

# Restorative Practices In Schools

## I. Various School Discipline Theories<sup>1</sup>

- a. Reality/Control Theory (RT- Glasser)
  - i. Teacher's help students make positive choices by making clear connection between student behavior and consequences.
  - ii. Class meetings, clearly defined rules and the use of plans and contracts are featured.
  - iii. Researchers (Emmer and Aussiker, Gottfredson, Hyman and Lally) have noted modest improvements as the result of this approach.
- b. Positive Approach to Discipline (PAD)
  - i. Based on Reality Therapy and is grounded in teachers' respect for students and instilling in them a sense of responsibility.
  - ii. Program components include developing and sharing clear rules, providing daily opportunities for success, and administering in-school suspension for noncompliant students.
  - iii. Research (e.g., Allen) is generally supportive of the PAD program.
- c. Teacher Effectiveness Training (TET)
  - i. The TET philosophy differentiates between teacher-owned and student-owned problems and proposes different strategies for dealing with each.
  - ii. Students are taught problem-solving and negotiation techniques.
  - iii. Researchers (e.g., Emmer and Aussiker) find that teachers like the program and that their behavior is influenced by it, but effects on student behavior are unclear.
- d. Transactional Analysis (TA- *I'm OK, You're OK; Games People Play*)
  - i. Within the context of counseling programs, students with behavior problems use terminology and exercises from Transactional Analysis to identify issues and make changes.
  - ii. The notion that each person's psyche includes child, adult, and parent components is basic to the TA philosophy.
  - iii. Such research as has been conducted (e.g., Cobb and Richards) has found the TA counseling approach beneficial.
- e. Assertive Discipline (AD- Canter)
  - i. First publicized and marketed in 1976 by developer Lee Canter, Assertive Discipline is a well-respected and widely used program.
  - ii. According to Render, Padilla, and Krank, over half a million teachers have received AD training (1989).
  - iii. AD focuses on the right of the teacher to define and enforce standards for student behavior. Clear expectations, rules, and a

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton, K. (2001) *Schoolwide and Classroom Discipline*. Online Resource Accessed on June 8th, 2005 at: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/5/cu9.html>

penalty system with increasingly serious sanctions are major features.

- iv. Some research (e.g., Mandlebaum and McCormack) is supportive, but most is inconclusive about the effectiveness of the AD approach (Emmer and Aussiker, Gottfredson, and Render, Padilla, and Krank).
- f. Adlerian Approaches (Alfred Adler)
  - i. Named for psychiatrist Alfred Adler, "Adlerian approaches" is an umbrella term for a variety of methods which emphasize understanding the individual's reasons for maladaptive behavior and helping misbehaving students to alter their behavior, while at the same time finding ways to get their needs met.
  - ii. These approaches have shown some positive effects on self-concept, attitudes, and locus of control, but effects on behavior are inconclusive (Emmer and Aussiker).
- g. Student Team Learning
  - i. Student Team Learning is a cooperative learning structure and, as such, is an instructional rather than a disciplinary strategy.
  - ii. Its use, however, appears to have a positive effect upon the incidence of classroom misbehavior (Gottfredson).

## II. Laying the Foundation

- a. Even though there are a number of strategies to choose from, each having a list of benefits and disadvantages, there are a number of broad ideas that cut across many of the strategies outlined in previous sections. Steffens (1995) and Yorba Middle School (n.d.) have elements that inform instructors to:
  - i. Have a short, clear, and reasonable set of classroom rules for students to follow.
  - ii. Focus on positive events.
  - iii. Be a role-model for students by acting the way you want them to act.
  - iv. Maintain student involvement from beginning of class to end of class.
  - v. Manage conflicts calmly.
  - vi. Send a student to someone else only after exhausting all possible strategies.

## III. Preventive Practices

- a. Cotton (2001) suggests a number of strategies for creating a well-disciplined school. The following preventive measures are key elements of schools that exercise preventive practices and are well-disciplined.

## IV. Principles of Discipline that Restore<sup>2</sup>:

- a. Misbehavior is viewed primarily as an offense against human relationships and secondly as a violation of a school rule (since school rules are written to protect safety and fairness in human relationships).

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<sup>2</sup> Barron County Restorative Justice Programs ([http://www.bcrjp.org/school\\_init.html](http://www.bcrjp.org/school_init.html)).

- b. The primary victim of the misbehavior is the one most impacted by the offense. The secondary victims are others impacted by the misbehavior and might include students, teachers, parents, administrators, community, etc.
  - c. Discipline that restores (DTR) is a process the “make things as right as possible”.
  - d. DTR recognizes both the danger and the opportunity created by the misbehavior and the conflicts that underlie the misbehavior. As soon as immediate safety concerns are satisfied; DTR views the misbehavior and conflict as a teachable moment.
  - e. Discipline that Restores prefers resolving the conflict or handling the misbehavior at the earliest point possible and with the maximum amount of cooperation (as little coercive force as possible).
  - f. Discipline that restores prefers that most conflicts and misbehaviors are handled using a cooperative structure directly between the ones in conflict.
  - g. DTR recognizes that not all persons misbehaving will choose to be cooperative. Therefore there is a need for outside authority to make decisions for the misbehaving person who is not willing to be cooperative. The consequences imposed should be tested by whether they are reasonable, related, restorative, and respectful.
  - h. DTR prefers that persons who misbehave and are not yet cooperative be continually invited (not coerced) and encouraged to become responsible and cooperative, and they should be given that opportunity at the earliest possible time they so choose.
  - i. DTR requires follow up and accountability structures since keeping agreements is the key to building a trusting community.
- V. A **restorative approach** to conflict and/or wrongdoing consists of first asking **4 key questions**<sup>3</sup>:
- a. What has happened?
  - b. Who has been affected (how did that work for you)?
  - c. How can we involve everyone who has been affected in finding a way forward?
  - d. How can we do things differently in the future?
- VI. The **restorative approach** is based on the belief that the people best placed to resolve a conflict or problem are the people directly involved<sup>4</sup>:
- a. Imposed solutions are less effective.
  - b. Imposed solutions are less educative.

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<sup>3</sup> Transforming Conflict, National Centre for Restorative Justice in Youth Settings, Mortimer Hill, Mortimer, Berkshire, RG7 3PW ([http://www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative Approaches and Practices.htm](http://www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Approaches_and_Practices.htm))

<sup>4</sup> Ibid #1.

c. Imposed solutions are less likely to be honored.

VII. In order to engage in a **restorative approach** to challenging behavior<sup>5</sup>:

- a. People need certain attitudes and skills.
- b. Skills-based training can develop both restorative skills and attitudes.
- c. It can help participants to identify a variety of applications for these skills.
- d. It can meet the needs of the whole school community.
- e. The ultimate outcome is to build a strong, mutually respectful, safe and inclusive community in which everyone feels valued and is heard.

VIII. The potential advantages of **restorative approaches** in the school setting include:

- a. A reduction in bullying and other interpersonal conflicts.
- b. A greater awareness of the importance of connectedness to young people. The need to belong and feel valued by peers and significant adults.
- c. Greater emphasis on responses to inappropriate behavior that seek to reconnect, not further disconnect, young people.
- d. Reductions in fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- e. A greater confidence in the staff team to deal with challenging situations.
- f. An increased belief in the ability of young people to take responsibility for their choices, and more people giving them opportunities to do so.

IX. The Punitive-Permissive Continuum



Figure 1:  
Punitive-Permissive Continuum

X. The Punitive-Permissive Continuum

- a. Punishment is often the normal response to misbehavior, wrongdoing and criminal intent.
- b. Those who fail to punish naughty children are often labeled permissive.
- c. The above continuum reflects this limited perspective and confining implications for educators. Schools have two choices- punishment or not (i.e. detentions, suspensions).
- d. The result has been more and more difficult and violent behavior which has then led to “zero tolerance policies.”
- e. These limit the discretion of the administration and thus move them further toward the punitive end of the continuum.

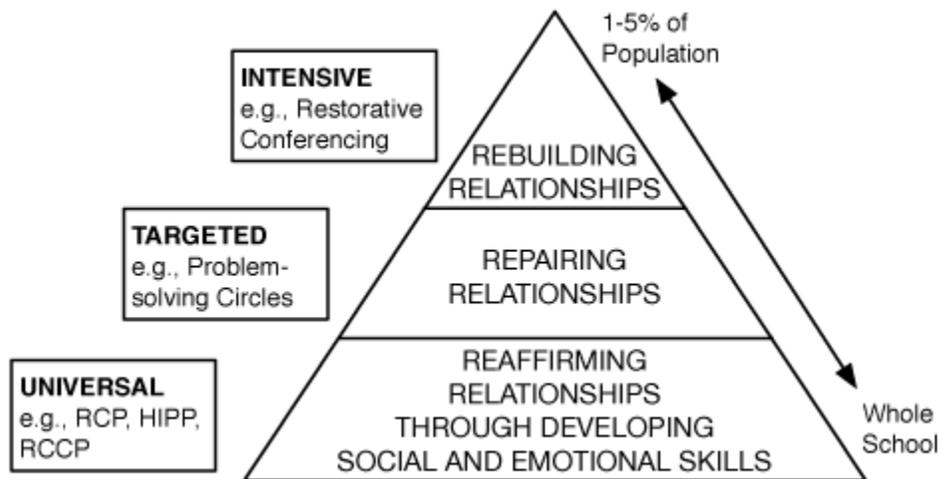
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<sup>5</sup> Ibid #1.

XI. The **restorative approach**, a new paradigm:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Old Paradigm</b> <b>Retributive Justice</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>New Paradigm</b> <b>Restorative Justice</b></p>
Misbehavior defined as breaking the school rules	Misbehavior defined as adversely affecting others
Focus on establishing blame or guilt in the past (did he/she do it?)	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and how to meet them in the future
Adversarial relationship and process	Dialogue and skill building- everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent (retribution)	Restitution as a means of restoring both/all parties, the goal being reconciliation
Attention to right rules and adherence to due process	Attention to right relationships and achievement of the desired outcome
Conflict represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	Misbehavior recognized as interpersonal conflicts with some value for learning
One social injury replaced by another (retribution)	Focus on repair of social injury/damage
School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation	School community involved in facilitating restoration
People affected by misbehavior not necessarily involved	Encouragement of all concerned to be involved-empowerment
Miscreant accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	Miscreant accountability defined as understanding the impact of the action, seeing it as a consequence of choices and helping to decide how to put things right

## XII. Restorative Justice Intervention Continuum



### Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation

These three types of restorative practices come together to make up a whole-school model of restorative justice, offering three different levels of intervention: universal, targeted and intensive (see Figure 4). Briefly, these levels of response form a continuum of responses based on common principles. By way of analogy to a health care model, the universal level of intervention targets all members of the school community through an ‘immunisation’ strategy, such that all members of the school community develop social and emotional skills to resolve conflict in caring and respectful ways. The targeted level of intervention addresses conflict that has become protracted, such that it is affecting others within the school community; as such, a third party is often required to help facilitate the process of reconciliation. The intensive level of intervention typically involves the participation of an even wider cross section of the school community, including parents, guardians, social workers and others who have been affected or need to be involved, when serious offences occur within the school. A face-to-face restorative justice conference is a typical example of this level of response. Taken together, these practices move from proactive to reactive, along a continuum of responses. Movement from one end of the continuum to the other involves widening the circle of care around participants. The emphasis is on early intervention through building a strong base at the primary level, which grounds a normative continuum of responsive regulation across the school community.

## XIII. The Social Discipline Window

The social discipline window (Figure 1) is a simple but useful framework with broad application in many settings. It describes four basic approaches to maintaining social norms and behavioral boundaries. The four are represented as different combinations of high or low control and high or low support. The restorative domain combines both high control and high support and is characterized by doing things *with* people, rather than *to* them or *for* them.

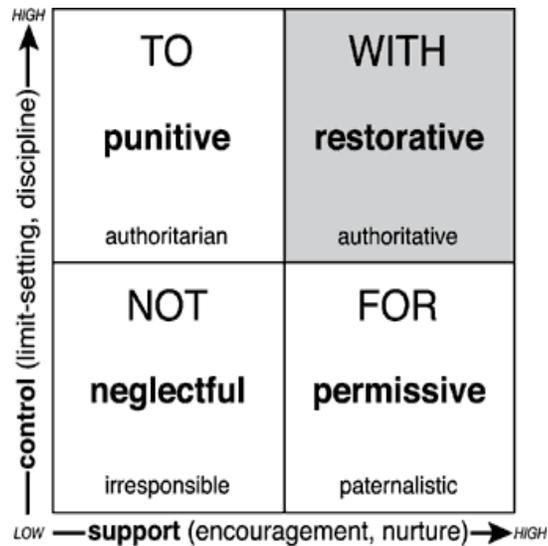


Figure 1. Social Discipline Window

#### XIV. Formal and Informal RJ practices

Restorative practices is not limited to formal processes, such as restorative and family group conferences or family group decision making, but range from informal to formal. On a restorative practices continuum (Figure 2), the informal practices include affective statements that communicate people's feelings, as well as affective questions that cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. Impromptu restorative conferences, groups and circles are somewhat more structured but do not require the elaborate preparation needed for formal conferences. Moving from left to right on the continuum, as restorative processes become more formal they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are more structured and complete. Although a formal restorative process might have dramatic impact, informal practices have a cumulative impact because they are part of everyday life.



Figure 2. Restorative Practices Continuum

The most critical function of restorative practices is restoring and building relationships. Because informal and formal restorative processes foster the expression of affect or emotion, they also foster emotional bonds. The late Silvan S. Tomkins's writings about psychology of affect (Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991) assert that human relationships are

best and healthiest when there is free expression of affect—or emotion—minimizing the negative, maximizing the positive, but allowing for free expression. Donald Nathanson, director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute, adds that it is through the mutual exchange of expressed affect that we build community, creating the emotional bonds that tie us all together (Nathanson, 1998). Restorative processes such as conferences and circles provide a safe environment for people to express and exchange intense emotion.

Tomkins identified nine distinct affects (Figure 3) to explain the expression of emotion in all human beings. Most of the affects are defined by pairs of words that represent the least and the most intense expression of a particular affect. The six negative affects include anger-rage, fear-terror, distress-anguish, disgust, dissmell (a word Tomkins coined to describe "turning up one's nose" at someone or something in a rejecting way), and shame-humiliation. Surprise-startle is the neutral affect, which functions like a reset button. The two positive affects are interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy.



**Figure 3.** The Nine Affects  
(adapted from Nathanson, 1992)

Shame is worthy of special attention. Nathanson explains that shame is a critical regulator of human social behavior. Tomkins defined shame as occurring any time that our experience of the positive affects is interrupted (Tomkins, 1987). So an individual does not have to do something wrong to feel shame. The individual just has to experience something that interrupts interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy (Nathanson, 1997). This understanding of shame provides a critical explanation for why victims of crime often feel a strong sense of shame, even though the offender committed the "shameful" act.

Nathanson (1992, p. 132) has developed the Compass of Shame (Figure 4) to illustrate the various ways that human beings react when they feel shame. The four poles of the compass of shame and behaviors associated with them are:

- *Withdrawal*—isolating oneself, running and hiding
- *Attack self*—self put-down, masochism
- *Avoidance*—denial, abusing drugs, distraction through thrill seeking
- *Attack others*—turning the tables, lashing out verbally or physically, blaming others



**Figure 4.** The Compass of Shame  
(adapted from Nathanson, 1992)

Nathanson says that the "attack other" response to shame is responsible for the proliferation of violence in modern life. Usually people who have adequate self-esteem readily move beyond their feelings of shame. Nonetheless we all react to shame, in varying degrees, in the ways described by the Compass. Restorative practices, by its very nature, provides an opportunity for us to express our shame, along with other emotions, and in doing so reduce their intensity. In restorative conferences, for example, people routinely move from negative affects through the neutral affect to positive affects.

Because the restorative concept has its roots in the field of criminal justice, we may erroneously assume that restorative practices are reactive, only to be used as a response to crime and wrongdoing. However, the free expression of emotion inherent in restorative practices not only restores, but also proactively builds new relationships and social capital. Social capital is defined as the connections among individuals (Putnam, 2001), and the trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behaviors that bind us together and make cooperative action possible (Cohen and Prusak, 2001).

For example, primary schools and, more recently, some secondary schools use circles to provide students with opportunities to share their feelings, ideas and experiences in

order to establish relationships and social norms on a non-crisis basis. Businesses and other organizations utilize team-building circles or groups, in which employees are afforded opportunities to get to know each other better, similar to the processes used with students. The IIRP's experience has been that classrooms and workplaces tend to be more productive when they invest in building social capital through the proactive use of restorative practices. Also, when a problem does arise, teachers and managers find that the reaction of students and employees is more positive and cooperative.

When authorities do things *with* people, whether reactively—to deal with crisis, or proactively—in the normal course of school or business, the results are almost always better. This fundamental thesis was evident in a Harvard Business Review article about the concept of "fair process" in organizations (Kim and Mauborgne, 1997). The central idea of fair process is that "...individuals are most likely to trust and cooperate freely with systems—whether they themselves win or lose by those systems—when fair process is observed."

The three principles of fair process are:

- *Engagement*—involving individuals in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account
- *Explanation*—explaining the reasoning behind a decision to everyone who has been involved or who is affected by it
- *Expectation clarity*—making sure that everyone clearly understands a decision and what is expected of them in the future

Fair process applies the restorative *with* domain of the social discipline window to all kinds of organizations, in all kinds of disciplines and professions (O'Connell, 2002; Costello and O'Connell, 2002; Schnell, 2002). The fundamental hypothesis that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in behavior when authorities do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them expands the restorative paradigm far beyond its origins in restorative justice.

(This explanation of restorative practices is adapted from [From Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices: Expanding the Paradigm](#), by Ted Wachtel and Paul McCold, a paper presented at the IIRP's Fifth International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices, August, 2004, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.)

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