SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER IN ORDER TO PROMOTE

DEVELOPMENTAL RESTORATIVE RESPONSES

WITHIN OR BETWEEN SCHOOLS, YOUTH WORK PROJECTS AND YOUTHREACH CENTRES

Co. Donegal VEC
Restorative Practice Project

Derick Wilson, Hugh Campbell
and Tim Chapman
Restorative Practices Programme
University of Ulster

January 2012
THE RESTORATIVE SCHOOL/YOUTHREACH CENTRE/YOUTH WORK PROJECT - A DYNAMIC MODEL

Fig 1: A University of Ulster Restorative Approaches Conceptual Model, Co Donegal VEC. The interlocking cogs of Restorative Practice evidenced from practitioner experience in the Co. Donegal VEC Restorative Practices Schools, Youth Work and Youthreach Programmes, 2011.

The different interlocking cogs reflected for us the different possibilities practitioners see to contribute restoratively by:

1. Promoting Respectful Cultures. We call these a “Culture of Respect”.

2. Promoting more reflective learning cultures between staff, between pupils and staff and between pupils as well as with parents ideally. We call these “Learning Moments’.

3. Promoting specific structures, under the transcendence of the law, that deal with incidents of significant harm in a restorative manner and that impact on the school, club or programme. We called these specifically and structurally, “Restorative Practices”.
Co Donegal VEC Restorative Practices Research
Spring 2012

A number of teaching staff from different schools, Youthreach centres and youth work organisations attended the restorative practices training day in November 2011. They looked at the model outlined above and considered how they could individually and collectively promote activities supportive of restorative practices.

Co. Donegal VEC are now inviting responses from different schools, youth programmes and Youthreach Centres to secure some financial support to underpin a range of new Restorative practice initiatives.

This text outlines some ways in which project proposals could take the Restorative Practices theme forward. Different groups might come together to look at ways in which they could respond to this invitation.

Groups of staff from the different schools, youth work programmes and Youthreach Centres are invited to gather, within their organisations and, possibly, in some inter agency partnerships, to consider the opportunities open to them to promote restorative practices further in 2012. Some detailed opportunities and constraints are itemised in the Appendices and were listed in the interim research report given to Co. Donegal VEC in December 20111.

The headline actions people could take under each area are gathered as follows:

LIMITS AND CONSTRAINTS TO PROMOTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES
The top themes identified as limits or constraints in developing this work were:

- Time
- An absence of an unequivocal Senior Management Support and Drive
- A sense of isolation in developing this practice
- A lack of an organisational culture where people were given positive feedback and affirmation or able to challenge demeaning staff cultures.

It would be possible to develop proposals that attended to some of the specific constraints staff identify in their school, youth work organisation or Youthreach centre.

PROMOTING THE CULTURE OF RESPECT
Respectful cultures are welcoming and inclusive, robust relational spaces where respect is experienced. Such spaces are safe, differences of view can be shared and healing experienced because the relationships are not themselves at risk. In such spaces people grow ease, confidence and trust. Such spaces are central to people growing as fulfilled human beings, open to learning and able to learn with others.

The top themes identified as developments that would support a respectful culture in schools/Youthreach centres/youth work organisations were:

- Actions supportive of relationship based-relational approaches to restorative practices;

• Actions linked to more open and joint working with students in ways that enhanced an understanding of the value of restorative practices in relationships between pupils/young people, pupils/young people and staff, and staff and staff;
• Actions supportive of a whole system approach to restorative practices.

LEARNING MOMENTS - PROMOTING A REFLECTIVE SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE
These are relationships and structures that promote more reflective learning cultures between staff, between pupils/young people and staff and between pupils and students/young people as well as with parents ideally. We called these “Moments of Learning’.

The main developments that would support more reflective learning cultures in schools/centres/youth organisations were:
• Promoting and securing relationships and structures that mandate reflective learning conversations between all;
• Promoting respectful listening to diverse experiences and views;
• “Supporting staff and students engage reflectively in new ways together that restore possibilities to restore understanding and address conflicts between them”
• Supporting staff reflect together on an approach to understanding the need for rules and a discipline code.
• “Engaging parents in thinking through their responsibilities”

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES are specific meetings and structures, under the transcendence of the law, that deal with incidents of significant harm in a restorative manner.

The main developments that would support more reflective learning cultures in schools were grouped the responses under three broad headings:
• Sustained Staff Development-Skill and Confidence Development in Working Restoratively
• Building Student and Young People’s Participation, Understanding and Confidence in Restorative Practices
• Promoting and Motivating young people through Mentoring and Pastoral Support Approaches.
APPENDICES TO CONSULT FOR POTENTIAL RESTORATIVE PRACTICE INITIATIVE THEMES

SOME LIMITS AND CONSTRAINTS IN PROMOTING RESTORATIVE APPROACHES IN SCHOOLS, YOUTH AGENCIES AND YOUTHREACH CENTRES

**TIME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME TO FOLLOW UP WITH STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT ABLE TO GIVE INITIAL START UP TIME TO PROMOTE RP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKING THE TIME TO INTEGRATE THE PRACTICE RATHER THAN SEE IT AS SEPARATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUALS ARE HARD TO GIVE TIME TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVING THE ENERGY TO WORK RESTORATIVELY EVERY DAY?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL ISSUES GET LIMITED TIME IN A WORKING DAY AT SCHOOL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AN ABSENCE OF UNEQUIVOCAL SENIOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT AND DRIVE**

| ABSENCE OF FULL SMT SUPPORT |
| STAFF NOT MOTIVATED TO EXPLORE RP |
| CONSISTENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES NOT IN PLACE |
| SOME STAFF ARE RESISTORS OF CHANGE |
| BEING JUDGED NEGATIVELY BY COLLEAGUES |
| DIFFERENT TEACHER STYLES WORK AGAINST A COMMON APPROACH TO RP-NEED STAFF CONSISTENCY |
| SOME OPPOSE ALL CHANGE |
| WE NEED MORE POSITIVE AFFIRMING OF RP BY ALL STAFF AND SENIOR STAFF WILLING TO PROMOTE IT |
| A BLAME CULTURE EXISTS-FEAR |
| EACH PERSON HAS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ACTIONS |

**ISOLATION**

| ISOLATION OF WORKING ALONE-LACK OF STAFF INTEREST IN RP AS A NORM |
| LACK OF SUPPORT FROM OTHER STAFF-RESENTMENT |
| RP IS NOT THE NORM |
| ABSENCE OF MENTORING |

**CULTURES WHERE POSITIVE FEEDBACK AND AFFIRMATION WAS ABSENT**

| POSITIVE FEEDBACK WITH STUDENTS IS NOT ROUTINE |
| CODES OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AFFIRM SUMMARY JUSTICE NOT RESTORATIVE APPROACHES |
| NO POSITIVE AFFIRMING OF RP BY ALL STAFF AND WILLING TO PROMOTE IT |
| STAFF WERE UNWILLING TO CHALLENGE PEERS REFERENCE ATTITUDES TO THIS RESTORATIVE WORK |
| A BLAME CULTURE EXISTS-FEAR |

**PROMOTING RESPECTFUL CULTURES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Actions supportive of relationship based-relational approaches to restorative practices;

| POSITIVE AFFIRMATION OF STUDENTS DONE AS MORE OF A DAY TO DAY ROUTINE-NOTES, SPEECH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, ENJOYING CLASS TIME |
| LISTEN AND HEAR WHAT IS BEING SAID-BE RESPECTFUL |
| ACKNOWLEDGE EACH PERSON EVERY DAY BY NAME |
| GREETING PEOPLE IN THE CORRIDORS |
| SMILE MORE IN THE WORKPLACE-SAY THANKS MORE |
| PROMOTE SCHOOL COMMUNITY SENSE |
Actions linked to more open and joint working with students in ways that enhanced an understanding of the value of restorative practices in relationships between pupils, pupils and staff, and staff and staff:

- Encourage staff to stand back rather than quickly react to situations.
- Use restorative questioning more.
- All working together—respect is a two-way process—fair.
- Talk more about the theme in a creative manner with students as well as staff.
- Seek out attainment and positive behaviour contributions from all students.
- Understanding background of young people who present challenging behaviours.
- Offer opportunities to pupils as a priority and take the risk.
- Using restorative interventions—behaviour is the problem.
- On going training and support needed.
- Clarify what students are saying—show I understand the gravity of their situation.
- Promote greater involvement with theme in extra curricular activities with staff.
- Distribute RP prompt cards to all staff.
- Circle time.
- Promote an openness to diversity.
- Treat all as I would want my own child treated.
- Being transparent about RP approaches.

Actions supportive of a whole system approach to restorative practices:

- Whole school approaches led by senior management—policy priority.
- Senior staff meet class teachers regularly with their groups to examine the theme of respectful relationships between us.
- State RP as a base of new contract appointments.
- Developing new code of behaviour.
- Place restorative approaches in school prospectus, teacher and pupil diaries.
- Belief in RP and lead by example in staff room.
- Liaise with colleagues about small actions that support RP approaches.
- Articulate the arguments in favour of this approach for a safer, more effective school.
- Develop school/agency cluster of staff promoting RP.
- Establish that the restorative approach is the way we are going to promote.
- Establish a no shouting school culture.
- Establish an RP budget head-staff release.
- Supporting new staff get involved in RP.

PROMOTING MOMENTS OF LEARNING

“Promoting and securing relationships and structures that mandate reflective learning”.

- Time established to encourage reflective learning.
- Staff asked—how did I make those around me feel today?
- Staff meeting agendas—staff training.
- Structured training for the whole management team.
- Promote informal conversational cultures—new relationships in agency.
- Reassure teachers developing this practice that a senior manager is supporting them.
- Pastoral care group.
- Securing high levels of respect and responsibility.
- Recording existing practice.
- Being able to admit and learn from my/our mistakes.

“Promoting respectful listening to diverse experiences and views”.

---

6
POSITIVE WORDS OF AFFIRMATION AND RECOGNITION-PROMOTING ESTEEM, MENTORING
GIVING SPACE FOR PERSON TO REFLECT ON BEHAVIOUR-OTHER SIDES TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED- HOW DID I MAKE THOSE AROUND ME FEEL TODAY?
BE IN THE MOMENT PATIENCE-LISTEN

“Supporting staff and students engage reflectively in new ways together that restore possibilities to restore understanding and address conflicts between them”
STUDENT COUNCIL AS BASE FOR RP UNDERSTANDING
MEDIATION TRAINING
ENABLING EACH PERSON TO BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE
PRACTICE CIRCLE DEVELOPMENT
PROMOTING THE LANGUAGE OF POSSIBILITY

“Promoting Restorative Practices as part of staff reflecting together on an approach to understanding the need for rules and a discipline code”
USE RP IN HANDLING CLASS BULLYING AND IN ANTI BULLYING CAMPAIGNS
RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AS PART OF DISCIPLINE SPECTRUM
WHERE ARE THE LIMITS OF RP AND TRADITIONAL PUNISHMENT APPROACHES?

“Engaging parents in thinking through their responsibilities”
PARENTS ASSOCIATION INTRODUCED TO THEME  2
PARENTAL AFFIRMATION OF CONDUCT  1

There were a number of specific items identified by individuals that are important to note.
TO TEACH WELL AND NOT BE ANGRY WHEN STUDENTS DO NOT APPRECIATE MY EFFORTS
BEING IN-BETWEEN LEADERS AND RESISTORS
DEVELOP YOUTHWORK PRACTICE CENTRED ON RESTORATIVE PRACTICES
CLEARLY IDENTIFY SOME ISSUES THAT ARE NOT RESTORATIVE
USE UU MODEL AS FRAMEWORK WITH COLLEAGUES

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES
YEAR HEAD, MANAGEMENT AND CLASS TEACHER STRUCTURES
BUILDING RESILIENCE IN PUPILS/YOUNG PEOPLE AND WITH STAFF
DEVELOP A CORE GROUP OF STAFF
INITIATE WORK WITH ONE YEAR GROUP AS A BASE TO DEVELOP FROM
RP TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN YOUTH AGENCIES
SUPPORT STAFF DEALING INFORMALLY WITH CONFLICTS- MINI CONFERENCING MINOR INCIDENTS
RESTORATIVE LANGUAGE PROMOTED
USING RESTORATIVE QUESTIONING STYLES DAILY
PASTORAL CARE ENGAGE WITH THE THEME
MORE PRACTICE IN TEAMS NEEDED
CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS PROMOTED
NEW AWARENESS THROUGHOUT SCHOOL WITH POSTERS AND MESSAGES
DEVELOP STRUCTURED RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FOR STAFF CONFIDENCE TO GROW
INTRODUCE THE RESTORATIVE CULTURE FROM DAY 1

OTHER SUGGESTIONS TO CONSIDER

MAKING RESTORATIVE CHANGES
THE LANGUAGE OF RELATIONSHIPS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES THAT DEMEAN OR EXPEL PEOPLE

The places you work in and the relationships you create are important, potentially, for the personal development of both students and staff. Schools that do not exclude pupils; schools that try not to exclude pupils who have committed some harm; youth projects and informal education programmes that offer second chances to young
people are all important places where new choices can be exercised and new ways chosen, especially if the old ways young people and staff have tended to use have been conflictual. Such spaces need to pay attention to at least two aspects:

ATTENDING TO LANGUAGE: The language that dominates engagements and meetings between all in that space and how it is continually looked at in terms of fostering personal development or not;

ATTENDING TO RITUALS: The character of the community you build in the school/centre is central to whether students/young people and staff feel at ease and support one another.

ATTENDING TO THE NATURE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCHOOL

1. A staff group could openly explore together whether there are any words or terms in common use by pupils, staff, managers and parents that undermine the building of a respectful culture?
2. They could then discuss how these words are heard and people’s responses to them?
3. They could then examine what prevents them being challenged?

If there are such words or phrases, they could identify them and then develop a plan of action through which they, as a group, work together to address and change this culture.

State the Nature of the Language you are Choosing to Address

What is your Action Plan?

Narrative: write up what you have done and list what evidence you can bring to measure its impact.

EXAMPLES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ‘BROAD BRUSH WRITE OFF’:</th>
<th>THE ‘DEFICIENCY LABEL’</th>
<th>THE ‘CHARACTER ATTACK’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She / he is a liar</td>
<td>She / he is a slow learner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is a troublemaker</td>
<td>She / he has a record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is racist</td>
<td>She / he has been assessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is bigoted</td>
<td>She / he is ADHD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is ‘perpetual trouble’</td>
<td>She / he is mentally unbalanced, the social worker says</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he never makes an effort</td>
<td>She / he has a dysfunctional family background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is habitually late</td>
<td>She / he is incapable of ever catching up, I am told the school psychologist says</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he always interrupts</td>
<td>She / he is incapable of ever catching up, I am told the school psychologist says</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is not at all interested in learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She / he is promiscuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUILDING COMMUNITY-ATTENDING TO RITUALS

The character of the community people build in a school, youth centre or Youthreach centre is central to whether the young people and staff feel at ease and support one another.

The rituals of welcome, naming, meeting, celebrating-saying sorry, acknowledging, taking responsibility, making new agreements are all important but are often not attended to enough.

As a group explore how the different rituals for class groups, year groups, whole school, staff and parents, members, students could be used to support a more restorative culture.

Regularly look at the progress, if any, that you are making on this task.