Catholic sector also have key centrally based people supporting schools, including the Pastoral Care team, Christian Education Personal Development staff, Educational Support Services who work with schools on issues of pastoral care welfare and health.

It would be valuable for district and regional staff to be involved in relevant professional development and to forge links across networks of schools.

Involvement of community

Restorative Practice has its origins in the community. It is worth noting that Pilot schools had insufficient time to build the necessary connections with parents and the general community that would lend support to the initiative. This is another area where further investigation and support are required.

Schorr (1997) cited in Fullan's 'Change Forces' suggests that successful school improvement models have seven attributes which point to the need for community involvement.

- Comprehensive, flexible, responsive and persevering program
- See children in the context of their families
- Deal with families as part of the neighbourhoods
- Have a long term prevention orientation over time
- Managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identified skills
- Staff PD that is high quality and responsive
- Operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect. (Schorr in Fullan 1997)

Community involvement is at the core of a restorative approach. Schorr's model which places families and neighbourhoods within successful school improvement lends weight to the use Restorative Practices as a practical way of enhancing community involvement.

Systems support

National and international literature suggests that the proactive role of education systems is critical in the uptake and imbedding of restorative practices. The Pilot revealed the intention and philosophy of restorative practices were consistent with the Victorian Framework for Student Support Services Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools and has potential to be an important strategy in terms of student well-being.

Over recent years Victorian schools have looked positively at the work of researchers in the social emotional field. The idea that investing in caring relationships, high and positive expectations, youth participation and social competencies to enhance the student outcomes have resonated with many schools. The notion of connectedness with peers,

family, school and community has been picked up as a way of reducing high-risk behaviours or increasing positive and protective behaviours.

The Framework for Student Support Services (1998) which currently underpins Government schools responses to welfare, was influenced by significant research evidence (resilience, coping skills, social skills, mental health) of the benefits linking welfare to curriculum. The Framework represented both policy and implementation advice to schools in terms of four levels of activity; primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention (restoring wellbeing). Restorative practice would appear to represent a practical means of implementing the Framework.

As an example of a potential systemic response, restorative practices could be linked in policy to the four levels of the current Framework for Student Support used by the Victorian State education system as follows:

- Primary prevention – the development of social competencies in all children that empower them to sustain positive relationships and negotiate differences
- Early intervention – the use of restorative language by the teacher in managing relationship issues and conflicts; the use of “mini conferences” in the classroom and playground
- Intervention – the use of Community Conferences for serious incidents
- Postvention (restoring wellbeing) - the consolidation of community through the enactment of agreements and the empowerment of members of the school community as a result of restorative processes. (Marshall 2002)

The value of such a systemically endorsed framework would be the guidance it provides to schools about the range of ways that restorative practices can be incorporated school policy and practice. It would signal to schools the wider implications and value of a restorative philosophy which is essential if the focus of restorative practice is to move beyond the use of the Community Conference for serious incidents. Without a broader framework the Community Conference runs the risk of becoming described as a “boutique” activity (Ritchie and O’Connell 2001) or an “add-on” grafted onto a range of punitive and contradictory practices for the management of behaviour.

The Guidelines for the Student Code Of Conduct (Directorate of Education, 1994) provided a model for schools to develop their own responses to manage student welfare and discipline. This document is still current. Ministerial Order Number 1, a key feature of the Guidelines, gave Principals legislative authority to suspend or expel students on a range of violations including “threatening the good order of the school’s program or facility” or “possession, use or deliberately assists others to use illegal drugs” (p.14). An internal Discussion Paper reviewing the Code of Conduct is being prepared and this evaluation should be considered as part of the consultation process.

‘Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools’ provides guidelines on student discipline and application of appropriate sanctions. It too is under review and is currently being updated with new evidence. Staff from the Catholic Education Office report on the

applicability of DE&T's Framework for Student Support Services Framework for schools in their sector, and has strongly promoted the Health-Promoting Schools Framework DE&T.

“The ideal of the Catholic schools is based on inclusion, relationships and building responsibility. So in terms of Restorative Practices, the Catholic system is supportive of the approach”. (Stakeholder interview)

The Framework, The Health Promoting Schools Framework and the findings from other Australian research all highlight the importance of linking curriculum and community to promote student wellbeing. Victorian schools have also indicated widespread uptake of mental health promotion curriculum resources such as Mind Matters (1999) which build on resilience, pastoral care, health promotion. It would appear that restorative practices complement these efforts by providing a ways of managing incidents in terms of building relationships, a process which is at the core of mental health promotion.

It is apparent that effective restorative practices will need to sit alongside and inform current efforts at improving the quality of our schools.

DE&T's current focus has been on advancing the notion of social competencies. That is the ability to integrate the cognitive, emotional and behavioural realms in order to engage in positive social relationships. In 2003 a research based 3 year pilot project involving 18 schools will commence across all regions. The intention of the Pilot is increase understandings of social competence and guide whole school implementation as models for the broader school community. Reference and use of Restorative Practices would strengthen the development of such key social competencies as responsible decision making, self-management and social problem solving.

In the Catholic sector Parallel to the restorative practices pilot, VicHealth and CEO are working together on a 'Schools for the Future' project, exploring the issue of schools as core social centres. This 12 month Pilot in 3 inner city primary schools is looking at building social capital. It is hoped that the model will further inform the potential use of Restorative Practices.

Restorative practice blends into key school welfare policy frameworks. It should not be seen as an add on although a system's response is required to take account of the current fragmented response to student welfare and behaviour management in this state.

The current efforts of schools in terms of student support have often been often characterised by piecemeal approaches (reactive responses). Structural responses at a system level are necessary if a truly restorative paradigm is to be embedded within school culture and ethos. Without systemic support and integration with other key educational initiatives such as The Framework for Student Support Services and other curriculum initiatives restorative justice could quickly become another example of “projectitis” i.e. another ad hoc ‘short term response’ response.

What would it take to effectively implement restorative practices in Victorian schools?

Future directions could include a range of strategies at four levels;

1. A response at government level could include;

An Interdepartmental Working Party established to prepare a Position Paper and strategic advice for circulation and response from Education, Justice, Police, Health and Community Services on the use of restorative practices / restorative justice.

2. A response at systems could include;

- An extension of the Pilot project to allow for proper implementation, documentation and evaluation. Focus of this next phase should be on the development of whole school approaches.
- The development of an implementation strategy and resource base to support whole school change in each trial school.
- The provision of a State wide manager/s to monitor progress and report.
- The cross sectorial working party to be maintained to provide ongoing advice on the establishment and delivery of restorative practices.
- The provision of time release in each Pilot school to allow for more effective establishment.
- The maintenance of a viable pool of trained district or regional staff to work with the schools as required.

There are key centrally based people supporting schools - the Pastoral Care team, Christian Education Personal Development staff, Educational support services - on issues of pastoral care welfare and health issues and welfare. These go out and support schools.

- The maintenance of network support for ongoing school cluster meetings.
- Reference to current literature / evaluation advice in any review of relevant policy initiatives, particularly the DE&T Code of Conduct, Social Competencies Pilot and CEO Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools.

A response at school level could include;

- The continued promotion of the Pilot and associated philosophy of Restorative Practices including the use of mediation, circles and conferencing through state and regional professional development.
- A small expansion of the number of pilot schools to other diocese / regions. Such schools would need to demonstrate a commitment to dedicate internal professional development funds / time to be involved in pilot and to document experience and findings.

Further research and writing

- A cost benefit analysis of restorative practice compared to other practices currently employed by schools. The aim to provide evidence of comparative costs in terms of time, resources and outcomes.
- An investigation into the models of training / professional development available with a restorative framework. The aim to identify future training options.
- An investigation into the role of parents and parent organizations in relation of the introduction of Restorative Practices at school level.
- Compilation of resource kit to support Pilot schools.

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APPENDIX 1

Applications

Restorative Practices in the Curriculum: Classroom Role Play : Bullying

Background:

Linda and Kate have known each other since primary school. They have never been friends as they do not have a lot in common. There were no problems at primary school, but since starting secondary school, Kate has increasingly bullied Linda. Kate is popular and a lot of girls look up to her. Kate knows that she makes her peers laugh when she teases Linda. Linda has increasingly become isolated and withdrawn. She has a few close friends who are also quite shy and too scared to stand up to Kate. Linda has skipped school a lot and is very stressed. She has been quite sick and the doctor believes the stress of school has greatly contributed to her asthma. Linda often cries at home and at school, she cannot concentrate and her marks have fallen dramatically. The teachers were aware that Linda was unhappy but very surprised that Kate had been the cause of her stress. Kate is a friendly student, although talkative, and has a good relationship with the teachers she likes.

Incident:

Linda was very upset about a rumour Kate had spread about her that she was poor and smelly. Kate always greases her off and laughs at her rudely with her large group of friends. Linda hates being called "pizza face" and "povo". Linda was standing in the canteen line when Kate pushed in, covering her nose, and making rude comments about Linda. She then threw 20c at Linda, saying that she needed all the money she could get. Linda burst into tears and left the school. She didn't go home until late that afternoon and her mum and the school were very worried about her welfare. Linda is too scared to come back to the school.

Linda:

You hate school and you hate Kate. You just want to be left alone. You feel like the whole school is laughing at you and no-one will listen to you because Kate is popular and you're not. You are worried about your mum and feel guilty because she's upset.

Linda's mother:

You are angry and upset. You work hard to send Linda to a good school and you feel ashamed that you can't give her the things other parents give their daughters. You can't sleep and find yourself crying all the time. You are very worried about Linda and think the other girl should be made to apologise publicly or be expelled.

Jackie (Linda's friend)

Linda is a really good friend and you feel bad that you haven't been able to stick up for her. You too have been bullied by Kate and you know how awful it makes you feel. You want Linda to come back to school because you miss her. You are worried that the bullying may continue.

Kate: You were having fun but now you realize you are in big trouble. You're still not sure what the big deal is but some of your friends have had a go at you and you are starting to realize how Linda must feel. You don't know how to fix this.

Kate's Mother:

At first you didn't believe the story, but now you realize that Kate is not the angel she appears to be. You are embarrassed and want Kate to make up for what she's done. You are horrified at some of things you hear that Kate has said and worried that people will think you have raised her to be a snob. You think that you may have spoilt Kate and that she needs to be more caring towards others.

Simone (Kate's Friend): Kate's really funny and you like her but you have been concerned that she is getting really nasty lately. You secretly feel sorry for Linda and the others but you are too scared to say anything because you don't want the group to turn on you. You feel guilty and want things to change.

Co-ordinator:

You feel guilty that you didn't realize how bad the situation was. You were terribly worried about Linda when she ran away. You feel you can't trust Kate and you are finding it difficult to concentrate at home and school. You want all your students to feel safe and happy at school. You want Linda to come back to school and you feel Kate should participate in the anti-bullying program which runs after school.

APPENDIX 2

Stakeholder consultations

Interviews were held with 4 senior officers with the Department of Education and Training and the 2 from the Catholic Education Office.

Department of Education & Training

Background

The Department of Education and Training policy framework for student behaviour and discipline is best described a few key documents; The Framework for Student Support Services (1998), Guidelines for Developing The Student Code of Conduct (1994) and Student Attendance Guidelines (1997). A discussion paper on the Code of Conduct is currently being prepared and will be due in the middle of next year for wide consultation.

Student Support Services Officers (SSSO) are located in each region and provide specialist support in the areas of speech therapy, visiting services for physically impaired students as well guidance and welfare support. A review of Student Support Services is currently being conducted internally with recommendations expected by the end of the year regarding employment conditions and service delivery. The review will include regional networks, teamwork, flexibility in relation to other key initiatives including Secondary School Nurses, School Focused Youth Service and the Student Welfare Co-ordinators (funded essentially in secondary schools).

Over recent years a focus on the Middle Years and Drug Education have been at the forefront of reframing welfare and discipline particularly in terms of reducing exclusion. A new focus on social competencies will be trialled in 15 schools next year.

In the view of the DE&T staff it has been difficult to tie all these things together. *“There is a lot of fragmentation and it is therefore difficult to get a good view of what is happening. Policy is really behind what is happening in practice. There has been a lacking of accountability with no common measures of the impact or effect of programs”.*

“We hope we can make people aware of what’s happening across departments”.

“We need to talk more to schools. Ask what they are doing in terms of student support.”

“Professional development is the best way to make a difference”.

Philosophy guiding current practice

Much of the philosophy hinges on the Framework for Student Support Services. This document expresses the goal of whole-school support for student well-being and learning. It expresses advice to schools in terms of a resilience paradigm with subsequent attention to the development of prevention and intervention strategies designed to maintain students in educational pathways.

However issues regarding accountability and the interpretive nature of policy documents means that it is difficult to get a good picture of how schools apply the Framework to student discipline or management of incidents.

What might be some of the implications of using restorative justice approaches / philosophy in Victorian schools at this current time?

There was general support expressed for restorative practices in that it linked well to a number of other initiatives designed to improve student wellbeing e.g. Reintegration / retention project and Young Offenders Project.

In effect there were no apparent inconsistencies with the aim of restorative practice, that is. the maintenance and restoration of relationships and the general thrust of the Framework for Student Support Services;

“Schools can implement the framework by placing high priority on developing and maintaining a positive school environment – systematically working on the quality of the relationships within the school community.” FSSS p 11

There was agreement that such an approach had merit but should be seen as another ‘tool’ available for schools to use.

The broader issues concerning the application implementation of such an approach centred on sustained professional development.

“It is not about good policy. There is policy out there. It is about how widely it is taken up. It is about giving schools the resources, tools and skills to implement”.

What might be some implications for skill, knowledge and resource development? Schools? Region? Central?

In summary regional support was seen to be essential. *“The Regions and regional staff should be resourced and supported to assist schools that are interested in using restorative approaches”.*

A clear view expressed by the DE&T Manager of the Pilot was that the training and network support have been essential to the success some schools have already experienced in the Pilot. She felt the involvement of school leadership was critical and therefore the adoption of a whole school approach with strong curriculum connections to social skills programs were important to ongoing sustainability.

She offered the following suggestions on how to build on the current initiative.

- Extend the project by 3 years to allow for proper implementation and evaluation.
- Train more people in each trial school as change agents and insist on whole school PD as part of the approach.
- Develop a pool of experienced regional staff available to work with the schools as required.

- From a state wide perspective be prepared to train 6 or so people as trainers. They need to have run conferences and be accredited. A manual has recently been developed for schools. We could buy training manual and adapt it with a Victorian flavour.”

Catholic Education Office Victoria

Stakeholder interviews

CEO Project Manager / Senior Officer

What has worked well?

1. *Cross sectorial approach* (Catholics and DE &T). Personally I believe that the school is a centre for building social capital, harmony and unity. We have far more in common than the things that separate us. This system has really valued being asked to co-manage the project. The clusters have seen schools talking across the sectors. Working across systems has raised issues that need to be considered. It has involved some hard yakka and good discussions. No one has shied away from that, but discussions have been real and positive.
2. *Timing in terms of developments within education*. There is now a solid evidence base from research on wellbeing, resilience, and the need for retention in schools. Also directives to keep young people in education. The pilot project has been small enough to be a manageable exploration of what works.
3. There is a growing body of *resources related to restorative practices*. TJA, Melbourne uni, the new book, Brenda Morrison has been working on curriculum initiatives. I have been contacted by a woman in Sydney who is working on restorative practices for teachers - nothing to do with Community Conferences. All of these levels and modes of professional development become resources when we begin exploring what areas are useful if looking for PD.
4. *People have been happy with the networks*. It has been a chance to be heard, share, be affirmed and supported, or even to say 'and I goofed'. This is because they've formed a lovely coalition amongst themselves.
5. *The reference group has worked*. Probably because people are passionate about it, and committed to the cause. It has not been too bureaucratic. It's not been rally a report back system but a storytelling and sharing time. Having others - eg uni and police - there was really healthy.
6. I've kept in contact with senior management in CEO. They have felt it is consistent with what they say and are on about. So this has been *very supported from a systems point of view*. I don't believe this is new stuff. ... none of it is rocket science. Principals have been calling people together to talk about issues for years, that is using the philosophy of restorative justice, without the terminology. This is an affirmation of really good practice that has been going on for years and affirms it. It fits with catholic ethos - real strength - gives a form of practice and structure to Catholic ethos. The project and funding puts a little umbrella over good stuff and names it, encourages, affirms, embraces and pushes it. It's got a name for the first time and is given legitimacy and potency and strength by the pilot.

Schools that are doing well

Three schools come to mind and the common factor is that none of this is new to them. Where it is forming well, they were doing this anyway - the training has furthered what they were doing. The language has been really helpful.

This approach lands well when a school has a principal who is really comfortable with it. One of the schools had never heard of it before but this is what they did. Never punished, always exploring the harm done. Where it lands well it has to be supported by leadership and consistent will philosophy shared among staff and the broader community. Classroom practice is needs to be consistent with the approach.

Future investments

This is the most important component – Future investments and major challenge - from my perspective and these points are vital for the evaluation with an appreciation of the difficult task you have in selecting what to include, what to leave out.

What I've learned from this is pilot is that it is about cultural change in whole schools. It will involve not training alone but a good implementation strategy.

An Ongoing Pilot should involve:

- A core team in every pilot school
- Facilitator appointed and attached to schools or clusters of schools. 12 month support for the core teams.
- As other schools come on board they will need to demonstrate a 'readiness factor' - schools are in a position where they believe in the philosophy of restorative practices - offer a briefing session to principal.

The Health Promoting Schools Framework talks about cultural change. It is about:

- 4 ethos and organisation
- 5 curriculum
- 6 key partnerships

Training is not enough and we will not create long term systems change without these.

Regarding the facilitators: every school's journey is different. They would be responsible for audits - what does it mean for school? Where are they at, pointers, what is needed, what PD and for whom?. The school might not have training until year 2. Phase one might involve looking at curriculum, language, what it means, and who can help us do this. Phase two might involve core training in Community Conferencing. It is too hard to ask schools to do all of this at once.

Major Challenges

The key challenge is the question how to support schools in an ongoing way so that restorative practices becomes integrated, and also inform the Pastoral Care document and Student Services framework.

That's against a backdrop of this happening at a significant time. There is a clear body of research on wellbeing, risk, resiliency and protective factors. Restorative practices are important - where can we go with this? How to continue to build an evidence base?

In schools we don't know how to sustain this.

The pilot is too short. We can't have complete or absolute learnings from this project - we need to continue the story. We need to have time to reflect and continue telling the story, and set up structures to continue the storytelling. The challenge is not to get engaged in a massive role-out but to question what structures sustain, how integrate, how to share stories, how to build practice upon research. Only at that point can we ask what sort of facilitation is required, in a systemic and organised way. What sort of PD is important and who for? What timeframe, what levels?

How to integrate it into what teachers do so its not just one more thing that they have to deal with?

There is evidence that PD doesn't work. If we want something to continue we need to keep the agenda open. A body to discuss the key issues. In that way building on the learnings of the project and evaluation.

We need to think not just in terms of training but an implementation strategy. If we do continue the project it will involve the management team continuing to meet regularly, systems people as co managers alongside evaluators - growing it through the management team - revising - reflecting on mechanisms employed and having the courage to change them.

Rather see a hiatus on first semester next year. Semester 2 could be a condensed evaluation and consultation on how to progress forward.

Catholic Ethos & System, Existing Structures and how Restorative Practices Fit
Source document is pastoral care framework. This informs ethos and approach. It is under review, being updated with new evidence. We are also comfortable with, and using the Student Services Framework, and very strongly attached to the Health-minding Schools Framework - a lot of that applies to us as it does with DE&T.

There are key centrally based people supporting schools - the Pastoral Care team, Christian Education Personal Development staff, Educational Support Services - on issues of pastoral care welfare and health issues and welfare. These go out and support schools.

Besides ongoing support at a prevention level there is also an intervention support available through central and area office staff - supporting students, parents, and teachers.

Often initiatives happen in partnership with DE & T (eg Vet, Mindmatters, Middle years)

On our own we've been involved in the Road Beyond Gatehouse project which built upon the work of the Gatehouse project about connectedness.

The ideal of the Catholic schools is based on inclusion, relationships and building responsibility. So in terms of Restorative Practices, the Catholic system is supportive of the approach.

Parallel to the restorative practices pilot, VicHealth and CEO are working together on a 'Schools for the Future' project, exploring the issue of schools as core social centres. This is a pilot (12 months) in 3 inner city primary schools, looking at building social capital. This model will also inform a strategic roll-out of what is learned (through principals, core teams, clusters, PD etc). This will really help us to think through the Restorative Practices implementation strategy too.

Other ongoing priorities are Mindmatters and School Focussed Youth Services (now funded for 3 years). This means another arm that could support the development of Restorative Practices.

This is a great time to be involved in Education.

Stakeholder 2

Coordinating Chairperson, Catholic Community Support, Catholic Education

Restorative philosophy and practice links in with our primary policy document 'Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools' with whole range of emphases, for example:

- Justice
- Dignity of humans
- Starting again
- Protocols for dealing with serious offences. In critical incident cases – this policy, for example, does not really support expulsion. A whole lot of things need to be put in place. Where a critical incident ends in removal we would ask a whole lot of questions about having good things in place – processes, preventative programs, early intervention.

In terms of this project, we already have, in place, a framework where we believe in it.

What restorative practices do is provide a way that we can target the policy.

The policy takes into account legal requirements, theological, educational implications. Most of our PD is about putting this into place.

Progress is evaluated by a 'self review and external validation' process. This happens every six years, and a team comes in for the external validation. Schools also do a yearly self- review, which allows them measure, monitor and review.

Some of these are working really well and others less so.

What gets in the way?

Perhaps it is just a matter of where there is no structured process. Critical incidents may be outside the experiences of staff, students and parents. Where I see potential of the restorative approach is as a way of dealing with the unexpected. Particularly community conferences can inform us about what preventative approaches can be put in place. This is probably an approach that can only be learned through participation.

We are moving away from belief in taking 1-2 people out of schools, training them and sending them back. More and more we are trailing projects which have a wider ownership by the community, and systemic support.

The restorative practices project fits in with a range of other projects in different schools: for example focusing on retention rates, pathways, middle years and engagement.

In terms of research that underpins our work – much of the work going on at the Australian Catholic University helps us to respond to particular needs. We hear how our programs and their philosophical underpinnings are being received – how useful is what we are doing? Some of that research is now indicating that secondary students are seeking value clarification. Trends in suicide, retention, pathways - the statistics lead you to ask questions about what happens to students when they disappear ‘off the radar’.

Role of schools as centre of community. This is particularly a focus within the catholic system. Traditionally schools were built around Catholic Communities, along with religious life, and sport. Where traditional roles and institutions have fallen away (even organised sports), people within the community can still contribute enormously to young people – but in different ways - as mentors etc. We see enormous potential to re-activate local communities. Things will not return to the way that they were, but it fires the imagination what communities of the C21 could be like.

Schools should be centres for human persons to reach their potential, based on real community not just superficial. Places where they really do have a role, where their contribution is valued, where their voice is important. Not just being schooled to become new sources of labour, new consumers.

Why schools as the centre of community? Because the whole of life is broken into systems – we tap in and out of options. The education system is in a favoured position because attendance is compulsory. The majority of families have a 12 year connection to the institution. This connections is probably more stable than any other system.

Catholic Education Victoria are committed to a devolved system. Nothing is done at a higher level that can be done at a lower level. Four dioceses within Victoria and each diocese has independence as a Catholic education system. Each has their own bishop. We do share a lot though. Whatever is going well will get noticed across Victoria. Our meetings are great for sharing philosophical understandings and cooperative directions.

The breakdown of communities is felt even more strongly in rural areas. There is the potential for restorative practices to be used powerfully in these regions.

The other thing is that we have staff dedicated to three separate areas: social welfare, pastoral care, and religious education. Potentially each of these staff could be involved in supporting and growing restorative practices.

Risks, costs and barriers? The costs will depend upon how it proceeds, so will the risks. This is about moving along at a slow pace and broadening what we are doing. Ownership by communities, continual evaluation. If benefits can be seen, schools will incorporate them at low cost.

The implications for PD will grow as projects grow and as Restorative Practices are received. In our system, this could happen by diverting some of the work that people are doing in similar areas – dovetailing this in.

Hundreds of our staff are prepared to do further education through Melbourne uni because we pay their fees. They will work all weekend for this – so there is a match there already in terms of a hunger for learning. Many have finished already and could provide some leadership in terms of Restorative practices. Also, during the course students do a longer assessment project. There is no reason why they could not choose restorative practices as a focus.

APPENDIX 3

Case study schools

Holdsworth College is a suburban boys school with around 660 students and 80 staff.

Four staff members were involved in the *Managing Conflict in Educational Settings* from the Masters of Education course offered through the University of Melbourne. One staff member, Senior School Co-ordinator had been doing the Masters course independently from the other three, who completed the one unit. 'Paul' was working exclusively with Year 9.

Following Project Manager's briefings from to the College Leadership Team and the Year 9 staff it was decided to locate pilot activity at the Year 9 level. While this contained the Pilot to smaller numbers of students it also created limitations for staff involvement to only one staff member.

Role / position of people interviewed:

Year 9 Co-ordinator – 'Trent'

Support staff – 'James'

Year 9 teacher – 'Paul'

Senior School Co-ordinator - 'Josephine'

The evaluation also drew on the written comments of the two other participants in the trial

Levels and roles of school responsibility as they relate to the management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

The school is managed by the Principal advised by a School Executive Team.

The Behaviour and Pastoral Care policy guides current responses to student behaviour and student management. This document clearly outlines expectations of staff and students in terms of their rights and responsibilities.

Statements concerning staff responsibilities highlight their role in the immediate supervision of students. Staff are also reminded about steps that may assist, prevent or manage classroom difficulties For example;

If student is misbehaving, ask him in a non threatening and non-aggressive manner to stop and continue with the set activity or task.

If behaviour continues. Take a deep breath, relax and then ask the student why the behaviour persists. Listen – Give the student the opportunity to put forward his explanation. Often they merely apologise and return to work. P 59

If the behaviour continues to be a problem then it is referred to the relevant Year Level Co-ordinator who may then consult the Deputy Principal or Principal if further action is required.

Matters may also be referred to school psychologists who play an important counselling and referral role in the school.

Current practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

The college has invested time and effort in its pastoral care system. Pastoral time consists of 2 hours for each year level over a 10 day cycle. Fifty minutes is allowed for a pastoral period in which teachers provide a specific lesson / program with welfare, social or curriculum benefit. The remainder is used for morning and afternoon homeroom meetings.

‘James’, in his counselling role, said most of his work was reactive – “....*responding to students who had misbehaved because the curriculum or pedagogy didn’t suit them*”. He suggested many problems could be averted with review curriculum and pedagogy.

‘Josephine’ also talked about the challenges. “*It can be a hard place to work*”. She is reluctant to take additional responsibility because she is “*sick of being a policewoman*.” and wants to concentrate more on student participation. She hopes to gather evidence about the effectiveness and place of student participation at the College.

In terms of teacher professional development the school had had a number of high profile speakers in the social domain e.g bullying and resilience theory, but according to staff there has been limited time and opportunity for teachers to follow up, reflect or implement new ideas so “*not much has changed*”. All agreed that there needed to be more professional development. The Year 9 YLC felt more was required in the area of conflict resolution

The school relies heavily on counsellors to “*mend and fix*”. The psychologist, who has only been at the school for 12 months felt he was expected (by teachers) to bring about change quickly. He is one of three counsellors at the college and says he spends a lot of time on the reactive issues although he does provide classroom support to teachers on anger management.

Philosophy underpinning this practice

A view was expressed by two of the staff interview suggested that the school was already restorative in its approach. “*Schools policies are restorative, we don’t call them that.*”

The premise for this reasoning was based on the approach recommended through the Behaviour and Pastoral Care policies “*Student welfare and management recommended that staff do things in non confrontational ways, handle things in the classroom before taking more serious cases to the YLC or DP*”.

There is not enough evidence to suggest that the school is practicing restorative approaches across the school.

How current practice is measured / monitored / reviewed / resourced?

The Executive Team and Pastoral Care Committee

Who is responsible for evaluating current practice. What is likely to change?

The Executive Team.

The level of parent contact and involvement in the case of serious incidents

“Historically it has been difficult for the school to engage parents. Relatively few parents are active in the school or regularly attend events”.

“Some parents have high expectations that are sometimes unfair or unrealistic. These can be unreasonable given the student’s attitude or ability. Many parents are unclear about the education process that often makes it hard to work with them e.g your job to educate”.

‘It is extremely hard to get parents into the school and then you may have language barriers’.

The involvement of police or outside agencies

No outside agencies have been involved in this current trial.

What does this approach currently look like in this school?

Two ‘conferences’ were run at the year 9 level. In both cases students and their parents were brought before a group of teachers who had ‘ongoing classroom issues’ with the students. The facilitator, ‘Paul’ was also a victim in both cases

The TJA script was used and facilitator reports revealed some short term success in changing behaviour. Given these were the first attempts at running conferences there was an evident lack of experience and familiarity with the process it is not entirely clear what happened in either conferences.

The facilitator reported, *“We were happy that this first conference worked as well as it did.”*

“James’ however was more sceptical of the process. He felt he *“was put on the spot, asked what I thought should be done without preparation or warning”*. Apart from the ‘Trent’ none of other participants were briefed. ‘James’ said he spoke to the boys after each conference and neither was happy with the process. One boy, he said, had been confronted with confidential information (from his mother) and was surprised and upset.

While the ‘Trent’ and ‘Paul’ felt they already used a restorative approach there was a lack of consistency and understanding about what this meant.

Understanding of Community Conferencing / restorative justice

Staff indicated that the school has had insufficient time to properly develop a response to their training. Year 9 staff felt they had some obligation to run a conference. 'Paul' expressed some anxiety about the conferences but "*Was glad*" he did it. on the grounds that '*you have to start somewhere*' while there was some benefit from the experience it is worthwhile to note some concerns.

- Other trained staff were not involved and it would be useful for co-facilitation to have occurred in both instances.
- This evaluation would recommend that the school not run conferences for serious incidents unless supported by an experienced facilitator.

Supports / strengths/ barriers / weaknesses

The pastoral philosophy was a potential strength to the introduction of restorative practices.

The constant barrier according to staff is the limited awareness of the approach across the school. With limited awareness comes limited support and potential resistance.

There is an enthusiasm from people involved in the pilot this year with a recommendation that more staff be trained. 'Trent' was keen to be trained and suggested that it would be useful to have more concentrated training on conferencing.

The network meetings were highly valued and should be maintained to 'Paul'.

What skills / knowledge / resources will teachers, parents, students, school leaders and support staff require for such an approach to be effective?

Reference to further staff professional development and the need for whole school approach pointed to a couple of strategies;

- All staff and school leadership develop experience in the use of restorative practice for low level behaviour problems. Such experience might include the use of peace circles, restorative language and 'mini conferences'.
- Approaches could be linked to needs based curriculum development particularly in the areas of student participation and social skill development.

What are the implications for skill, knowledge and resource developments in this school? Eg PD, Curriculum initiatives, parent awareness raising

All people interviewed felt that Restorative Practices needed to be a whole school approach although they all said this was difficult. There was no planning about what to do next.

Although it wasn't possible to look at more closely at the curriculum it would be useful to conduct an audit in terms of the application of restorative practices. All staff mentioned the need to revamp the curriculum to make it more relevant to student needs. 'Trent' was particularly interested to develop stronger community links at the Year 9 level.

The curriculum was described as an important site to teach social and communication skills e.g. listening, sharing, empathising. *“It would sit well with the pastoral philosophy”*.

‘Josephine’s attention on the development of student participation strategies e.g. Student Action Teams, Peer Mediation could be a worthwhile strategy as it is a positive curriculum initiative that gathers information and evidence about ‘empowering’ students within the curriculum. She has enough students to run this program each semester with two groups and is looking at conflict management / peer support; that is Year 10-12 students supporting year 7-8s. At the Year 9 level there is a Peer Support program (working well) with the local primary school and they are looking at peer mediation in 2003

What are the likely benefits? Barriers? Costs? Risks?

All participants agreed that restorative approaches have merit at School A. They felt it was important to maintain some momentum. This could be achieved they said with;

- Whole School Approach
- Continued involvement with some form of network
- Opportunities to provide some feed back to school leadership team in terms of benefits / challenges / strategies.
- An action plan developed to further enhance the use and implementation of across the school. This plan needs to match with Student Management Policy and have provision for further staff briefings and training.

What is required?

- Active support of principal and Deputy Principal.
- Workshop the process with staff before conducting further conferences
- Workshop the staff on the language of restorative justice and the potential integration into the school’s behaviour management plan.

North Tyler Secondary College is a co-educational secondary school located in industrialised suburb of a regional city. The school has 716 students through years 7 to 12

The school motto ***Strive to Achieve*** and the vision;

“North Tyler Secondary College values the cultural diversity of its students, and strongly believes that all students regardless of their various backgrounds should be actively supported in achieving their best. Student will be provided with opportunities to gain academic and personal skills necessary for the pursuit of personal goals and for the productive and contributory membership of society.”

The school had six staff members involved in the three day training provided by Transformative Justice Australia. The Student Welfare Co-ordinator had already been trained a number of years before and had been practicing restorative justice as the Assistant Principal of another secondary school. His skills and experience in restorative practice were highly regarded by fellow staff and the regional network. He was called upon as a speaker in the Community Conferencing section of the University of Melbourne’s *Managing Conflict in Educational Settings*.

Role / position of people interviewed:

Principal – ‘Bill’

Assistant Principal – ‘Martin’

Student Welfare Co-ordinator - ‘Vince’

House Manager – ‘James’

Three students involved in conferences – ‘Erica’ Y12, ‘Kate’ Y11 & ‘Tom’ Y 8

Parent of Kate - ‘Maria’

Health teacher involved in conference – Alice’

ESL Co-ordinator – ‘Liz’

Levels and roles of school responsibility as they relate to the management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

The school implemented a new behaviour management model in 2002. The model has two components, one for use ‘in the classroom’ and one for ‘out of classroom’. The model is consistent with a restorative approach in terms of being based on rights and responsibilities and students owning behaviour.

Teachers are essentially responsible for the implementation of the model but are urged to seek support from House Managers and student Welfare Co-ordinator. The Assistant principal takes over the management of more serious incidents.

Current practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

The school operates a four House System for student management. This system is designed to increase opportunities for students to participate in leadership positions throughout their schooling and according to school promotional material, have input into shaping the school program. *“Each House has established Student Councils, their focus being to organise extra curricular activities”*.

School Code of Conduct.

The things that guide school practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

Student Behaviour Management Policies

Philosophy underpinning this practice

The Student Behaviour Model in the classroom is based has relocation as a core strategy. This is a procedure where a disruptive student is ‘relocated’ to a different class and a process of behaviour tracking commences. “Relocation is for serious inappropriate behaviour which stops the teacher from teaching and the class from learning.”

According to the Teacher Support Booklet the positives of relocation include;

- Removing students from the peer influence and peer audience
- Think sheet asks the student to reflect on behaviour and explain what has happened
- Allows a cooling off period for everybody with the student being appropriately supervised.

The Think Sheet given to relocated students to reflect on their behaviour follow a restorative script;

1. I have been asked to leave the classroom because (What happened?)
2. I did the following things.....
3. What is my side of the story? (Story)
4. What rules did I break? (Effect of actions)
5. What can I do to fix things? (Restoration)

The ‘Out of Classroom’ behaviour management model is based on a ‘Booking’ system for positive and negative behaviour, e.g. Positive behaviour is managed with Good Citizen slips being distributed by teachers on duty . Students exchange these slips for rewards. Negative behaviour is managed by Booking slips. Students ‘booked have a range of consequences applied to them.

How current practice is measured / monitored / reviewed / resourced?

The Student Behaviour Management models were described as having a positive effect on behaviour but staff felt there had been insufficient time to more accurately measure the impact of this approach.

The trial of the 'Out of School' model began in term 3, 2002 and was to be evaluated through fortnightly reviews and issues forums. At the time of evaluation there was only limited data available.

The level of parent contact and involvement in the case of serious incidents

High

The involvement of police or outside agencies

High

Understanding of Community Conferencing / restorative justice

The school leadership was of the view they were already restorative in their approach. This was not supported by the descriptions of incident management. The style was essentially autocratic. The reference to restoration was more to do with keeping students in school, that is 'we try not to suspend or expel'.

What does this approach currently look like in this school?

The school provided written reports on four conferences in the trial period. A further 21 incident reports were filed.

Incidents using restorative practices "mini-conferences" have so far included harassment, theft, bullying, graffiti, assault, repeated misbehaviour in the classroom

Time and human resource allocation associated with the organization and facilitation of conferences are regarded as critical issues. The ability of the school to respond to incidents perceived as requiring formal conferences severely challenge current resource allocation.

Supports / strengths/ barriers / weaknesses

The core of staff at the school are an important change group but rely heavily on the 'Vince' to maintain momentum. While there is clearly more work to be done with other staff this is taking some time and the core group may see a drop of enthusiasm. The school leadership are supportive but position Restorative Practice / conferencing in a trial phase. The demonstration of its worth therefore sits along side existing and more traditional responses. This has been a cause of frustration for people on the team as some practices are therefore in contradiction.

The schools efforts at reforming behaviour management procedures is an opportunity to have the intellectual discussion about the philosophy of practice. However this too is a trial and is dependent on the experience of the staff and students.

What are the implications for skill, knowledge and resource developments in this school? Eg PD, Curriculum initiatives, parent awareness raising

The school, mainly through the efforts of 'Vince' has undertaken significant activity in terms of conferences and mini-conferences. They are clearly active in the field and an important source of knowledge about the Victorian experience. As with most school

initiatives the application is undertaken in a complex environment. Staff and student awareness raising are important steps toward a whole school approach. The school is on the way from achieving more widespread support but requires further time and resourcing such as whole staff professional development time and continued flexibility to investigate the use of conferencing..

Examples of incidents, impact, outcomes? Stories of incident - what happened, who was involved, what was done, who managed it, what was the outcome, levels of satisfaction?

See Appendix 4 for examples of conferences.

Smith Street Primary School is a rural primary school with 120 students.

Role / position of people interviewed:

- Principal - 'Stan'
- Student welfare Coordinator - 'Mary'
- 4 other non-cc trained teachers (short focus group over recess) 'Jan', 'Sharon', 'Sue', and 'Norma'

Levels and roles of school responsibility as they relate to the management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

Mary - one to one follow up with specific children, contact with parents, special programs.

Introducing schools to restorative practices - effective starting points

The initial approach taken by Smith Street during the Restorative Practices Pilot could represent a particularly useful one. Principal + the most 'hands on' person are trained together and trial restorative practices, together or in parallel, within the school.

'Mary', the Student Welfare Coordinator is dealing with the front-line on discipline issues, has significant connections with other staff, students and families, and insights into effective processes. 'I've had teachers approach me and say "can you conference this?". However, because of their location within school, non-senior staff members will have their hands tied in shaping wider school practice, especially if there is not such a strong level of support from the 'top'.

The principal can shape school policy. A principal's authority and profile within their own school and other neighbouring schools can impact the way this approach is considered, utilised and understood, but they will have very limited time to follow up with specific individuals. 'I ask A to deal with it'

A whole school approach

Still both point to the need for a 'whole school' approach to student welfare and discipline

Current practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

In the focus group, staff outline 3 steps:

- teacher,
- principal,
- parents

We do have a behaviour management policy but we are currently re-writing it.

Some restorative practices already well in place:

- For example if someone gets heated, taking time out with a teacher, walking and talking
- A kid can call a class meeting (in theory any where, any time they're not happy with process or need something discussed by the group). Moving more towards this in practice

The things that guide school practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

The school are currently writing their own behaviour policy. 'This fits in nicely with a non-punitive approach'

We are drawing upon a whole range of things: notions of all behaviour being chosen, purposeful, that there might be a better way to act but they might not know it, learning a better way to act, all problems having solutions, understandings habits and control, expectations and consequences. (principal)

Other staff point to a range of different terms for practices already central to the way the school already operates - the most commonly mentioned is choice theory (children choose own consequences).

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Historical links

In terms of justice we have a mandate - this approach fits in with some of the better-known sayings of Jesus, for example: 'judge not lest you be judged'

yourself. It sits comfortably with his example as well. Jesus spoke with authority and never imposed - choice theory exemplified. (Principal)

Philosophy underpinning this practice

It's a spiritual thing - our aim is that kids reach their full potential (principal)

It fits in well with my understanding of the Catholic / Christian ethos. Not all Christian outlooks though - there is some difference in the way these things are interpreted (principal).

Making moral decisions. Having to think about others. Self-control. Treating others as you would like to be treated. Respect. (staff in focus group).

How current practice is measured / monitored / reviewed / resourced?

- Behavioural plans for kids
- Small school, small staff, informal support, consultative approach.

Who is responsible for evaluating current practice. What is likely to change?

Authority rests with Stan (principal). Changes involve the formalisation of behaviour management policy, staff pd, a slow cultural shift.

The level of parent contact and involvement in the case of serious incidents

'Total'. There is an expectation of dialogue. Parents are very supportive. In the focus group, staff reported no animosity with any of the parents (these were also less front-line on discipline issues than 'Mary', Student Welfare Coordinator and Stan)

Understanding of Community Conferencing / restorative justice

By the trained staff, Community Conferencing is seen as a way of conflict resolution. Central are ideas of being heard, just listened to.

Restorative Justice approaches fit in with a range of other non-punitive philosophies and practices being explored within the school's discipline strategy.

This concurred with the understandings of other staff.

What does this approach currently look like in this school?

Using the language.

Rather than formal conferences, trained staff report that approaches has been most helpful in terms of the practices that it has taught them. They find themselves drawing upon *the practices, assumptions, and language that they have learned through the training*. This has been quite transformative:

'I've stopped calling in witnesses. I've stopped asking people about what they *think* happened. So now I'll get those experiencing the problem to tell their stories in turn - they will say what they want. After everyone's had a talk I'll say: "We seem to have solved this - are you prepared to do that?" and see if there's a problem. Adapting the language often fixes the problem.' (Principal)

Supports / strengths/ barriers / weaknesses

Strengths:

'I just like the philosophy behind it. It's modelling that there are ways other than just standing and yelling. If we're on about kids reaching their full potential emotionally and spiritually we need to take this seriously'.
(Principal)

Non punitive approaches work. Listening rather than accusing "What do you want?" "Let's try something different..."

'...I've learned that listening to someone actually calms them down'
(Principal)

Barriers:

It's about creating a culture where people are pro-social rather than autocratic. This will take time. We are a rural school (high staff turn-over)

What are the implications of using restorative justice approaches / philosophy in this school? What needs to change? Stay the same?

Some are coming to grips with consequences vs punishment,.. with listening rather than accusing...

As a teacher, I could tend to listen with my mind made up. There's '*listening*' and there's *listening*. This involves a shift in mindset....

Adopting this approach means that you have to pull yourself up from adopting the position of a benevolent dictator... Anyone who came from authoritarian stand will struggle, to relinquish their position of power... Doing this is a mammoth power struggle and you have - I've had - to unlearn some things that I have been doing for years (Principal, Smith Street Primary).

What skills / knowledge / resources will teachers, parents, students, school leaders and support staff require for such an approach to be effective?

The task involves teaching parents to be pro-social. In terms of staff support, it will be important for the school to write its own behaviour management policy to capture the philosophy and give protocols.

Since we have been heading towards a non-punitive approach there are some (more traditional) teachers who have become confused - they are not sure what is good or bad behaviour any more. It's actually about respecting a kid's right to choose. The choices that they've made will have consequences. I don't think this means anything goes, it means being on-the-ball, being fair, firm, and consistent. (Principal)

It will take a bit for some teachers who have [at the scene of an incident] for a long time said 'You! go pick up bits of paper!' to change their habits and ask: 'What were you thinking while this was happening?'

What are the implications for skill, knowledge and resource developments in this school? Eg PD, Curriculum initiatives, parent awareness raising

Perhaps a night for parents? We had parent contact after we ran the first one - they were happy it happened - I spoke to parents outside - the word is slowly spreading in the parent community.

The importance of the cluster networks - 'of getting together to remind each other'.

'The other [local, Catholic] principals are out there listening. It's in our interest that children who leave this school and go there have the same opportunity to be listened to.' (Principal)

'There's likely to be a staff meeting for 4 Catholic schools in area with Regional support staff - a cluster meeting on philosophy language, and process. Nothing frightening, just the 4 principals and 2-3 teachers from that school.'

A combined staff meeting is not wasteful of time - it may sow seeds - we are exploring the idea of school closure for a day. We could focus on this or choice theory or... there are many ways we could approach staff PD at this time. (Principal)

Examples of incidents, impact, outcomes? Stories of incident - what happened, who was involved, what was done, who managed it, what was the outcome, levels of satisfaction?

Probably 5-6 times we've had incidents where a Conference approach could have been used. A couple of times I've followed the dialogue - just with the kids themselves, not a formal approach - dropped all formality. Other times I've used it on yard duty. For example I found a little girl called 'Megan' and 'Ben' screaming. I said: "Stop. It would be much better if you two take a seat. You two are not to move until you've talked: you say what you want and need, and then you say what you want and need, if that doesn't work. Just sit there and I'll come past later. Ben you've got to listen to her. It might not be pleasant but - don't interrupt." Later I saw one of them and asked "Did you sort it out?" she said "Yes and I think now we'll have another good day like yesterday."

'Mary', (SWC) Says:

I have run a couple but my biggest had 18 boys involved. It took quite a while - setting up, keeping people separate, just the preparing, finding a room took quite a while. It went most of the morning - finished just on lunch. They felt a sense of satisfaction. The kids (who had taken sides) felt satisfied that each and every one had a say. We followed the script, each said what... there was a good sense of satisfaction.

There have been lots of mini chats, using the language. Students are happy to be listened to and can often hear the other person's side of the story.

What are the likely benefits? Barriers? Costs? Risks?

Difficulties:

At the moment *to be honest* [emphasis added] I've only tried one full blown. Time was an issue - the background work took most of my day.

There's other organisation issues too. I'd prepared a party [the celebration for after the conference] and left it in the staff room, and then when we went to get it, somebody had been eating it! (principal)

The main obstacle is cultural change:

Man have I got some work to do! I've got 4 and a bit years left if I'm going to leave a culture here!

We're only doing the best we can do. (Principal)

Stokes Secondary College is an outer urban secondary college, nearly 900 students

Role / position of people interviewed:

- Assistant Principal - 'Ron' (his voice is the one throughout this document, the others were interviewed in relation to one specific conference)
- Yr 10 coordinator
- Yr 9 student
- Yr 9 student
- Yr 9 coordinator
- Student Welfare Coordinator
- Co-facilitator
- Trained facilitator (observer)

Levels and roles of school responsibility as they relate to the management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

This starts with Classroom teacher. They have support from year level coordinator with area of leaning coordinator. Year level coordinator has autonomy over year level and deal with all sorts of situations, otherwise they speak to us (principal class) perhaps asking 'what do I do here?' Beyond Year level coordinators there is support from principal class (AP) SWC, external agencies etc

Current practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

In practice, there is also collegiate support within the wing (this school is geographically separated into wings) - sending kids to another teacher - there's pre-arranged or on-the-spot management of incidents.

We listen to other schools but we do give lots of chances to kids. In many cases this represents their last opportunity.

The things that guide school practice regarding management of student behaviour / discipline / wellbeing

A concern for student wellbeing. Being understanding of where a kid is at. Issues of welfare and discipline are inseparable. There is a recognition that kids are going to come with baggage. If they have had no food, there will probably be a punch-up. At the same time, there this needs to be balanced with the need maintain control.

Where there is an incident or harm is done, the issues should be addressed rather than the kid simply being punished.

The school prides itself in developing significant relationships with kids, before we try to do anything else.

Historical links

Experience. We have seen what happens. If we haven't got relationships, kids won't be doing anything in class.

Philosophy underpinning this practice

New material supports this - Strong control, strong support (he points to the 2x2 diagram that regional staff recently brought back from a Minnesota conference on Restorative Justice).

How current practice is measured / monitored / reviewed / resourced?

Student support group, principal class, year level coordinators, student welfare coordinators. We meet every 3 weeks and discuss whole variety, evaluate codes of conduct, school rules, codes of practice and management procedures. Evaluated by that group, but also seek feedback from SRC & staff.

Who is responsible for evaluating current practice. What is likely to change?

(As above) This group is about defining roles, who does what. One result meant we set up program in conjunction with student transition to employment program (Brotherhood of St Lawrence) for at risk young people

The level of parent contact and involvement in the case of serious incidents

Immediate, during the course of that morning

The involvement of police or outside agencies

In the case of assault, we tend to deal with it at school level. This seems to work well, but we also say to parents 'we'd encourage you to call police and press charges'.

Critical incident management. Not too many that warrant police attention. I have to say that it's really hard to get police involved. 000 can bring police from anywhere - a far cry from the days of 'one local copper'. In the case of drugs, they don't want to know - they want the dealers. We try to involve parents or people from the youth resource centre. When the community policing squad were around we were on a first name basis - we could call them: 'I want you to talk to a kid, frighten some kids.' They'd explain the implications with them. That was sometimes effective.

Which is why I was really delighted that the district inspector came to the last cluster meeting, especially if they were to get a few people trained or familiarised with CC. Having police involved would introduce that other layer of involvement, bringing the message to the offenders: actions like this mean harm to victim, community and potentially, you! In this way, conferencing presents a framework for potential involvement in the management of serious incidents.

Understanding of Community Conferencing / restorative justice

It is about harm done and repairing that harm. Establishing or re-establishing relationships

What does this approach currently look like in this school?

Pilot is it's infancy. We are trialing and experimenting.

Supports / strengths/ barriers / weaknesses

The early indicators are that conferencing itself is costly but can produce powerful outcomes. And so because of the time factor and because it is new, we are being selective about what to conference.

What are the implications of using restorative justice approaches / philosophy in this school? What needs to change? Stay the same?

Over the last few years there has been a deliberate and conscious effort for staff to develop relationships with students. Lots of staff took that on board. Some took time. The minority (of staff) who do not understand the significance of these relationships are actually having trouble. Relationships are actually better now than they were at the beginning of the year - lots of one on one with some staff.

A common theme here - teaching into the 2000s is a completely different 'ball-game', and teachers need equipping for this.

What 'Ella' (SWC) used to do was provide relationship-building material for pastoral groups. Some got annoyed with the intervention. We used to take a horse to water, now we tell them where the water is. So many now are on board anyway. New staff are being introduced. Some staff, we wonder why they became a teacher, because they're not going to develop relationships with kids. We've moved on with the culture that we've developed. Those who are not going to move on are 'stuck'.

Examples of incidents, impact, outcomes? Stories of incident - what happened, who was involved, what was done, who managed it, what was the outcome, levels of satisfaction?

See 'school and participant experiences of conferences Appendix 4.'

What skills / knowledge / resources will teachers, parents, students, school leaders and support staff require for such an approach to be effective?

Information over time - case study of a strategic whole school process

Introducing people to these ideas and practices needs to be an intentional process. We have 3 staff trained as facilitators. All staff have been e-mailed general info regarding community conferencing and in-service activities. Where there is PD we like to see the information - as a kind of accountability. So the e-mail was to let everybody in on it. Following that e-mail, full staff meeting with (regional support worker) explaining community conferencing. So when we went to run a conference they knew about it. Next we'd like to get a number of conference scenarios involving different people and when we've got a bit more of an information bank, to give feedback to staff about successes, get conferences going more broadly. The drips will keep flowing through the coordinators.

What we need still is a greater understanding among the staff. We'd like to do something like our own training - hands-on stuff and some scenarios, and unpack that on a smaller scale.

There's the remaining question of how to get information to parents. It gets explained to them individually as we deal with incidents. Next year we will put info in the newsletter: "we trailed this strategy last year and we've evaluated it, and now we're going to adopt it".

We'd rather get a bit more comfortable with it - prefer to test it before espousing it to the wider community. For us here in this school - the issue is doing a conference that's 'safe'. I would hope that after a period of time we would become more comfortable about the conferences that we are doing, but people are right outside their comfort zone. It would be good if we had that background knowledge that it was safe, that it was going to be Ok

What are the implications for skill, knowledge and resource developments in this school? Eg PD, Curriculum initiatives, parent awareness raising

Regarding conferences, the main issue is time. Time involved in preparation. Large numbers of staff are involved. If this is in class time, we need to cover classes. If it's after school the cost of staff staying back (costs for them and their families).

Regarding training - it be really good with 6 year level coordinators - a half-day or a day just going through the use of the dialogues and language. Getting the other APs, SWC, YL coordinators and our career person understanding that sort of dialogue could be relatively easy. *Ultimately we'd like to have all staff resourced to use that language. Doing the whole staff - 80 odd... much more difficult!*

APPENDIX 4:

EXAMPLES OF CONFERENCE CASE NOTES

A sample of case-notes from these conferences are presented here. The case-notes highlight:

- The incident (what happened);
- How the school (or staff-member) responded;
- What happened as a result (outcomes and feedback);
- What they learned;

Case 1 - Nth Tyler Secondary College

Seven teachers from Nth Tyler had attended three days training provided by TJA. The Student Welfare Coordinator, although already trained attended with his colleagues. Other trained staff included three house managers, an acting house manager and two teachers.

Incidents using restorative practices 'mini-conferences' have so far included harassment, theft, bullying, graffiti, assault, repeated misbehaviour in the classroom

The incident

Four students bought and consumed alcohol at school on three separate days. These same four students plus six other students bought cigarette lighters to school and light fires on two days.

How the school responded

These offences were regarded as serious breaches of school rules and had the potential of suspension or expulsion. The Student Welfare Coordinator was of the opinion that this behaviour was not characteristic. *'Great kids, one off behaviour.'* The matter was discussed with House Managers, Assistant Principal and Principal before it was brought to a Conference.

Eight offenders and their supporters (12 parents / one grandparent), five teachers and a member of the local Country Fire Authority (CFA) attended the Conference. The victims in this case were the teachers and CFA representative.

The offenders were able to tell their stories and the victims talked about the impact on them. The parents expressed feelings about the helplessness they felt in controlling the children's behaviour. The teachers talked about potential risks to others in the school and about how close the offenders came to expulsion.

'The CFA officer had a terrific impact and involvement.' He described the effects of fires and the impact they could have on people's lives.

What happened as a result (outcomes and feedback)

The following agreement was reached:

- The girls will write a letter of apology to the teachers.
- That they would be good citizens around the school. Be honest.
- The teachers and parents agreed to forgive them.
- The school will approach the milk bar re: sale of cigarette lighters to students.
- The CFA would run a video about the impact and effects of fires for offenders.
- The teachers also agreed to support the girls with some harassment issues.

Two victims (teachers) and a witness / victim (student) responded to self-administered surveys and were very positive about the way the conference was managed. There were however concerns about the honesty of some offenders and their ability to keep to the agreement.

A very powerful tool. The student reactions to their parents speaking was testament to their relationships – very telling for future dealings. I just wish the four purple (house group) girls would be totally honest with the real story and their motives. I feel they were still trying to protect each other.

(Teacher victim)

Two months later, compliance has been high for most of the students involved. *According to a teacher victim, a student victim and the facilitator, the incident has had a mostly successful outcome. However, one of the offenders has since left the school and another has had difficulty complying with agreement.*

It didn't work for two of the girls. They didn't show as much remorse as other students. They didn't have the level of understanding required. While they both admitted it and were happy to be involved they had no moral acceptance of the harm caused by their behaviour.

(Teacher)

This teacher felt the other students had been good to begin with so for them the incident was out of character. He felt it had been positive for the parents to have been involved 'They were very supportive parents had been very good.

Case 2 –Nth Tyler Secondary College

The incident

The 'Rating Game' involving Year 11 boys who rated and selected Year 11 girls and coerced them into sexual activities then reported back to the group, rating the girl's performance thus publicly humiliating them. Spontaneous acts at parties were given bonus points.

One of the victims brought the matter to the SWC after being convinced by a friend after another recent spate of 'Rating Game' incidents. The victim, as with most of the girls involved, felt somehow they had contributed; What had they done to coerce the boys?

How the school responded

It was the view of the Student Welfare Co-ordinator that conferencing represented the best opportunity to repair harm caused across the whole school community.

Some of the offenders when faced with the choice of conferencing or a more traditional approach opted for the conference, as the SWC reported:

They wanted a forum to apologise. They felt guilty over their actions and wanted some way to end it.

The school had already attempted to deal with this matter over a long period using such means school assemblies and individual punishments. None had been successful.

Twenty-nine people were involved in the conference. The victims were represented by five students – 2 boys and 3 girls and their student supporters, the Student Council President, the Assistant Principal and House Manager. Ten offenders made up of nine boys and one girl were supported by five adults. There were no parents present. The Conference was facilitated by the Student Welfare Coordinator.

What happened as a result (outcomes and feedback)

The following **agreement** was reached:

- If the boys see others playing the 'Rating Game' they will stop them.
- Think before acting in future.
- Be honest, open and continue talking to the girls to begin to build trust again.
- Be role models to others in their House.
- Assist House Managers to sort out junior problem students and stop their own silly behaviour in the Orange house quadrangle.

In the **week following the conference**, seven evaluation sheets were returned; two were from staff members (one supporter), four from victims and one from an offender.

Sincerely impressed that the kids had the language to deal with the situation properly coached. Surprised by level of sincerity and real sense of closure and relief. (Teacher supporter)

While the victims were positive about the process but there were some reservations about aspects of the conference, particularly with the agreement.

I feel the Conference went well although I couldn't say all that I wanted because I didn't want to get upset in front of them. It was well organised and good to hear what the offenders had to say.

The boys are very fortunate this approach was taken. I couldn't tell how the other girls really felt about the justice. What happens if it (the Agreement) is broken.

The Conference was a fantastic way for all of us to express our opinions and how we felt. It helped deal with issues that needed to be discussed. It was a great alternative to what would normally occur.

One offender responded also responded positively making the following observation.

I would like to say that the conference was a success and I think it is a really good way to resolve problems because it really opens your eyes to the positive and negative effect of everyone involved.

Two months later, two victims had mixed feelings about the outcome of the conference. Both were satisfied that the conference had been well run and that it had given them an opportunity to hear the boys apologise. One girl felt there were too many people involved, particularly teachers '*all the heavies*'. No parents were invited.

After two months one victim was confident the matter had been resolved.

It has been unreal. There has been no more trouble. There has been nothing like this before and it has worked out well. The boys have complied with the agreement and have been perfect gentlemen.

The other victim was less confident.

I still don't know if I can trust them. I talk to them more and we are friendly. Like they are my friends now but I'm not sure about the relationship.

She was also unhappy that a teacher who attended the conference told the main offender not to go near her for a period of time. In her view this added further hurt and was contrary to the agreement. She thought it would be useful now to have a facilitated small group discussion with boys, '*I am shy in the big group*', to check in on the agreement. She added:

I was glad they didn't expel them. They were friends before and they are friends again.

Case 3 - Wyn Primary school

The following story was told by Paul, the teacher of a grade 3-4 class. Paul writes:

On returning on the last day of term from the 3 day Community Conferencing Training I found an incident had occurred whilst I was away.

The incident

A year 3 boy, 'Larry' had been writing notes to a Year 4 girl, 'Vera', which were unwelcome and followed a distressful period in which her bag was moved or hidden each day.

How the staff member responded

I decided to run a conference to deal with the matter and help explain my absence. The remainder of the class were observers with explicit instructions that no-one was to make a comment until I had signalled the process was complete.

I followed the script and this lasted over 20 minutes.

What happened as a result

Larry was clearly upset at the distress he had caused to Vera and had volunteered to write her an apology letter which he presented soon after. He was almost in tears at this point and was quite remorseful.

Interestingly the first comment when it was over was from a class member who said "Wow, that should have been on video, that was better than a movie."

Equally impressive was that Larry was (and did) receive as part of the class reward system an order of potato cakes and chips at lunchtime. He in fact offered shared most of this with Vera.

There has not been any problem between the two since (as of 20 / 5).

After the class conferencing I asked both Vera and Larry to write down their thoughts on how they felt about conferencing and what they felt now (some 2 hours after the event).

Larry wrote – "I felt 5/10. Disgraceful and stupid. After that I was stupid and funny, yucky and silly. I feel better now."

Vera wrote – "I felt much better after. When Larry gave me the note I felt better. It was very nice."

Case 4 – Wyn Primary School

The incident

One boy along with three other boys over a period of time have harassed and bullied another boy. This included kicking, punching, pushing and calling him names such as ‘faggot’, ‘dickhead’ and ‘bitch’. They also prevent him from seeing mutual friends.

The victim, who had been an offender in a previous class conference, requested a conference to deal with this matter. He had been pleased with the other conference outcomes.

How the school responded

The school felt the incident warranted a conference because of the continuing nature of the harassment.

Seven people attended the conference; the victim and his mother and another supporter, the offender and a supporter, conference facilitator (internal) and co-facilitator.

What happened as a result

The offender was not forthcoming in stating all of the names he had used to tease the victim but it did come out early that he been teasing over a long period of time. Major turning point was when the victim verbalised his fear that the offender was only being nice to him in the lead up to the conference. It became clear however that the offender had been remorseful and taken the matter seriously. He also had been ‘grounded’ at home.

The offender apologised for the hurt and bad feelings without prompting and the victim apologised, without prompting for his answering back which had encouraged further teasing. Both agreed they could quite happily get along together.

The following agreement was reached:

Jeff and Larry will not call each other names, tease or bully each other in or out of classroom.

The agreement to be monitored by the teacher and parents.

What they learned

The school recommend having an observer in the second line as it provided valuable feedback on body language and changes in the dynamics within the group.

Five evaluations were received and all were very positive:

I found the conference to be extremely well run and most beneficial to all parties. It certainly gave the two children a perfect opportunity to solve difficulties and more importantly move on. Well worth the effort and time.

(Observer)

I think this is a good idea.

(Offender)

A good idea to do this to sort out problems for the kids and any concerns parents have.

(Offender supporter)

Larry said there isn't any need to write in this section as the conference is what he wanted.

(A comment by the facilitator on behalf of the victim)

I feel these conferences, when dealt with in a more positive way continually prove to be more effective than previous punishment or conflict solving strategies. Instead of making the offender resentful and the victim bitter, it seems to bring the two together. Good stuff (It also makes not just the offender, but the victim think about any provoking they may have done, and it makes the offender more accountable than detention or suspension.

(Victim supporter)

This final comment was the conclusion to a letter received from the victim's mother shortly after conference:

By the way, I've told quite a few people (parents and non parents) about the successful conference I witnessed and contributed to last Thursday. The parents I told all said they wished their child's school could adopt the same system principles. Thank you again for that!

Case 5 – Stokes Secondary College

Stokes Secondary College had three staff trained; the Assistant Principal, a year Level Co-ordinator and the Health PE coordinator. They all attended the 3-day TJA program.

The incident

Three students were wagging school during the morning. ‘Nevan’ and ‘Michael’, both in Year 9 fondled ‘Emma’ a Year 10 student. Michael held her arms while Nevan put his hands under her top and grabbed her breasts. He also unsuccessfully tried to grab her crotch. Emma asked them to stop. She later spoke with a friend about the incident who suggested Emma speak to the co-ordinator.

The boys were suspended for three days. Counselling was to be arranged for all three students.

How the school responded

The procedures followed to this point. The Year Level Coordinator conferred with the principal and the parents contacted. Normally parent interviews would be arranged.

It was decided to replace the interviews with a Community Conference. *‘Relatively straightforward incident for our first conference.’*

The Conference was attended by 12 people including the victim’s mother and the two offenders and their mothers. The principal, Facilitator (Assistant Principal), Year 9 Co-ordinator, Year 10 Co-ordinator, Student Welfare Co-ordinator, a co-facilitator and an observer also attended.

Just prior to the conference the victim’s mother contacted the facilitator to inform him that her daughter had run away from home and was staying with an aunt. It was decided to continue the conference in her absence. Her mother was willing for this to occur.

The conference followed the script to the letter.

A key turning points was the emotion expressed as the victim’s mother related her feelings, particularly as she that she hadn’t known where her daughter was until late the night before and how she felt looking at the boys and hearing what they had done to her daughter.

Michael wanted to apologise to Emma in person.

The offenders’ mothers hugged and kissed the victim’s mother at the end of the conference. It was interesting that on mum came up to the victim’s mum at the start of tea and coffee, while the other remained seated and then approached her before departing.

The conference provided a great deal of emotion with many participants crying or close to tears. At times with the emotional outpouring occurred the boys, particularly Nevan, had their heads fall even further.

What happened as a result

The following agreement was reached:

- All students to be placed on a daily report.
- Personal apology to Emma from Michael.
- Written apology to Emma from Nevan.
- A meeting of the boys with Emma on Monday or when she returns from school where apologies will take place.
- Emma to meet with SWC to receive ongoing support.
- Michael and Nevan to maintain confidentiality and inform the YLC if there are any repercussions from other students.

What they learned

- To always have a co-facilitator.
- Extreme difficulty in getting so many people together at one time.
- You can never be certain that all the planning undertaken will eventuate, eg. Our victim didn't turn up with only 5 minutes warning.
- In future conference – use the same venue but isolate the PA system to avoid interruptions.
- The absolute need to know all the details of the incident and to know the agenda of each person.

The conference lasted about 90 minutes and was costly in terms of staff involvement, but very worthwhile for all. I can anticipate that as the school undertakes more conferences, that there will be occasion where no suspension will result and a community conference will take place.

Immediately after the conference, eleven evaluation forms were returned:

I think the conference was a great idea and it gave the offender [a chance] to see what sort of impact it had on everyone.

Given the nature of the offence and what was spoken about at the conference I think it was probably a good thing that the victim's mother took her place...

9 Year Level Co-ordinator

Very expensive – time and money. Parents were positive of the outcome. It seemed very intimidating for students and parents with so many staff.

(10 Year Level Co-ordinator)

Traumatic for some and time consuming but valuable.

(Student Welfare Co-ordinator)

This was the first authentic conference I had been part of and it was a moving experience. I found myself going over the conference, reflecting on various moments later that day. I feel very positive about the outcomes for the participants but regret the victim was not present as there are many issues that need to be addressed for her.'

(Co-facilitator)

This is the first Community Conference I have facilitated. Whilst it was very time consuming and emotionally draining, it was very worthwhile. This conference was a good learning experience and I am looking forward to the next.

(Facilitator)

Case 6 - Regional staff

Some Regional support staff have received training as part of the Pilot. 'Carol' had received training from RJA in 2001 and reported on two conferences conducted over the last 12 months.

The first was conducted at a remote P-12 college in May 2001.

The Incident

The offender, 'Jay' was in Year 7 at the time and experiencing social emotional difficulties. The school had attempted to deal with the resultant behaviour without much success and Jay was at the risk of an ongoing suspension / expulsion. His attendance record was poor and his classroom behaviour disruptive to other students. There was no one incident that characterised this conference. This was seen as a last attempt to resolve an ongoing problem. A number of people in the small community saw potential in Jay and were willing to support the conference. At least one, the YLC was not supportive but agreed to attend.

How staff responded

Carol decided to interview everybody involved in the conference in order to get the complete picture as well as 'begin the relationship building'. In her view *'If you haven't got the relationship with the people it's not going to work.'*

In all she interviewed 16 people including Jay's mother, the Social Worker, other supporters and staff from the school. This took a whole day but according to Carol was critical. It enabled her to plan the seating arrangement, assign roles and spend time with the Middle Years Co-ordinator, who she was warned did not support the Conference.

It also gave her time to meet with Jay. He did not turn up to the scheduled interview so Carol went to his house:

We talked generally at first and then I made it clear that I was doing this for him so he could have a happy life – then we talked. It took 4 hours and was able to coach him on the what he could say and what to expect.

The Conference was difficult to get going.

I started with the Social Worker, someone who had less of an emotional connect. I tried to make it non-threatening to Jay so he could loosen up. Once other people started talking things got going.

Carol used the TJA script but took out the phrase about 'choosing to leave' as she felt it gave Jay too much of an escape route and this was really his last chance.

The contract took a long time to come up with. *'Because he had had a free rein for some time it took Jay a while to learn this was fair dinkum.'* In all the Conference took 4 hours.

What happened as a result

Several months later, the invitation to Jay's review meeting read;

Dear _____

I would like to invite you to come and share the things I have done well and help me plan for the future.

I hope you can come!

From Jay

Twelve months later Jay is in Year 8.

What they learned

Carol was adamant that the effort she had put in to interviewing people and doing the ground paid off in terms of putting a workable agreement in place:

Every single person knew each other's role. Mum was responsible for him to be home before dark. Others who saw him out were supposed to remind him.

In Carol's terms the community rallied around:

The community attitude had to change around Jay and the group had to stick together – everybody had a task they were responsible for.

The foundations of Jay's contract were essentially based on consistency and long term support. Rewards were built in for compliance. This included some flexibility about his attendance and spending time on a fishing boat. He had to demonstrate some achievement in a Special Ed class before being involved in some regular group activities.

In the past the school had allowed him to do whatever he liked, now there were boundaries and limitations but also some security and predicability¹ ... He was soon pleading to go back into the classroom.

In all Carol spent 2 whole days preparing and facilitating the conference. She spent another two days following up 3 months later.

¹ See Dibbs, In Search of Self :-

Why would you spend so much time on one kid – because it changed a whole community. Everybody contributed, worked and supported to make a difference.

She met with half the people who had been involved in the conference and with Jay. The YLC was now an advocate for conferencing. Jay was still at school. According to Carol he was more confident and caring:

He had learnt values he never had the opportunity to learn before.

When asked about the skills required to facilitate a conference Carol suggested the following:

- Genuine – people will know if you are not genuine;
- Good listener – reflective;
- Empathetic – warm / able to put yourself in others shoes / non judgemental;
- Willingness to learn – look beyond the immediate / short term.

APPENDIX 5

Responses to End of Pilot Survey

Replies from schools up to November 15th 2002

Monterey SC	3 trained staff
Frankston PS	2
Rosewall PS	3
St. Josephs PS	2
Derinya PS	2
Korumburra SC	4
Geelong CRC	2
Samaritan College	4
Western Height SC	5
North Geelong SC	6
Bannockburn PS	5

Replies from support staff

Geelong North Network	3
Southern Network	1
North Geelong RO	1

Overall respondents	42
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END OF PILOT SURVEY RESULTS

1. Number of staff trained in your school []

2. Use of school wide approach related to restorative practice

(a) How have other staff mostly been briefed / involved?

[10]	staff meeting	[4]	staff PD	[5]	informal / incidental
[4]	bulletin	[5]	team / YLC meetings	[4]	c/conference
[4]	other				

Comment

Not well explained to staff due to 'gate keeper' role of AP responsible for behaviour management.

Observation technique – staff member invited to observe conference in action.

All staff were involved in training as part of school curriculum day. Regular reports are given following a conference session to brief staff on what has occurred so that they know where things are going.

Observation of a small / mini/conference

We are holding a School Closure Day in November to discuss the language used in CC and the approach used.

The staff meeting report was very brief, and we have had a few discussions where we have brought up the value and appropriateness of using a Community Conference and the language of restorative justice and script was shared with all staff.

School Council and Parents & Friends Association

We have given a 1 1/2 hour presentation to full staff meeting (60 people) including a mock community conference which we ourselves did in our training. However we have peer mediation and lots of restorative justice strategies.

A decision was made to introduce this initiative at the Year 9 campus so staff on that campus were briefed by two trained staff on that campus.

Need to speak at a full staff meeting.

We have been aware of the need to do PD around CC but time didn't permit.

School Councillors have been informed about the concept of Community Conferencing only in general terms.

(b) How have parents mostly been informed / involved?

[5] bulletin	[6] c/conference	[2] parent meeting
[5] informal	[1] other	

Comment

School council briefed.

Parent newsletters.

Parents were informed after the mini-conference

Parents have still not been informed yet. We are still in the early stages (for CRC). During parent meetings we have negotiations and discussions which are all about restorative justice.

Parents by telephone.

Need to inform parents more.

Parent involvement in one of the conferences I was involved in was extremely positive.

Not well explained to staff due to ‘gate keeper’ role of AP responsible for behaviour management.

Mini conferencing – teachers who have undergone training have tried the approach, in a sense, using the “talk” or “script” when dealing with incidents – not a structured process as yet.

(c) How have students mostly been informed / involved?

[2]	bulletin	[8]	c/conference	[2]	curriculum
[7]	class discussion	[9]	teacher modelling	[]	assembly
[]	other				

The mini-conferences we have had in the classroom have been the way the students have been informed.

Inclusion in the curriculum e.g. Art / graphics. Models and symbols of bullying. Not informed of CC as such but involved class CC script use and informal CC.

*Again needs to be **expanded**.*

(d) How have outside agencies / support staff been informed / involved?

[1]	facilitating conferences	[2]	observing conferences
[1]	compatible with existing role	[1]	approached by school
[]	approached by parent	[1]	other

Involved in training in CC. Provided support and advice when needed.

CEOW & CEOM will have input into November Closure Day

One conference involved children from different grade levels and another facilitator based within the school. It was a very successful conference.

No outside agency has been involved but the school psychologist has been an observer at both conferences held so far.

District staff have provided support, advice and briefing.

Mostly district staff: Social worker and guidance officer.

3. In what ways has conferencing / restorative approach impacted on practice?

	YES	NO
(a) Using restorative approaches in dealing with incidents generally	[12]	[]
(b) Using restorative language in interviews with students, staff and parents	[12]	[]
(c) Using mini conferences for minor incidents	[12]	[]
(d) Using learning circles for class meetings	[6]	[4]
(e) Using community conferences for serious incidents	[9]	[1]
(f) Using restorative philosophy in the curriculum via social skills programs	[4]	[5]
(g) Using restorative philosophy in behaviour management plans	[9]	[2]
(h) Involving the community more	[4]	[5]

Other (Please comment)

Need to do more promotion of CC with the community. It is very time consuming to organise a CC and sometimes take the quick option to suspend students. It is just the reality of the day to day pressures.

We intend doing more after the in-service day

Some of these things are not across the board yet but the school is trying to develop that.

The language of restorative justice is used with the teacher and children. Students ask for conferences, and gathering in a circle is something we do several times a day for learning or expressing feelings. The students in the class that uses these behaviours seem to be more confident about expressing their viewpoints to each other and other teachers. Not all teachers see this as a positive.

*More follow up is needed,
Restorative approaches have brought n more positive behaviour and reasonable consequences.*

4. ***Overall impact of conferencing / restorative approach? (circle)***

(a) Using conferencing restorative practices has improved school climate?

5 Strongly agree 4 2 undecided 1 strongly disagree

(b) Restorative practices /conferencing has been effective in holding offenders accountable?

7 Strongly agree 3 2 undecided strongly disagree

(c.) Restorative practices /conferencing has made the school safer?

4 Strongly agree 8 undecided strongly disagree

(d) A restorative approach /conferencing has been less effective in administering discipline than traditional methods?

Strongly agree 1 undecided 11 strongly disagree

(e) This school has not yet effectively implemented a restorative approach?

4 Strongly agree 2 undecided 3 3 strongly disagree

(f) Rates of suspension, expulsion, and detention reduced as a result of the pilot?

2 Strongly agree 8 undecided 1NA 1 strongly disagree

(g) Offenders are complying with the terms of conference agreements?

8 Strongly agree 1 3 undecided strongly disagree

(h) Offenders experience increased empathy as a result of the conference?

6 Strongly agree 2 1 3 undecided strongly disagree

5. What were some of the challenges or difficulties associated with the use of conferencing / restorative approaches?

Time x 2

Getting all parties to agree to participate / time involved initially.

Familiarity with process with students involved e.g. getting primary school students to tell their story.

Skill of participants – skill has a long way to go to be truly effective in managing a conference.

The time that setting up a Conference takes even on a small scale. You really need to do your homework if you are going to run a conference with several people, especially if advocates are present also.

Getting all staff to feel that it is a successful form of dealing with incidents.

Time and convincing parents that restorative approaches actually help the offender reconnect with their peers.

Time required. Getting all staff on board

Time is not an issue using the script. What (then) what (now) feelings (who has been affected, how effected.

We sometimes use a THINKING ABOUT BEHAVIOUR sheet (this was prior to CC) – has students thinking about some of their behaviour and to some extent their feelings.

The ability to contact the parents to invite them to participate was difficult. A third conference was not held for this reason. Need to have a whole school approach, PD, resources. Biggest challenges have been; apathy of teachers to new learning, difficulty in contacting teachers, time.

TIME – As SWC I have 10 sessions per week for welfare. Year level co-ordinators have 2. It really requires management, without a teaching allotment, to do more of the organization.

*Culture change concerning behaviour management.
Accountability requirements as perceived by admin.*

We are unable to comment in depth, or with concrete knowledge – to this question or the previous one –as our level of implementation is low. It is fair to say that the school climate at Bannockburn is positive, and issues leading to suspension or expulsion are almost nonexistent at this stage. We are luckier than some! Perhaps we could have undertaken a conference in at least one instance this year – however the timing of this situation made the conference option more difficult.

6. What have been the most useful supports / resources associated with the use of conferencing / restorative approaches?

Conference handbook / script.

Having a co-facilitator.

Network meeting support.

Regional consultant support.

Network meetings were the best provided e.g. supportive environment and sharing of ideas.

The initial training was excellent and the follow up meetings kept the impetus going. The option of 'experts' being able to come and speak with staff has also been beneficial.

Local network meetings.

Networking and support from colleagues, support by Marg Armstrong.

The common language.

You have a plan to work with

I think to introduce change (although at our school that is big as RJ anyway?) we need interest the staff slowly, enlighten them with the positive feedback by these few and will escalate. I have regular emails, the script has been passed around school staff areas – photocopies in staff room and toilets (female).

Hand outs from the uni course on the steps phases.

Cluster meetings.

Other trained members in the school.

Awareness that there is another way of disciplining young people.

Support from school counsellor with follow up.

The support of the District staff and a team of people trained in the school.

Regional / District support through networks.

Core of trained facilitators in each school.

Professional development for staff has been beneficial. The development of a network, and the provision of opportunities for exchange between colleagues have been very useful.

7. Summarise any benefits you or your school have noticed through the use of community conferencing / restorative justice.

Level of parental satisfaction, victim support, offender support.

Cooperative spirit.

Broader ripple effect being understood.

More conscious of different available options for managing misbehaviour.

Seen as a positive proactive approach by parents and staff.

Listening skills have certainly improved. Willingness to wait until all the info is in before making a judgement about issues. Children have an increased ability to see other's points of view and reasons for certain behaviours. Closure seems to be more possible after an issue.

I find the students respond better than punitive discipline only.

Students have since made positive choices when pressured by their peers. Disconnected students have made reconnections and are happier at school. Students who saw themselves as victims tend to realise they also made bad choices and adopted bullying behaviour.

Too early yet, however I believe that it will have a bigger impact as we use it more often over time

Better relationships, relationship based discipline, so less re-offending, better restoration of relationships and understanding, willing compliance on most occasions although we know that misbehaviour and conflict will arise.

So the support will be the stuff encouraging and inspiring others. We are just beginning to see that. I then need to organise a big CC, then get onto admin and staff training.

Very little because we didn't have a whole school approach.

The year 9 co-ordinator is keen to do the course next year.

Decrease in aggressive tendencies in one student.

Initial improvement in student No 2 then decline in his effort and behaviour.

More lasting change in individuals.

An increase in maturity levels – a deeper understanding amongst participants.

Shifted thinking from 'sanction' to 'action'.

Educative process now included in behaviour management practices.

Management of kids now parallels curriculum initiatives.

8. What advice would you give other schools contemplating the use of community conferencing / restorative justice?

Do it.

*Go for it!!!!
Co-facilitation*

Well worth the effort to train staff to implement. It is another strategy in the student welfare / management bag of tricks but has a philosophy of respect that helps people move on.

Go into it with an open mind and be prepared to do your first conference early.... the earlier the better.

Work hard at getting all staff working on a restorative approach.

PD the whole staff at one time on restorative justice. Ensure that AP and Principal are part of the PD process. Educate the community and make it a part of the information booklet at the beginning of the year. Be part of a school net-work who use restorative justice.

Need to get the Administration on side and then work on training the key Student Welfare people in the school, such as the SWC and Year Level Coordinators

That autocratic, no discussion discipline / not restoring relationships does not result in willing compliance and a desire to do the right thing. It ostracises and angers.

*It is excellent but without support of DP, YLC it will not be as effective.
The whole staff (including non-teachers) need to have training and support.*

*Don't start until you have the active support of the principal.
Workshop the process before conducting a conference.
Workshop the staff on the language and the potential for integrating it into the schools behaviour management strategy.
Plenty of ground work needs to be laid.*

*Just do it.
It is scary at first and involves risk but it works.*

Go for it. Discuss with people using RJ in the classroom across a range of settings.

9. What advice would you give your education system regarding future investments in community conferencing / restorative justice? e.g. training, resources, networks, discipline frameworks

Provide adequate training, work to integrate conferencing into the overall discipline structure.

Training opportunities.

Needs resourcing welfare staff funds for schools.

Needs promotion and support by Department.

Needs recognition of the value of the approach it takes.

Needs to be seen as part of the whole school approach / consistency in student welfare management practices.

Worth investing time and money in CC. It is not a panacea, but when used within the context of a sound School Behaviour Management Policy, it becomes a very worthwhile exercise. Fits in beautifully with the Catholic ethos.

Min / condensed training or information sessions for schools entire staff.

Essential tool for schools. Positive approach to futures and as above.

I think that it is well worth putting resources into in the future

For our school we need to concentrate on implementing 1 on 1 and other informal conferencing. One example was a whole class CC after a bullying incident in which they all wrote down the answers to What, When, Who, How and What (is a fair consequence for that behaviour, do you think) individually . Great responses. I shall feedback responses to staff to promote more interest and use more feedback etc.

As far as full blown CC, we probably need to co-conference with an experienced person because a school, I think, would only invest the time etc on a big CC and would want as I would as much success as possible. Perhaps District staff would help us with one. The principal is thinking of one (however this one child never feels accountable, nor his parents) so perhaps not them.

All YLCs trained.

Time allowance.

Close networks with other schools.

Really need police support.

More recent training and information video.

Rune the course again in 2003.

Consolidate in the schools that started this year.

Train more people in these schools to create a critical mass

Keep the networks going.

*Conduct PD these same schools for all staff.
Run introductory sessions for school leaders.
Plenty of time to work through the process.*

*Increase time allowances for a co-ordinator of the approach.
Continued training opportunities.*

Lead the community rather than follow traditional models of state based justice. Review State Code of Conduct immediately.

Ask the system, “What body of research supports the approach currently taken?”

Funding and time are perennial issues, no matter what the focus. If school personnel wish to apply this practice effectively, there is no escaping the significant time requirement and the related costs in terms of funding. If restorative practices are implemented well, eventual community benefits must result. It is fair to ask for government investment in training and resourcing.

Section B - For non school based staff

1. Organisation / agency link to school/s

Workers are attached to schools as a contract person and generally visit 1/2 to 1 day per week.

DE&T

BSW Regional Office (Student Wellbeing Unit)

2. Comment on the extent of your involvement with conferencing / restorative practices during the pilot. Which schools?

Working with one school.

My role has been to try and spread the word. I have informed Network Committees of school progress and arranged for SWC's in our network to watch role play and hear from other schools how conferencing works.

Regional support, debriefing trained personnel, facilitating conferences, running network meetings and overall management.

5 BSW Region schools

Co-ordinating role, arranging network meetings, contacting schools between meetings to discuss progress, issues, difficulties etc.

3. Overall impact of conferencing / restorative approach? (circle)

(a) Using conferencing / restorative practices has improved school climate?

1 Strongly agree 2 undecided strongly disagree

(b) Restorative practices /conferencing has been effective in holding offenders accountable?

2 Strongly agree 1 undecided strongly disagree

(c.) Restorative practices /conferencing have made the school safer?

Strongly agree 2 undecided strongly disagree

(d) A restorative approach /conferencing has been less effective in administering discipline than traditional methods?

difficult to answer as my understanding is that conferencing is not designed to “administer discipline”??

Strongly agree 1 undecided 2 strongly disagree

(e) School/s have not yet effectively implemented a restorative approach?

Strongly agree 2 undecided strongly disagree

Comments

Varying degrees of success in the 5 schools from no progress to marked changes. In the middle, there are schools that, whilst there have been some successes to date, overall they have found it difficult to embed into the whole school structure.

4. What have been the main benefits of using conferences / restorative practices?

Works well with Tribes.

Some change in the way people speak to students. More use of script.

Useful when school doesn't want to suspend.

Gives teachers and schools another tool.

Students accountable for their actions.

The chance to repair, let go and move on – prevents issues simmering

Giving the victim a voice.

Allowing parents the opportunity to participate.

Teaching to become a necessary part of behaviour management.

An opportunity for schools to question/reflect/challenge the underlying philosophy and rationale of their whole school approach to discipline/welfare practices and structures (and for individual teachers to reflect on their style of communicating/responding/relating to students).

5. What have been the challenges of using restorative practices?

Time consuming

Having to convince school administrators of the benefits.

Co-ordination of staff availability.

Getting used to the script.

Time involved – school time plus travelling.

Not effectively knowing the school well enough.

Getting staff to understand – changing their thinking.

Systems change.

Lack of time and money to provide the necessary professional development for all staff

Lack of understanding and hence acceptance by the broader school community of restorative practices

The conferencing itself takes time, effort and personnel

Need to be seen to be disciplining!

Restorative practices seen as a soft option

Need for ongoing support for the schools using restorative practices especially around the practicalities of implementing restorative practices throughout the whole school (it can't be an isolated approach standing alone from the accepted welfare/discipline approach(es)).

6. What advice would / do you give to schools or other organizations interested in undertaking restorative practices in the future?

Go for it but be clear that it is a big and ongoing commitment and that it would take a number of years before it really becomes part of school based culture. Choose carefully when to conference (and when not) so as to maximum benefit and not overload staff. Make sure leadership team is trained to.

Get involved, observe a conference if available.

Look outside the box.

Question the relevance / appropriateness / effectiveness of current practice.

A critical part of the process is the need to invest considerable time and energy into intensive groundwork in the school before implementing restorative practices ie opportunities to question current practices that may then lead to the whole school identifying the need for change (readiness) and acceptance of a better way!

Hands on involvement of principal class ie the movers and shakers who have the power to make things happen in schools!

Budgetary commitment to continue the necessary level of support to implement restorative practices in the long term

7. What are the main supports and resources in your work with schools?

Networks.

Supporting a network of the participating schools to share experiences, talk through difficulties and successes

Debriefing

8. Comment on further needs, supports, resources

A. More resources are needed for

- 1) Staff to be trained. Needs a whole school approach so all staff are familiar with conference speak
- 2) To cover staff to organise and facilitate a conference
- 3) Venue hire other than school

B. Education of the community

- Difficult to make a judgement in such a short time frame - need for a longitudinal study to show whether the project has made more than an initial impact on managing difficult incidents in school communities
- Continues financial support for participating schools
- Rewriting of Guidelines for developing the Student Code of Conduct to encompass the philosophy of restorative practices
- Supporting schools with examples of good practices to assist in infiltrating restorative practices into the whole school culture ie not seen as an add-on
- Professional development for all teachers, parents and students to create common beliefs, understandings, expectations and intended outcomes of restorative practices
- Restorative practices incorporated into school policies
- Finding opportunities to profile the successes of restorative practices so that the momentum builds within the pilot schools and other schools are encouraged to adopt restorative practices.

APPENDIX 6

Evaluating the Training

Different Expectations?

Nearly all respondents, in both training modes, identified an interest in learning the skills to conduct conferences and other restorative practices. It was more characteristic of the respondents from the Melbourne Uni course (mode 2) to also mention wanting to better understand the theories behind these practices. Slightly different patterns in the answers may be a function of the slightly different questions asked.

Pre-training Expectations: Mode 1

Pre-training we asked the Mode 1 respondents: ‘What are your expectations of community conferencing?’ Nearly all answered in terms of what they expected or wanted from their training. These comments would be useful, for the planning and design of any future training.

- Wanting to understand the process of conferencing and how to apply it, some first hand experience in how a conference is run
- A more formal, more organised process to draw together a protocol shared between the district schools
- To learn new ways to deal with serious issues involving families and friends of victims and perpetrators
- I want to gain a better understanding of the process of community conferencing and the instances where its application would be suitable in the school setting
- Also to gain some first-hand experience as to how a community conference is run
- Learn how better to deal with difficult situations. Learn strategies to deal with conflict
- More strategies to assist with incidents/ situations happening within schools
- Develop awareness amongst all concerned to understand the impact of their behaviour on others
- Provide structure within which to work for school community to deal with difficult situations
- Enable all parties to become involved in process rather than simply main players
- I am very ignorant of this subject and look forward to being skilled up in this area
- Alternative methods of dealing with conflict situations
- Add a further dimension to the schools approach to students

- Potential for these concepts to form the basis of a review of the schools' overall discipline procedures
- As a tool for dealing with the more serious misdemeanours certainly but also hopefully to apply the strategies as part of an ongoing process of conciliation between involved parties.
- To learn more about the process and understand the framework
- To take away practical knowledge that can be readily applied
- To learn processes of mediation within the school community. Through lecture content and role play I would hope to feel more enabled as a facilitator to resolve potential conflict situations
- To help me be better able to get students to see the consequences of their actions and its impact on others. Also to help me better support the 'victim' and, overall, to reduce incidents of 'misbehaviour', particularly in areas like bullying.
- To have another strategy for conflict resolution and to be able to implement this program in some format at our school
- A process that empowers all involved to rebuild relationships while avoiding blame and punishment. Those within the community should feel safe and listened to and move towards resolving conflicts
- Develop a way for our school to assist both perpetrators and victims
- To learn more about the community conferencing process
- To be able to use the process and language effectively for various situations at school
- To be able to demonstrate the process to others in the school
- To build on existing links between local schools
- To add another string to my bow in the welfare / discipline area of student services. Am half way through a student welfare post-grad and hope this will supplement my studies

Expectations Of the pd:

- To enjoy myself
- To learn about community conferencing – what it is -how it works – how it works in schools – when / how to use it

Expectations of community conferencing

- To use it in our school
- To use it in conjunction with other strategies (eg peer mediation)
- To use it to support a change of culture
- Acquire skills which empower people to resolve some of their difficulties

- Confirmation of my belief that the process will be highly valuable to the system of schools in which I work
- Broadening my understanding of its application . ie in which situations it may be used.
- Enhance my skills to negotiate difficult situations
- I am expecting to come away from the conference with enhanced skills and knowledge to enable me/ us/ we to successfully conference students, parents, teachers to attempt to assist in problem solving - give skills to problem solve
- Keen to find out how it works, what it offers. I expect that the course will instil new skills which will be useful in various circumstances
- To be made aware of options for dealing with conflicts in such a way that one can expect more positive outcomes
- To provide another strategy in dealing with bullying and conflict resolution between the various stakeholders
- A more developed version of a practice already used in school – learn a bit
- I hope that it will assist with keeping some students at risk in school, making them more responsible learners.
- I hope that it will improve relationships between some students, teachers and parents

Pre-Training Expectations: Mode 2

Pre-training, we asked the Mode 2 (Melbourne Uni) respondents: ‘What are your expectations of this course / training. These comments would also be useful, for the planning and design of any future training.

- Enhance my own knowledge in the area of community conferencing.
- Improve upon my skills in dealing with situations requiring such facilitation
- Improve my personal skills in resolving conflict.
- Where possible obtain the knowledge to promote community conferencing in my region
- If possible help others run a conference
- To gain knowledge and strategies for managing conflict
- To gain theories to assist others in my school
- To gain an understanding of conflict resolution and to conduct community conferencing
- Hope to find out more about skills in community conferences / negotiation / mediation
- In depth exploration of theory of conflict and conflict resolution approaches as well as practical information about applications in school contexts
- To learn processes for effective conflict resolution management
- To be directed to an understanding of community conferencing and to extend links with like-minded people
- Gaining of personal expertise to help with position of leadership
- Expertise to help facilitate some change within my school with regard to conflict resolution
- To explore the theoretical underpinnings which inform community conferencing within a restorative justice framework.
- To explore a systems approach to incorporating cc into the school system.
- Increased understanding of the model of community conferencing. Develop the skills to feel confident to facilitate a CC.
- I am expecting to learn about community conferencing (what it is, how it works, what its advantages and disadvantages are) and how we could go about implementing it in our school.

- Feel confident to run cc
- To have a better understanding of theory behind conflict management in education, eg CC
- To be familiar with recent research on CC, mediation etc and to gain a very good understanding of the underlying psychology, behaviours, strategies, that lead to attaining positive outcomes to conflict
- Develop my own understanding of conflict and positive ways of dealing with conflict – personally and professionally
- To implement a conflict resolution aspect within the school that has positive effects for all
- To learn about community conferencing

Post-training Evaluations

Facilitators of both modes of training were keen to run their own evaluations rather than ones constructed by the pilot evaluation team. Therefore the post-training evaluations have measured different things, reflecting the different emphases of the two modes. This material is informative in terms of course content, the skills and understandings developed, and the things that participants found most useful.

Post-training Evaluations: Mode 1

1 = lowest, 5 = highest (scores have been aggregated here)

1. To what extent do you understand affect theory? (4.2)
2. To what extent do you understand the philosophy of conferencing? (4.7)
3. How well do you think you will be able to set up, run and close a conference? (3.9)
4. The facilitators' workshop made use of whole and small group dialogues, TJA leader input and conference practices. Which of these did you find helpful?

Whole group (4.6)

Small group (4.75)

TJA leader input (4.5)

Conference demonstrations (4.75)

Conference practices – (4.75)

5. Comments that would assist TJA personnel improve the content, process and delivery of the course (samples)

- Excellent – thanks to the workshop practice and looking at the benefits to victim / offender etc. I feel able to convince schools of the necessity of conferencing
- All very beneficial to see the successes and pitfalls that may occur
- Role-plays great to get actual 'feel' of conferences
- Need more opportunity to practise role play
- Did not get to facilitate a group. I thought the course improved as it progressed. Marg was thought-provoking. I will put into place many of the ideas presented

- The pace of the course and the extent of the content was spot-on
- Perhaps one (if not) the best training modules I have ever undertaken
- Although I always dread role-plays, they were very useful

6. *General comments (samples):*

- This would fit in extremely well with the managing of many issues eg bullying, theft, truancy, drugs, etc
- I believe it is imperative to have principal + at least 2 there staff members present for training
- I have been excited and inspired by this process. I sincerely hope I can implement community conferencing in my school and in our year 8 English 'dealing with feelings' unit. Thankyou!
- Discussions re role plays reinforced importance and value of each member
- [and that it is] vital to know all the facts
- Great way to allow each person's story to be told and heard. Overall feeling of huge challenge for the first one but knowing process and possible outcomes, feel ok
- Potential of use in many situations
- It was very, very good. I felt I learned a lot and I feel confident enough to have a go at conferencing. I enjoyed learning more about affect theory and will follow up on that.
- We had our principal in attendance, it would be hard (almost impossible) to implement community conferencing into a school without commitment from the administration.
- Could be fabulous with our school but will involve some fairly major change
- I now have the skills and confidence to run a conference at my school. With others at (school name) and (network name) I feel that we will support each other to make the most of our training. A fantastic PD opportunity! Thanks marg x2.
- I have found the 3 days to be very enlightening. It has given me an insight into a new approach. It has given me an insight into problems in a sec. School
- It has made me examine my philosophy in regard to students, punishments, etc.
- I almost wish that I wasn't going on LSL so that I could get into it now!

Post-training Evaluations: Mode 2

Most of the questions on the University of Melbourne's Quality of Teaching survey reflect criteria which are not directly relevant to this evaluation (eg. web-site use, volume of work, difficulty of work).

Regarding the statement 'This subject was well taught' the average response was an affirming 4.8. Again 5 is the highest possible score, and such a rating meant that teaching staff received a letter of commendation from the Dean (not a usual occurrence!). However, there were no questions on the University of Melbourne directly inquiring about skills learned or readiness to engage in practice.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

ATTACHMENT 2 TOOLS

- Incident Reports used for describing action taken to manage general incidents not proceeding to a formal conference;
- Conference Reports used for describing incidents warranting community conferencing and their subsequent outcomes;
- Post Conference Participant Surveys used at the conclusion of a conference to gather immediate feedback;
- Conference Participant Surveys used up to two months after a formal community conference;
- End of Pilot Survey

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