

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

KEY FACTS FOR TEACHERS ABOUT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice focuses on **mediation** and **agreement** rather than punishment. It was introduced into Australian schools over 25 years ago. Individuals are held accountable for their behaviour. Key principles of restorative justice are based around empowerment, reintegration, restoration and emotional and social healing.

The Restorative Justice concept, which has been informed by practices of groups such as the First Nations peoples in New Zealand and Canada, is based on three main pillars:

- **Harms, needs, and amends:** Transgressors are called to acknowledge the harm that they have caused and make amends to the victims.
- **Obligations:** Transgressors are called to restore balance and rebuild the victim's sense of security and self-control.
- **Engagement:** All stakeholders (victims, transgressors, and community) are invited to take part in and engage in the process of healing. Empowerment for the offender means, in part, building offender accountability.

Importantly the restorative approach is focussed on providing victims with a voice and on the re-integration of the transgressor back into the group. The philosophy and practice of Restorative Justice is sharply at odds with traditional punishment and zero tolerance approaches to school discipline.

RECOGNISING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN ACTION

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE
Builds relationships	Ignores relationships
Focusses on all participants	Focusses on the individual perpetrator
The offence is an individual and social act	The offence is an individual act
The offence is an act against another person or the community	The offence breaks a law or rule
Punishment alone is not effective and involves restitution	Punishment is effective
Acknowledges the harm caused	Identifies the rule or law that is broken by the offense

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RESTORATIVE PRACTICE AT WORK IN THE CLASSROOM

Restorative practice can involve one on one or the whole class. There are 4 commonly identified questions a teacher would use during a restorative practice session with an individual, group or classroom.

- 1. What happened?** If this involves more than one person all those who wish to be, should be given the opportunity to tell "their story". This differs from what an individual(s) did and allows students to tell the whole story and feel heard.
- 2. What were you thinking at the time?** The intent here is to have the individual or group reflect on their decision to act outside the norms and involves a meta-cognitive mental process allowing for reflection on thoughts and emotions which may have preceded the behaviour.
- 3. Who or what was harmed?** This question is focussed on accountability and links behaviour to the harm caused. The intent is to help the student(s) empathise and better understand the nature and effect of the harm caused.
- 4. How do you repair the harm?** This important question is requesting the individual or group to take responsibility and act to make the situation right and repair the harm caused. It is not about the teacher deciding on what will now happen.

An important follow-up action is to set a time to meet again so that an assessment can be made of the success of the restorative session.

LIMITATIONS

- There must be "buy-in" by the students and community. Sometimes this may be lacking if the belief prevails that punishment for the offence is required.
- Training for teachers is highly desirable to introduce and understand the concept and ways to use it in the classroom.
- Some individuals may simply "pretend" to be remorseful.
- For some students integration back into the school community may not appeal if they have a peer group either within or outside the school that condones the offensive behaviour. (e.g. Condone bullying).

REFERENCES

Restorative Practice in Australian Schools:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMkt6FPXcVE&t=52s

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Hopkins, B. (2011). The restorative classroom: Using restorative approaches to foster effective learning. London: Teach to Inspire, Optimus Education.

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