

Towards a Restorative Society

INTRO

- Wendy raises some very interesting points about education and its evolving role as a critical part in moving us 'towards a restorative society'.
- However the time I have is very short so I will make one point first.

FIRST POINT:

- I explored in depth only 15 NZ schools that identified themselves as 'restorative'. While this is a limited number it allowed us access to a larger network of schools that were interested in restorative practices.
- The point I make here is that restorative practices, **is**, a rapidly growing movement within the education sphere. Wendy refers to it as becoming fashionable & Popular but I believe it is much more than this. People don't just think it is fashionable, people actually **believe it does work**.
- **So we are faced with a choice.**
 1. Essentially, we can either support this new movement, directing it, ensuring & protecting its credibility, or:
 2. We can leave it to its own devices.

Short of making it illegal, **stopping it is highly unlikely**.

- Biased as we may be, others and I will tell you - choosing to support and direct this movement is by far the best option and our report also suggests this.

TWO KEY POINTS HIGHLIGHTED BY WENDY:

Support however means **facing up** to some of the **issues that Wendy has pointed out**.

Two of the more important of these are in my view:

- 1) The relationship between 'restorative practices' as process and, 'discipline as a reaction'.
- 2) The ability of schools as communities to expand how they understand 'achievement.'

Relationship between DISCIPLINE & Restorative Practices

- There are lots of reasons for RP introduction to NZ schools - Wendy points to the SRI, & Politics surrounding 'DISCIPLINE'.

- Most schools don't necessarily see RP as simply another discipline measure. Most recognise its potential and worth for providing help in other areas.
- **HOWEVER:** the perception of RP as discipline/behaviour management 'first' does exist. Probably for two reasons.
 1. As earlier noted, schools are pressured to deal immediately with 'DISCIPLINE, particularly low decile schools or those that have a reputation to uphold. For 'poorer' schools resource limitations usually mean that RP is focused on discipline.
 2. RP– **does work as a discipline tool.** Our report suggests it does lower 'EXCLUSION' rates. It also helps tone down the schools reaction.
- **My concern is about the focus of RP being concentrated on 'Discipline issues' – overriding other important abilities of RP.** -The 'processes' of RP somehow becoming trumped by the perceived need to react quickly and forcefully to 'discipline' issues. In some cases RP has become integrated into the existing exclusionary discipline system, for example some schools will not engage in RP unless a stand-down has already occurred.
- **The end result is the simple incorporation of RP into the DISCIPLINE system.** The tragedy of this is that to 'KIDS', RP becomes just another form of discipline, and RP is not used to its full potential.

RP also has the ability to **transform the community environment**, resulting in a whole school change. Our research shows that without this RP approach to whole school simple tools of RP often don't work well and are difficult to sustain.

- Schools should therefore focus on the transformative ability of RP, rather than RP as a simple behaviour management tool.

School Community & Achievement

So what are Restorative school Communities????? –What is different?

- The difference is about how Schools as communities approach building a 'learning' environment.'

Status Quo approach is centred on the concept that: 'learning' is defined by 'literacy & Numeracy'

- This is important but they in themselves don't make a well rounded individual
- School is first and for most **about helping kids learn about themselves as people, 'citizens'** not just about building good workers

RP Approach to learning is based on: Holistic human development – Associated with whole child approach of primary schools.

- This starts with providing students with a ‘**community of care**’, underpinned by:
 - Respect / Mana** – between all
 - Relationships** – staff student, two-way interactions
 - Rights and Responsibilities** – hammered out by students & staff
 - Incorporate learning in the traditional sense**

Conclusion:

1: RP is here to stay and has already begun to have an affect within our schools.

- **Either we nurture it or we fight it. To date research shows that nurturing it is likely to create healthier schooling environments for students.**

2: We must make a clear distinction between RP as ‘just a Discipline tool’ and RP as a ‘process’ for changing all aspects within schools, not just those regarding discipline.

3: The best way to create this distinction is to allow RP to expand its focus from issues of discipline to include that of developing a community of care within the schooling environment.