

# A preliminary evaluation of restorative practices in New Zealand schools

Ten case studies

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## **Executive Summary**

This report provides a preliminary qualitative evaluation of ten schools in New Zealand that have implemented restorative practices. It was funded by the Ministry of Education and carried out between March and June 2011.

The schools were two primary, one intermediate and seven secondary. Two of the secondary schools were integrated and the rest were state schools. A case study method was used, involving visits to the schools and discussions with a wide range of people, including teachers, students, leaders and the community.

This evaluation report constitutes one element of the study, and a brief handbook of effective approaches the other.

Restorative practices were defined as approaches that replace punishment with a process to fix and resolve problems, and as a result change relationships, foster engagement and create calmer schools with increased academic achievement.

Most of the schools in this study previously had high levels of suspensions and ran assertive models of discipline. Some had students involved in specific high-profile incidents that triggered the need for change. Some of the schools had gained a poor reputation because of their problems and were difficult, sometimes dangerous places. Many were looking for ways to change.

For some, the shift to restorative practices involved a 'revelatory moment', usually after attending a training seminar, and an instant decision to put the practices into effect. However, it is a big step from that kind of moment to implementing a whole school restorative approach. The key to implementation is good leadership.

A variety of leadership models were evident in the schools. In most cases, the principal handed over implementation to, or shared it with, senior staff. Models ranged from one deputy with full responsibility, to small teams of senior and guidance staff, to the whole senior staff being engaged in ongoing restorative work. In some cases the principal became more divorced from the implementation, and we noticed better outcomes when principals remained engaged. One role of the school leader is to articulate the philosophy of change, and this proved quite important to good practice.

There were differences in viewpoint over whether restorative systems could become self-sustaining, but most leaders thought that constant work was needed. The leadership role embraced two separate domains: practical skills and support, and values and beliefs. Both elements needed to be addressed in implementing restorative practices.

The schools had a range of visions and views about what restorative justice meant in the school context. This ranged from those who saw the practices as a set of skills for improving and managing behaviour, to those with a wide vision of a fair and just society. Most were attracted by the shift from punitive to restorative approaches.

Implementation involved a number of factors from planning to new system development, professional development, strategic and policy changes and community education. A variety of different models were evident, with some core differences between schools in relation to the model chosen, whether it was voluntary or compulsory for staff and whether the school aspired to be completely restorative.

A range of models are described in the report. They each contain an element of intervention within the classroom, followed by a hierarchy of other practices to support teachers and deal effectively with the problem. Some schools run a hybrid model where either punishment or restoration may be used, and some put limits on which issues can be dealt with restoratively, with certain serious incidents excluded.

Frequent elements include a classroom 'minichat', support from senior staff, a restorative room or restorative exercise, followed by escalation to a full conference if required. Some models also have part or whole class conferences to resolve specific issues.

Teachers interviewed for this study were glowing in support of restorative practices. The new practices lead to better and calmer classrooms, and more focus on learning. If there are incidents, teachers all follow specific practices and feel supported by senior staff. Hierarchies are reduced and teachers no longer have to shout or get angry with their students. By giving up the power of the top-down approach, they reap the rewards of better relationships. Top quality professional development inspires teachers and provides them with the skills they need to be restorative.

There is some resistance by some teachers to restorative practices. This is most evident in the hybrid schools, where teachers are not required to change their practices. Fewer benefits accrue to the teachers in these schools. The whole-school restorative context provides the most effective structure, because teachers know that all other teachers are using the same processes.

School leaders use a range of methods to engage teachers in restorative practices. There is a need for ongoing professional development to cement and extend the practices so as to improve student learning. At heart, the new approaches change what it is to be a teacher. The rewards of the new system are great, but they are difficult to implement and sustain. Teachers may find their own levels of empathy and relationship-building are enhanced. They may carry with them a new burden of caring for their students.

Support from the boards of trustees is crucial, because of their role in school planning and policy and in the discipline committee. Board members report being strongly supportive of the change, which one called 'intuitive'. This support is not surprising, because most board members are parents and their children benefit from the better relationships within the school.

About half of the schools had put restorative practices as a strategic goal in the charter, and others had placed it in teacher's handbooks and other places. Some of the schools undertook internal reviews, while others looked to ERO and Ministry reporting of outcomes for their indicators of success.

The restorative schools worked with the school community in a range of ways. Some deliberately tried to educate parents and the wider community, while others thought only those who came into contact with the restorative system need to know about it. The level of influence of the schools on local agencies, other schools and the wider community was relatively minor, considering the revolutionary change occurring within the schools themselves.

We interviewed a number of students who had been through restorative processes. Many of them would no longer have been in their schools under prior regimes. The students like restorative approaches but do not find them easy. The older students recognise the extent to which the systems have helped them. A small number worry that the schools are now so laid-back that they are not being pushed to learn. However, achievement figures belie that. Some student stories are reproduced in the report.

All of the schools are calmer places to be. They are settled, smooth, friendly, engaging and focussed on learning. Some are “lovely”. The core reason for this is the good relationships that exist between staff and students. Many descriptions of the schools are included in the report. Often the staff attributed the changes to a range of factors, such as peer mediators, fewer rules, engaging classrooms, no ‘blaming’ and far fewer incidents, especially serious ones.

For those schools which have implemented a whole school model successfully, there is a huge reduction in stand-downs and suspensions. The figures are clear and remarkable. Those using a hybrid system still tend to rely quite heavily on suspensions, and the outcomes are less clear. Reaching and remaining at zero suspensions is quite possible in well-run restorative schools, but not all the schools in this study aspire to that. Incidents in schools decline markedly in restorative systems, and most problems are dealt with increasingly at the lowest level (usually in the classroom). Overall, these schools have reduced their suspension rates by two-thirds.

Bullying is tailor-made for resolution within restorative systems. In restorative practices, bullies are required to account for themselves and for the harm they have caused by their actions. They are often given good support to change. As well, children learn good mediation and dispute resolution approaches in the best restorative schools, and no longer tolerate bullies. A happier, calmer and friendlier school environment repels bullies.

Restorative practices raise school achievement in two ways. The first is by increasing the engagement of students at school, and especially at-risk students. The second is by creating a good context for learning, with quiet and friendly classrooms and good relationships between students and teachers. In some of the schools in this study, the effects have been remarkable.

Perhaps the best way to characterise the relationship between restorative practices and academic achievement is that the improved school environment enhances learning opportunities for all, but that more at-risk students need additional assistance to benefit academically from the improved context.

The conclusion to the report discusses the factors that lead to successful implementation of restorative practices, including a clear philosophy, good leadership supporting values and beliefs as well as systems and resources, professional development, a system that works for all, support for teachers and the implementation leaders, and ongoing commitment to improvement of practice.

The lack of restorative approaches in teacher education is discussed. Only one College of Education offers a course in restorative practices to trainee teachers, which hinders implementation in schools. Finally, the question of the resources needed for effective implementation is discussed.

This is a small, preliminary study. It is a brief sketch to capture the essence of restorative schools and to begin to examine what works most effectively, and the difficulties that some schools face. The potential effects of restorative practices on schools and society are very large, but a more in-depth research project needs to be undertaken, focussing on those critical success factors.

## Introduction

The approach known as restorative practice has been around in the New Zealand schooling system for over a decade. There was a small burst of implementation in around 2000, a bigger initiative mid-decade and renewed interest in the past couple of years. Although a number of school case studies have been written and published, this document constitutes the first project to use comparative case studies to evaluate restorative programmes.

This report evaluates the experiences of 10 schools which have implemented restorative practices. The case studies range from some schools which have been leading change in this field for a number of years, to relative newcomers, including one school which was in only its second term of the new approach.

The study looked at seven secondary schools (five state and two integrated), one intermediate school and two primary schools. The schools were tracked down by word of mouth, ERO reports and through various offices of the Ministry of Education. Each school was visited for up to two days, and in most cases interviews were undertaken with principals, the senior leadership team, the person or group in charge of restorative processes, members of the board, teachers, students and parents. The schools were promised anonymity, and are therefore each known in the report by a general description.

The fieldwork was undertaken between March and May 2011 and the report written in June and revised in September. The aims of this small project were to evaluate the characteristics and effectiveness of the model within schools, and to write a handbook of effective approaches that can be shared with other schools. This document constitutes the evaluation.

There is a reasonably widespread perception that schools that are highly disciplinarian are the 'best' schools. In contrast, restorative schools are seen as 'soft' on discipline and therefore inferior. A couple of factors perpetuate this view. First, few adults as yet have experienced restorative practices in operation in schools, and assume that lifting the punitive hierarchies of school classrooms would lead to institutional chaos. Second, most teacher education courses in New Zealand do not offer restorative practices as an effective model of classroom discipline.

There is therefore a largely unchallenged assumption that when teachers get angry, give detentions or other forms of summary punishment, or seek to get a child away from the classroom or school, these are the only ways of ensuring a good learning environment for the rest. Restorative practices do challenge that view, and this report is largely about alternative ways of looking at the school community. As Blood and Thorsborne (2005 p. 3) note:

...we would like to emphasise that the introduction of restorative practice challenges deeply held beliefs around notions of discipline and authority. A traditional approach to these concepts focuses on the apportioning of blame, establishing which school rule has been violated and making wrongdoers accountable by punishing them. In these more traditional schools, policy, while espousing



philosophies around care and respect, often lists categories of offences and appropriate tariffs to be imposed as sanctions. Most of us grew up with this tradition and have practiced our teaching and behaviour management in ways which reflect these beliefs, despite holding values about people and relationships which are often in conflict with these practices. Taking up restorative practice, then, can challenge us in ways that may cause professional and personal discomfort, even pain.

Thus for parents, teachers or school leaders who have never encountered restorative practices in action, such approaches may be seen as counter-intuitive and weak, or even threatening and uncomfortable. The ten schools in this study that have gone down the restorative road have all had to convince their own staff and their school communities that this can be a highly effective model for dealing with issues such as bullying, class disruption, violence, drug-taking or simply disengagement from school.

One of the problems of the punitive model is that it ends up excluding from education certain people who are particularly in need of good educational opportunities. This group are often poor, or Māori, or living in difficult circumstances. They may have a parent in prison, and be emotionally distraught about that. Whatever the reason, restorative practices may be helpful in strengthening the engagement of this group with school.

### **What are restorative practices?**

We found a number of definitions of restorative practices in the literature, and noted a particular problem: there appears to be no one view of what they are. Views range from restorative practices as a set of tools for dealing with discipline issues, to restorative practices as a tool for transforming social relationships in schools, community and society.

New Zealand schools have very much looked to one person, the Australian Margaret Thorsborne, as the source of advice and training around restorative practices. While there are local trainers, most of the schools in this study still use her to train their staff. One of the problems with definitions is that Thorsborne's own view of what constitutes restorative practices appears to have evolved from a narrow 'conferencing' view a decade ago to a notion that it requires what she has called a culture change.

Thorsborne credits the roots of restorative practices in schools as coming from New Zealand, and then being spread through Australia, the UK, Canada and the USA. In an early paper, she talks about the difficulties for schools in finding an effective strategy for dealing with drug incidents (Thorsborne, 1999):

People who work in school settings will be well acquainted with the scenario of dealing with drug incidents - having to involve the police; dealing with parents who are highly anxious; staff who are polarised about the issue; other students whose activities have been interrupted one way or another; and sometimes the unwelcome attention of the media (n.pn).

In advocating a restorative approach, Thorsborne talks about the process of community conferencing which:

...is a process which brings together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the "offender" and his or her victim(s) along with their families, and appropriate school personnel. The purpose is to explore the harm done to all those affected, decide what needs to be done to repair that harm, and how to minimise the chance of it happening again (ibid).

This is probably how most outsiders see restorative practices – as a community meeting to fix things when there is harm. However such meetings constitute only the apex of a restorative approach. In her later work, she and her colleagues (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, 2006) begins to recognise the broader focus possible through a restorative approach.

It is therefore not surprising that the schools in this study hold a range of views about what restorative practices are. Some don't even like the term. Two of the leading principals in this study call their approach, respectively, restorative *justice* (linked to a social justice view emerging from Catholicism) and 'the kaupapa' (reflecting an embedding within a Māori perspective). In the schools we found RP viewed as a toolkit, or as part of something called a 'Wellbeing Project'. Sometimes it was simply unnamed, with one principal noting that good staff may not be attracted to the school if it is known to have a restorative approach.

The emphasis in some of the early literature on the restorative conference may be quite misleading in practice. Most of the schools in this study focused on restoring at the lowest possible level through personalised interventions. There was significant avoidance of restorative conferences, because they are very time and resource intensive, are emotionally difficult, always require some education of the community and are mostly not necessary. At the bottom level, the phrase: "what's going on with you", is not a social query, but a sharp weapon to comprehend and resolve a problem before it escalates.

Only an outline definition of restorative practices is possible, as it differs so much between schools. The following is a first attempt:

Restorative practice aims to replace punitive models of school and classroom management with restorative ones. The focus is on fixing the problems that arise, preferably as they arise. It requires a change in relationships between all parties. Teachers come to know their students better and help them solve problems. Students learn skills of self-management and improve their engagement with the school. The outcomes of a successful restorative approach are calmer schools, fewer incidents and improved academic achievement.

## Starting out

Most of the case study schools moved to restorative practices as a result of a perception that current ways of dealing with discipline issues were not working. Despite approaches that were said to be “punitive”, “highly structured and punitive” or run by “assertive discipline”, most of these schools had high or very high suspension rates:

Before [2005], 50 to 60 children were suspended each year, and 10 to 12 expelled, mostly for marijuana use. We moved from the process of suspension to one of stand down, and this made the statistics better but the problems were not solved (Principal, rural North Island high school).

The need for change was identified by the teachers - problems included high levels of suspension and behavioural problems (intermediate school).

The major perception among all the schools was that the current systems were not working for the school, the teachers or the students. Those children perceived as most in need of a settled educational experience were those most likely to be frequently punished or suspended. High levels of punishment were not resolving the issues and may have been making them worse. Several of the schools had seen their reputation suffer. The North Island primary school had gained a poor reputation and the new principal was hired in part to turn this around. The North Island integrated school had seen its chapel firebombed, and several other schools had suffered events of violence or community disruption that led to negative publicity in the media.

Two of the schools were approached by the Ministry of Education, who offered assistance in a variety of forms. In one school, local special education staff offered to run an anti-violence programme after a particular high-profile incident, but the staff felt the programme did not fit with the philosophy of the school. Instead of running what was perceived as a ‘negative’ anti-violence programme, they designed and set up a ‘positive’ programme focused around the notion of ‘wellbeing’. Restorative practice became central to that approach. The other school was given a grant to train some of their teachers in restorative practices, and it went straight into whole-school implementation.

The South Island primary school had some major problems of violence and disruption among students, to the extent that senior staff were on continual high alert to support teachers. A number of changes were made over time, which eventually allowed the whole senior management team to go to a restorative training programme, without fear that the teachers would be harmed in its absence. Further improvements followed, with the full introduction of restorative practices.

A number of the schools talked about how the change was driven by a philosophy, or an approach. For one of the integrated schools:

...being Catholic was important. The board always had a philosophy of social justice but we kept on being punitive – why was that?

The second integrated school in this study only commenced their restorative practices programme in 2011. That school also had high stand-downs and suspensions. Getting advice and support from other restorative schools, the other integrated school in this study, and the Edmund Rice Justice group which has recently set up in New Zealand, the school decided to shift to a restorative approach. A number of factors attracted them to the approach. The first was a conscience issue:

...we knew that when we suspended some kids they would go home and get a hiding for being suspended (Guidance Counsellor, North Island integrated school).

For others in the same school the goal was to “cut down on suspensions and move from the view that the teacher is always right”. In fact, that school was interesting because a number of different influences had led to the change, and at the point of the case study (in the second term of the new system) a number of ideas and views were bubbling around the school.

One factor common to many of the schools was a leadership change, either a change of person, or a ‘revelatory’ change in approach by a person in a leadership position. At the North Island primary school, the new principal was appointed with a mandate for change. He found the school in poor heart. This mid-decile school had a poor reputation for student behaviour, a strict system of discipline and a very top-down hierarchical approach that affected both staff and students. As well, the new principal was concerned by some of the staff attitudes towards students. Classroom autonomy was strictly circumscribed by the leadership. He had recently completed a Masters degree that included a paper on restorative practices, and these were introduced as part of a package of changes.

At the provincial North Island secondary school, a new principal was appointed who came from an early restorative school. He introduced restorative practices to ‘eye rolling from most of the staff’. At the time:

“ ...there was a very strong feeling among the staff that restorative practices was a soft option. One staff member said that it just lets them off with the proverbial slap on the wrist with a damp bus ticket”.

In some cases, an existing school leader, who had in the past been wedded to a punitive approach, came to adopt restorative practices. In several cases such changes occurred almost overnight. For two of the leaders, it was attendance at Margaret Thorsborne’s seminars that led to the change:

I was driving home, and I was contacted about a major discipline problem that arose at my school -- a group of students had been caught using alcohol in the town. I made a snap decision to deal with it using restorative practices. And we did, and it was highly successful. Then another group was caught smoking marijuana, and we used the same approach – brought in ALAC counselling and took the children through a restorative process. I decided that this was the way to go (Principal, rural North Island secondary school).

Within weeks that principal had arranged the training of the school staff, and personally led the implementation. For the school community, the change was somewhat bewildering. One staff member recalled:

The principal announced the new scheme to teachers at a guidance meeting, where he stated: 'no-one will be stood down today'.

We were told by the board at this school that the principal had previously been known as very militant, a person seeking higher levels of school discipline, and very assertive. As a result of the restorative practices initiative, he turned around completely. While in general such fervour and zeal may not constitute good leadership, in this particular case, after six years, that school provides a highly successful model of a decile 1 restorative school.

A Deputy Principal at another school had a similar revelatory moment:

I had come home from an introductory restorative practices session and was teaching a PE class, and I saw one boy chasing another across the field. I was about to do my usual 'coach bellow' to the boys and stick them into detention, then I thought, this is a good chance to have a go at a restorative approach. So I called them over and asked what was up, and listened to each of them in turn, and there was a real issue and we resolved it there and then. It blew me away. It caused me to question how I had developed as a person and a teacher. The whole affair was a revelation (integrated South Island secondary school).

Over the following year, that school put its focus first on developing an effective philosophy, and only later on the introduction of whole-school restorative practices.

The driver for change can come from a individual, for instance a principal who lead a voluntary change but was soon supported by some people in senior management, and some of the scale A teachers. It was a case of 'who's interested', rather than 'we're going to do this'.

Morrison et al provide some insight into why such fundamental changes often occur so quickly. In a discussion of the treatment of violence within the school setting, they note (p. 692):

The implication of this is that restorative practices are not just techniques to assist in dealing with discipline issues, but a clean break from the 'normative paradigm' of making the punishment fit the crime. It means, in particular, that restorative approaches cannot sit easily within a traditional framework, and this drives the very rapid progression of such practices from one person's revelatory moment to a whole-school approach.

It is clear that a wide range of factors can spark the crucial decision to move towards restorative practices. Even when the decision is made, that is only the start. It is not likely that a whole staff will share the same revelatory moment, and good change management processes are needed to avoid a chaotic implementation.

## Leadership

Those schools that had been most successful in implementing a whole-school restorative practices approach were also those most like to emphasise high quality leadership. The evidence supports the view that good leadership is absolutely crucial to the successful implementation of restorative practices. In general strong leadership implies at least the following factors:

1. A leader who is liked and admired by the school community, and who sends out clear messages that may include both philosophical elements as well as practical support.
2. The ability to collect and disperse adequate resources (people and financial) to ensure the success of the rollout of restorative practices.
3. A plan for sustainability in terms of both leadership and resources.
4. Good review processes in place.

In the case studies, the research team was often told that the key to effective change was leadership. Out of the ten case study schools, the decision to move to a restorative approach came from the principal in six schools, while in the other four cases the momentum came from one or more people in the senior leadership team. Without the support of the principal and key senior leaders in a school, full implementation could not occur.

In some schools, the principal continued to lead the change through the process, including hands-on work designing the systems. But in most cases, either a Deputy Principal or one or more Deans or team leaders took charge of implementation once the decision had been made. As one school put it:

It is critical to have someone enthusiastic and committed to drive the process, but it is dangerous if it just relies on that one person (Principal, North Island provincial secondary school).

Where that person is the principal, leadership involves bringing others on board to undertake the work needed for the change.

At the North Island primary school, the new principal had studied restorative practices in his Masters degree at university. He led the change personally, and felt that he had “been appointed with a mandate for change”, and saw “an opportunity to develop a more restorative approach with students”. He worked hard to get the staff on board, and at the time of the research visit, two years after implementation, two senior staff members were leading the planning and further development of the approach.

The principal of the South Island integrated school led the change when she was deputy principal. Her role through the process was one of strong leadership, especially in terms of the philosophy, but the new deputy principal, who became strongly committed to the approach, led the specific changes needed.

In one case, a new principal wanted to move to restorative practices, but faced scepticism from his staff. He noted:

At the time I recognised there needed to be:

1. A longer gestation time to introduce restorative practices into the school, and
2. Someone to drive it (provincial North Island secondary school).

When the Deputy Principal position became vacant, a person was appointed who had led the implementation of restorative practices in another school. He had both a passion for the approach and brought a 'working model' into the school. He commented that his successor at his previous school did not have a restorative approach, and many of the things he had put in place there no longer existed. Of his current school, he noted:

As Dean it is a bit different. I have been involved in two hui [restorative conferences in the community]. As Dean I can see how different teachers use the system and it is sometimes inconsistent. Students pick this up and can take advantage of the situation. I'm not sure how to make it consistent across the school, because as I say I do things differently... But one part of the system that really does need to happen is for all referrals to go through the Dean for tracking, and that seems to be happening (provincial North Island secondary school).

This illustrates the kind of hands-on approach that many of the leaders use. In a number of the secondary schools, the Deans play a leading role in ensuring the effective implementation of the programme. The issue of consistency across the school is discussed in the next section on implementation.

A number of the school leaders put a lot of thought into their style of leadership in relation to introducing restorative practices. As noted in the previous chapter, some leaders made fast decisions to shift to a restorative approach, often after attending a seminar programme. The principal of the North Island rural secondary school took a kind of 'visionary' approach, using passion and rhetoric, backed up by good results and professional development, as the impetus to move the school forward.

For the South Island integrated school principal, the focus was on articulating a clear justice-based philosophy and then carrying that through into action. This was an interesting situation. The research team asked whether, as a women principal in a boys' school, her support for restorative practices might be seen as advocacy of a weak response. She said that she had been very aware of this, but that her secret weapon was the Deputy Principal, an equally strong advocate who also happened to be male and the coach of the First Fifteen. He had also previously been seen as a disciplinarian, which also helped. There is no doubt that these two, strongly backed by the rest of the senior team, form a formidable philosophical and practical pair, and this school now advises and supports other schools.

It takes time for a school community to adopt a restorative approach, because it is so different from previous experiences of managing discipline with a school. One school thought that leadership meant that the position had to be constantly defended and enhanced – the approach couldn't just be 'won'. However other participants thought that

the approach could be self-sustaining. Teachers in one school thought their school could not now revert to prior approaches.

A variety of leadership models were evident in the case study schools, and some appeared quite complex. Two separate domains of leadership were easily identified. The first was practical leadership: the provision of models of planning, action, training, support, resources, communication and other features that would provide the material basis for the implementation in schools. These are considered in the next chapter.

The second area was that of values and beliefs. Such factors normally lie partially hidden below the surface in schools, and may be considered as part of the 'private' domain, and therefore not amenable to changes in school policies. Views about human nature, approaches to classroom control and the role of discipline have generally been seen as within that private domain. Within the limits of the law, teachers have been free to discipline as they like within the classroom.

Policies of restorative practices can act as a direct challenge to some of these private beliefs and values, sometimes at quite a deep cultural level. People who have been running discipline-led classrooms for years may find it difficult to change, and indeed may oppose or resist the new policy. All of the schools encountered some resistance of this kind, and how they dealt with it is outlined in the next chapter.

Understanding that there may be problems, some schools tried to work from a leadership model stressing "natural, sequential change", which apparently meant trying not to disrupt normal practice as much as possible, while bringing school staff on board with training and development.

There were also differences reported in the level of commitment to change even among the leadership teams. In the case of the school that was newly introducing restorative practices, the principal expressed doubts to us over the ability to extend restorative practices to 'hard' issues, for example drug offences. In turn the restorative leadership team in the school pointed to the principal's reticence as being a barrier (but not the only one) to implementation.

Committed leadership is crucial to the full implementation of restorative practices in schools. Such leadership can, but does not have to, involve up-front advocacy of a complete change. A variety of other models also work. However, there are some factors that point to the success or otherwise of implementation of the model, and these are considered in the next section.



## Implementation

In analysing the findings from the ten case studies, we learned that a number of things mattered in achieving implementation of the policy. The first was the vision that the leaders had for the model, and how this was articulated. The second was the approach taken to implementation, including training opportunities and encouragement for change. Finally, the specific model chosen has implications for success. These three elements are considered in this section, prior to a consideration of what we have called a whole school approach.

### A vision for restorative practices

There was no single vision for restorative practices articulated by the schools. The initiating factor for many of the schools was training with Margaret Thorsborne, and her own vision for restorative schools appears to have changed over time, as noted in the introduction. Probably the most common word used to describe the vision of restorative practices in the school was 'relationships', as in creating good and positive relationships at all levels of the school:

We wanted to be problem solvers with our students but the punitive approach did not fit that because it involved working 'at' children, not 'with' them. When you punish children they hate you, and that is not conducive to good relationships (South Island primary school).

The North Island primary school made a similar point, but put differently:

The philosophy and its development nationally and internationally is very interesting. The notion of repairing relationships has much merit in schools and in society in general.

The South Island state school leadership team had a variety of views about what restorative practices were:

It's about relationships and repairing the harm when something goes wrong. Teaching people to take responsibility.

It is about instilling a day to day routine. What I found was even though I thought I had good student relationships, the level of respect the children had for me grew to another level. Previously I was a strict disciplinarian.

I didn't understand the power of a well-run restorative process.

The leadership team at the North Island integrated school described their philosophy as follows:

Making 'right' relationships. Taking the journey together. Reconciliation and redemption.

The city secondary school tended towards the pragmatic end of the spectrum, describing restorative practices as “a set of tools”. But it was also described as having a “relational philosophy”, and of being a “fair” school.

One school counsellor noted that he understood restorative practices best by looking at it from a counselling perspective:

Restorative philosophy is about bringing people to understand what they have done and how it affects others, and taking responsibility for that. It gets to the depth where there is likely to be behavioural change. RP is in line with counselling as it is about promoting growth. There are lots of parallels. The philosophy is one of fairness and putting things right. It is about identifying what the problems and issues are... I see RP as fixing up relationships between the victim and the wrong-doer. It is about making the wrong-doer accountable rather than punishing them. This happens through the conference.

The most charismatic and persuasive messages came from those who saw restorative practices as incorporating a philosophy, rather than as merely a set of tools for improving school behaviour. Philosophical elements included:

- A socially just model
- Giving students a voice
- Reducing hierarchies within schools
- A shift from punitive to restorative approaches
- Developing relationships within communities
- A Māori kaupapa

A philosophical base appeared to give restorative programmes a coherence and strength that was missing in some of the tool-based programmes.

### **Approaches taken in implementing change**

While the starting point for change often occurred quite quickly, the planning and development process could take much longer and required significant involvement of board, senior staff, teachers and others. Often the priority was to send as many staff as possible to training, or to bring a trainer into the school. The courses with Margaret Thorsborne were seen as particularly effective, and the research team tried to find out why. One person noted:

She is very good on techniques as well as being inspiring. For example, when a child won't/can't answer the question about 'what happened', you can say "if there was a tape recorder there, what would it have heard? If there was a video camera there, what would it have seen"?

The mix of inspirational commitment to the model and highly practical techniques that could be adopted instantly in the school setting is powerful, and partially explains why these courses run by an Australian are so popular in New Zealand.

Professional development was the core initial action taken by most schools in preparation for initiating a restorative approach. Some had all the staff at PD or seminars, sometimes closing the school and sometimes holding the sessions in the holidays. Some trained their senior leadership team first, while others focused on teachers and teacher aides. Some schools required all their staff to be trained, while for others it was a voluntary option.

The school which had just implemented restorative practices had prepared the previous year, shutting the school two days early and having a seminar for all staff with Margaret Thorsborne. This was seen as very effective. That school also has had good support from Edmund Rice Justice, and took a group of staff and students to a restorative conference in Oamaru in early 2011.

The intermediate school is very committed to Margaret Thorsborne's approach, and is bringing her to the school in August 2011 for whole-school professional development. They are sharing the costs with neighbouring primary and secondary schools. This school began by getting the senior staff on board, and is now extending this out to other staff.

Aside from professional development, all the schools needed to change a range of practices to bring in restorative approaches. Some went very broad, in one case developing a 'well-being project' which encompassed a range of good practices. Some developed new systems of restoration to replace or go alongside punishment models such as detention. Others relied heavily on their senior staff, in a number of cases restructuring their responsibilities to provide restorative support to teachers in classrooms.

### **Models of implementation**

In most schools, the first step in the new models were new approaches in the classroom. Done effectively, small-scale restorative interventions at the classroom level stop problems escalating and calm down situations. The heart of the intervention for many schools is teachers establishing a relationship with a student by drawing them aside and saying something like: "what's going on with you?". One school's information sheet notes:

Teachers and students are encouraged to engage in restorative conversations which focus on restoring any harm done and see incidents as 'teachable moments'.

There are significant advantages in these kind of low-level interventions. They build relationships, and treat the child as a responsible person with a viewpoint that should be shared. In a later chapter of this report, it is demonstrated that restorative interventions have a particular effect in bringing about calm schools. Some teachers were concerned they would spend their whole time taking children out of class for chats, but what happens in practice is that the number of interventions needed declines dramatically from the first day of implementation.

In most of the schools we visited, and most of the time, all classroom-based punishments (e.g. standing outside, name on board and so on) had been removed. They were replaced with a variety of options.

One of the schools in the study was a decile 1 rural school with a large Maori population in an economically disadvantaged small town. The school population has many problems and, prior to the implementation of restorative practices, had enormous problems with both learning and discipline. The whole school moved to a restorative approach. At the centre is the 'minichat', a brief discussion between teacher and student, and the filling out of a 'bluey' (a form) for every incident. At all times, the Deans are available to assist if an incident becomes serious:

Yes, the team is the senior leadership structure and the guidance network, including all the Deans, who have to be restorative, because they all have restorative responsibilities in their job descriptions.

For fifteen minutes each day, from 3.15 to 3.30, the whole team meets in the principal's office to consider issues that have arisen during the day, and ongoing matters. If a particular child has amassed a number of blueys, a course of action is proposed, often involving a Dean or Counsellor talking to the child to find out what is going on. Sometimes the issue may be a stressed teacher issuing a large number of blueys, and a system for supporting him or her is devised. Resources outside of the schools are used, often people in the community with links to the whānau concerned, or members of the school board.

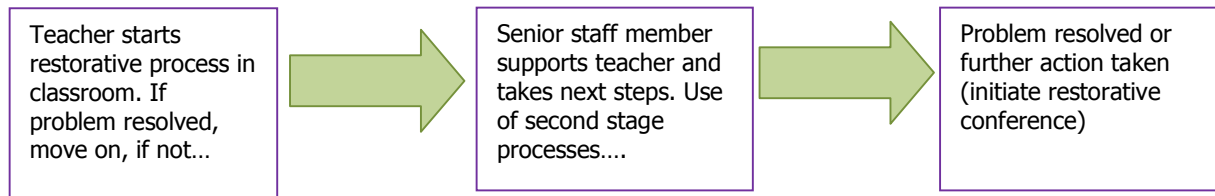
All of this activity is designed to prevent an escalation of problems that may lead eventually to a formal restorative conference. Because the school population has numerous problems, the daily meeting is necessary to keep the system working. But the investment of time and energy pays off in multiple ways, with a lovely, friendly, "laid-back" school, virtually no stand-downs or suspensions and extraordinary learning outcomes for the students (these are discussed later).

Our visit to the school coincided with the annual harvest of the large, illicit, marijuana crop. It was explained to us that drug use was a major problem in the community and in the school. Prior to the restorative approach being introduced, the inevitable result of drug use was suspension. Now, it is restoration. To maintain their place at the school, students must sign up for an in-school course which involves drug education plus frequent urine tests. They are expected to reduce their marijuana use over time down to zero.

We met a group of eight Year 12 and 13 students at the school who had all been through the programme. Under the old regime, none of them would now have been at school. The group we met were actively engaged in learning, drug-free and with bright futures. They told us that the school was so laid-back that they were worried there was not enough pressure to perform at high levels – but the figures show a different story.

The use of Deans as support and back-up for the teachers was a model pursued in about half of the schools. In the two primary schools and the intermediate, senior cluster staff are

used in this role, in a variety of forms. Having senior staff who all have a responsibility to support teachers and make the restorative process work drains resources from other activities, but was a feature noticeable in all the most successful case studies. This successful model, although it varies in content from school to school, looks like this:



There are major advantages in this model for all parties. First, it offers certainty. One of the most striking comments made to us through the whole case study process was a teacher explaining that the restorative process was very liberating because: “we always know what to do in any situation, and the senior staff always support us”. One member of that group of teachers said that when she used to be called in to see the principal, she would worry, but now: “it is always to discuss and resolve an issue, not to lay blame”.

Second, the students understand and, by and large, support the process. While discipline-based processes often provoke anger and resistance by students, restorative processes lead generally to a kind of eye-rolling resignation, with students knowing exactly what is to come, whether it be a minichat or a full conference. It was often said during the case studies that restorative practices require students to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and forcing them to engage with the process promotes emotional intelligence.

Finally, the strong emphasis on low-level interventions reaps its rewards in calm schools and few high-level restorative conferences. The principal of the South Island integrated school noted that the pinnacle of the model was a principal’s full restorative conference. These took a very long time to plan, and involved bringing many parties together. Various options moving forward had to be scoped and agreed to. She, and other school leaders, were always keen to avoid getting to that stage if possible.

Not all the schools deployed senior staff directly to support teachers. The second main variant was the institution of the entity often known as the ‘restorative room’. Some of these were located alongside senior staff as an added variant to the model outlined above, but others were stand-alone entities.

Students got to the restorative room either after a classroom chat, or without a chat taking place first. Two of the schools had no formal or required classroom intervention process, which meant that a visit to the restorative room was the first stage of intervention. For others, it was the second stage after the classroom intervention.

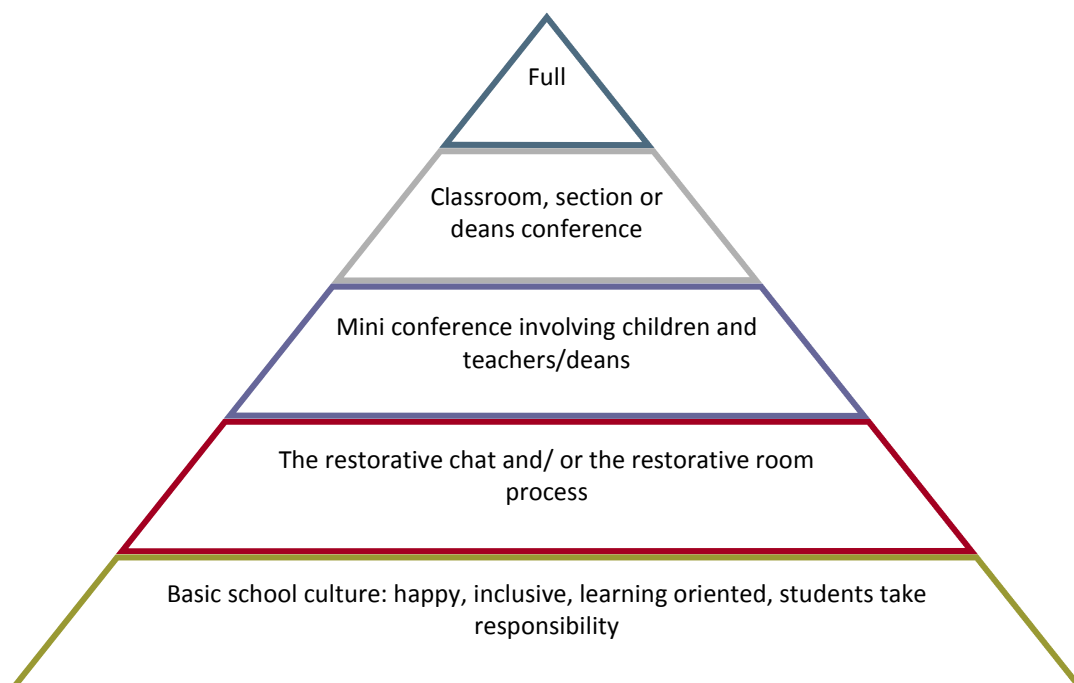
A number of schools adopted a process which was first developed by a high school. It consists of a thinking sheet, where students are required to fill in the blanks to remind them of their rights and responsibilities in the classroom. They are then asked to write down a restorative plan relating to the reason they were in the room, involving features such as:

What I did...  
What I was thinking...  
How it affected others...  
My goal is...  
One thing I will do next time...  
What will help me do this...  
How the teacher could support me to keep to my plan...  
What I need to do to put things right with those affected....

Where the students received good support to resolve issues, in a helpful way, the process felt restorative to us. But in one or two schools it appeared that sending the child to the restorative room was akin to time out plus detention, rather than a properly restorative approach. This was most true in the schools where teachers were not expected to try and resolve problems, and where the restorative room was situated alone, away from resources and supports. One school reinforced the time-out element by allowing teachers to tick a box saying that they did not want the child back in the class in that period.

In particular, in those schools (discussed below) that were running dual restorative/punitive systems, it was hard to tell the difference between one or the other. These schools also gained fewer behavioural and academic benefits from the system.

Most schools had some kind of hierarchical model of interventions that would take place. Below is an adaptation of one such model, showing the range of activities that may take place at various levels of the process:



In Margaret Thorsborne's early work, and in much of the literature on restorative practices (and also in youth justice models), the emphasis is on conferencing as a way to resolve and fix problems. In our case studies, what we mainly found was a range of practices aimed at

avoiding the 'full monty' restorative conference. Those schools which have fully implemented a restorative approach are able to move beyond issues of discipline and punishment, towards consideration of what they want in terms of a positive school culture. Examples include 'withdrawal of withdrawal' and other rule-removal processes, the use of first names, the reduction in hierarchies between students and staff, fostering student leadership and a positive environment that stresses learning.

Schools told us in case studies that staff fears revolved around the loss of power and status, and perhaps the loss of control, and additional workloads. The kind of positive effects recorded in the schools that were fully restorative (and even those which were not – see 'calm schools' below) are usually not envisaged by staff at the start of the process. But, as the next chapter makes clear, there are significant benefits for staff.

### **A whole-school approach**

The need for a whole-school approach is identified in the literature on restorative practices in New Zealand schools. In one study of fifteen schools, it was noted (Buckley & Maxwell, 2007): "The schools we studied found that a complete 'paradigm' shift needed to occur so restorative practices could be seen as a whole school management system" (p. 220).

In the case studies, a variety of practical reasons emerged that necessitated a whole school approach. The first and most obvious one was consistency. Teachers at one school felt strongly that a consistency of approach strengthened their effectiveness:

It only works because we all work at it. If we went to other schools it would be impossible to do it (from interview with teachers, state secondary school).

Second, moving to a restorative approach requires a re-direction of resources from punishment to restoration. For example, the number of school detentions in one school plummeted from daily sessions to Thursday lunchtimes only, while the time required by the Deans in supporting second tier restorative interventions climbed.

Thirdly, there is the question of fairness. How can a school justify dealing with some people or some issues restoratively, while others require punishment? The shift to a restorative approach is confusing for the school community; a partial shift more so.

A whole-school approach requires committed, strong and effective leadership for change, and a full belief in the model. This was evident in over half of the case study schools, but in others there was a dual system in place. As later chapters of this report note, the use of dual systems weakens the positive outcomes from restorative practices. What appears to be lost in a dual system is two things: faith in the model to work effectively, and the certainty that arises from a consistent and well-supported approach. This section discusses the three approaches that we found in the case study schools.

The first partial model embraces restorative approaches at a formal level, but at some stage moves from restorative to punitive. That is, certain things are considered to be outside of the domain of what can be dealt with restoratively. The model looks like this:



Typical comments from principals associated with this model are:

There are some things the school cannot tolerate. For example, a child that sells drugs on the school grounds.

It takes time and resources. I believe that there is space for strong action if it is needed. For example if someone hurts another person they will need to be stood down. Severe actions need suitable punishment.

We were interested in these comments because, in the context of the larger study, they did not make a lot of sense. Why pick on drugs, or violence, as the limit of the model? Both drugs and violence were discussed by some other schools as being amenable to good restorative interventions. Others mentioned law-breaking as an issue that cannot be tolerated, but as the youth justice system is also largely restorative in approach, why not deal restoratively at school?

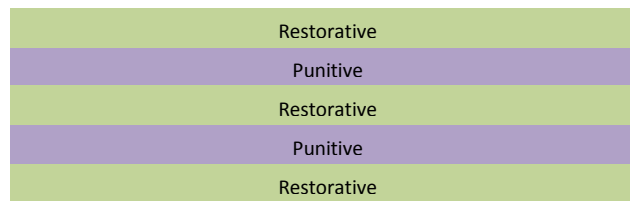
There is a distinct split in opinion between those schools that have committed to a full restorative approach and those which have not. The model shown above allows the school to act restoratively most of the time, and gain the benefits of that, but at some point (and there are no set rules, so the switch is arbitrary) move to a punitive model, usually suspension or exclusion.

All schools, of course, keep the option of removing students, but some do not use that option (see the chapter below on school discipline). However, one primary school noted that it was often asked to take on students with major behavioural problems, probably linked to ADHD or similar diagnoses. The morning of our first visit, the school had just suspended a young girl who had attacked her teacher aide. This girl had only recently come to the school, and the local Ministry office had pledged a full-time teacher aide plus additional support. The extra help did not appear, and the principal judged that it was not safe to allow the child in the school after her violent attack.

Other schools also thought they were used as 'school of last resort' for the most difficult young people. This caused problems where the children had mental or emotional health issues and were unable to demonstrate the cognitive skills needed to benefit from a restorative approach. The inability to be empathetic or to control oneself made engaging in restorative relationships very difficult.



The second model can best be characterised as follows:



In this model, both restorative and punitive approaches are available as responses. Two or three schools appeared to use this approach, and they were the worst-performing schools in the sample. The model had two aspects. First, the system of restorative practices is voluntary, able to be followed, or not, by a particular teacher. The students at one school told us that:

... some teachers feel like they are always for you and some are against you. The minute you get to their class they put your name on the board. One teacher has a desk and chair outside the door and likes you to work out there for half the period.

Some of the school leaders in these cases prefer the use of restorative practices to be voluntary for the teachers:

It's best in a big school not to be too prescriptive, and my leadership style prefers this.

At the point of implementation, five schools went 'cold turkey' and the other five involved a gradual approach. The schools made the following comments:

At first it was not imposed on staff - just the leadership team. How do you come back from a conference and persuade teachers that what they have been doing for 25 years is wrong? You can't do it in a single PD session after school. So we decided to lead by example (South Island primary school).

It was a case of 'who's interested', rather than 'we're going to do this'. I think it will take years to fully implement it (North Island primary).

While teachers have been told it is compulsory, the actual process is much more gentle to avoid dispute (North Island integrated school).

Yes, it is across the whole school but voluntary (North Island city secondary school).

In early 2006, I [*principal*] took a three hour presentation with the teachers, including role-plays and lots of information. At this point it became a whole school initiative (North Island rural secondary school).

Bit by bit, restorative practices is taking over - it incrementally creeps through the official speak as it does through staff consciousness. It becomes business as usual (North Island provincial secondary school).

Yes, we moved fairly quickly to a whole-school level involving planning, including BOT and parents, teachers and students (South Island integrated secondary school).

This is what the school is now - full implementation. We went cold turkey. Took detention off the agenda (North Island secondary school).

It was not a whole school approach but a gradual approach. For example, the "withdrawal of withdrawal" over time (Intermediate school).

These differences raise the question about which approach is best. In terms of behavioural and academic outcomes, the 'cold turkey' schools do better than the others. But that relationship may not be causal. Both relate to the kind of leadership that the schools have, and partially to the underpinning philosophy. For example, schools with a social justice focus would not easily tolerate the dual system that other schools allow. There is also an issue of teacher professionalism here, which will be considered in the next chapter.

## Teachers

As part of the case studies, we interviewed teachers either individually or in groups. We did not speak to any teachers that were opposed to the implementation of restorative practices, but we did collect a wide range of views on the practices from teachers. This section looks first at how teachers became engaged with the restorative project, then looks at the training and professional development they received and finally considers the new roles that the approach provides for teachers in the contemporary classroom.

## Engagement

A requirement of the school leadership is to engage the teachers in wanting to take on a restorative approach. This is generally achieved through a series of professional development initiatives within the school, led either by the school leadership team or an external person. Some examples follow:

First, we introduced the WITS<sup>1</sup> program and some teachers began attending professional development hui in the area of restorative practices. We had discussions about what it means to be restorative, teachers are provided with models such as WITS and restorative conversations brochure. These things need to be ongoing for them to become embedded (North Island primary school).

It can be bewildering for staff to see their professional leadership team suddenly change direction. At an integrated secondary school, the PE teacher, coach of the First Fifteen and known disciplinarian suddenly started advocating a whole new approach to discipline in the school. This caused initial wobbles:

Initially there were resisters – I think around half in favour, ¼ neutral, ¼ resistant. Now 95% of the staff are in favour. There is very little resistance now – only glimmers. Early on there was a serious incident and the staff member demanded “he needs to be out of here”. It was hard! Now, the same teacher might yell “we need a restorative conference quick”. Restorative practices are now widely used to deal with things such as staff disputes as well, which is a far more satisfactory approach and a learning opportunity for all parties (Principal, integrated secondary school).

In that school, around one-third of the teachers are now fully trained in restorative practices. All new teachers and new Deans take part in a three-day workshop. There are frequent staff discussions centred around changes needed to make the system better. For new staff applying to come to the school, restorative practices are mentioned in the advertisement and highlighted in the recruitment package.

Several other schools made a relatively sudden change. In the North Island rural high school, the principal was inspired by attendance at a Margaret Thorsborne session. He basically announced that the school was going restorative, and ran one initial three hour professional development seminar for all staff, backed up by new systems. Teachers told us:

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<sup>1</sup> *Walk away, Ignore, Tell someone about it, Stand up for yourself.* This programme is widely used in primary schools.

The leadership element was very important. It was almost like a bible story. The principal announced the new scheme to us at a guidance meeting, where he stated: "no-one will be stood down today". Probably one in three were sceptical at first.

Subsequently, other PD opportunities have been offered, and frequent discussions have been held throughout with teachers about the system. Staff expertise has been boosted by hiring trained restorative practitioners, and one teacher left (although the cause was the implementation of the related Te Kotahitanga model, not restorative practices). After six years, the teachers thought that it was now self-sustaining (although the principal believed it still had to be worked at constantly).

A new principal faced enormous resistance from staff, who considered restorative practices to be a soft option. However, he was determined to improve the discipline approach within the school:

Prior to this there had been the standard revolving door detention system that was hard to run and the kids treated it as a joke. It was the gathering place for kids who really only came to school to gather. So we abandoned it and focussed on individual teachers and restorative practices (North Island provincial high school).

Some staff continued to resist the initiative, even during restorative training: "One was so out of line that the rest of the staff talked about his behaviour at the session for weeks after."

Since that difficult beginning, most of the staff have begun practicing a restorative approach and there has been a notable change in the school as a result. New staff are hired with a restorative focus. However, one teacher estimates that one in five teachers are still not using this approach.

Another North island secondary school estimates that 85% of staff are happy with the restorative approach. The others have to practice it, but do not have faith in it. This school sends six teachers a year to Margaret Thorsborne sessions, has in-house professional development, has sent a team of teachers to a successful restorative school and works hard to engage teachers. The principal noted that when teachers – or students – get stressed, there can be "a little bit of a reversion".

Another school "has invested enormous resources in culture change" (intermediate school). This was important because there has been a big shift from a very authoritarian approach:

For example, there used to be circles painted on the playground, and children misbehaving at lunchtime would be required to go and stand in those circle.

The senior management team does a fantastic job - they set the mindset and foster the culture change for everyone. They put the change in context, and lay out the necessity for the change in a way everyone can understand. This is much easier than "thou shalt not punish..." (principal).

That school has paid for Margaret Thorsborne to come and do a whole-school restorative training in August, which they believe will make a further difference to the school culture.

Schools engage teachers using a range of methods: philosophical analysis, inspirational leadership, a determination to bring about change, access to professional development opportunities, 'field trips' to successful restorative schools and other approaches. The level and type of engagement has a direct effect on the success of the programme. Once again, the key success factor is leadership and an articulation of restorative practices as a philosophy, not just a set of tools. The amount and level of professional development is also important.

Even fully-restorative schools report small numbers of teachers who resist the model and who decline to engage. There are three kinds of responses that schools make to these:

1. They are still expected to implement the restorative approach even if they disagree with it, as discipline systems have been replaced with restorative ones, or
2. These teachers are supported in their practice but encouraged to engage and up-skill in restorative approaches, or
3. They are left alone to practice a punishment-based model.

In most schools, teacher engagement is not a problem. For some, though, the change in culture and philosophy proves difficult. The whole-school adoption of restorative practices can appear challenging and coercive to some teachers, and there is resistance by some of these to the model. It was noticeable that schools that actively address the resistance appear to be more successful in maintaining a whole school model.

### **Professional development and access to restorative tools**

The aim of school leaders is to extend restorative practices across the whole school, and the key method of doing that is to have all teachers committed to the approach and trained in its dissemination.

One school took a two-pronged approach to its professional development. The first round of professional development in the first year, linked to a wider consultation with parents, Board and the school community, centred around "winning the hearts and minds" of participants. The second round included the skills development aspect. The second round was much easier to implement because it was seen as proceeding from an important philosophy.

This school continues to take a whole school approach to professional development, with different activities in different forums. In the school assembly, for example, they might examine "what it is to be a man and fronting up to relationships". In the health curriculum, the focus might be on anger management, violence prevention and the teaching of mediation skills.

Most of the schools in the study offer a continued mix of in-house and external professional development. Some of the in-house approaches are innovative, such as the 'Breakfast Club' run by one school:

Once a month teachers can come to a breakfast to discuss ways of working using restorative practices, and innovative approaches in the classroom (North Island city secondary school).

That school offers 'lots' of development opportunities, but all of them are voluntary.

Beyond professional development is classroom practice, and even in the best-organised school, teachers need techniques for coping during the working day. Some of the schools have had a little restorative card printed, with processes, options and ideas for teachers to make the system work. One card provides the following process for teachers. This schools did not have a formal 'minichat' process, although it may bring one in. The process for teachers in that school is as follows:

1. Define the problem.
2. How do they feel?
3. What would fix the problem?
4. Reparation.
5. Teacher's restorative reflection...

Some schools are creating multiple resources to support restorative practices:

There is currently a process underway to work with staff and students - a student management scheme, a 'sign-up' contract, student code, sample letters for teachers to parents, a 'hassle log' (for students) ....

One school had cue cards to guide teachers through the classroom processes, but after a while these are not always needed:

I sat in recently when a teacher was having a restorative chat with a student, and although he wasn't using the cue cards he was talking the language.

Other schools also mentioned a cue card approach for the minichat. A number of schools have a system of restorative sheets. At one school, the 'bluey' constitutes both a system for teachers and deans, and a means of monitoring issues within the school. For other schools, similar systems provide a classroom management system:

The blue sheet has a hand on it - stop, think, reflect what they can do to change the situation. It is what students get after two warnings and prior to referral. Students work through it themselves, and then I talk to them (as classroom teacher) and often it is resolved at that stage and doesn't need to be referred.

There were several variants on the blue, orange or green sheet, which appear to have been adopted from one source but are used in many different ways. Some are filled in during

class, while in other schools the students go to a restorative room, where they engage in a process which is more or less restorative (and sometimes appears to be a more punitive process, a mix of time-out and detention). All the teachers we spoke to believed they had enough back-up from the designated persons or group, and no-one called for new or different resources. Indeed, many teachers spoke about the remarkable effects in the classroom of a restorative approach.

### **A new role for teachers**

Restorative practices require teachers to act in a range of different ways in the classroom. The easy bits are the application of new tools to existing situations. This simply requires an amendment to normal practice. But the underlying shift is more complex, because it requires basic changes in philosophy and approach for many teachers. It was noted in earlier chapters that restorative practices are primarily about relationships, which means that teachers must, to be effective, alter the way they relate to students. Changes noted by participants include:

- Teachers must be prepared to give up some of their power, that part which arises from hierarchies between teachers and students;
- Professional distance needs to be reduced;
- Teachers come to care more about their students as people;
- Teachers learn a lot more about their students;
- Teachers must move from an exclusionary mindset to a facilitative one.

These changes are complex and challenging.

Restorative practices engage teachers in new approaches to classroom discipline. Even where staff are supportive of the change, there are always concerns. The major concerns are over whether the new processes will work, and over the need of the teacher to shed some personal power and engage more fully with students over discipline issues.

We don't get as much blaming now, it's more about working through the problem  
(North Island primary school)

In the group of teachers spoken to at one school, issues including their nervousness over having the skills to be restorative, a fear of losing power over the students in the classroom, difficulties in shifting the teaching methodology towards a more collaborative learning approach, and a fear of failure. The younger teachers tended to be better in making these changes.

Teachers in a number of schools comment that the system is relatively simple to operate in the classroom, and also engaging for all parties:

How it is carried out varies. When I am in the classroom it is pretty straightforward. Students get a first warning, then a second one. Usually I take a few moments to talk to them at that point, and try to sort things out before giving out a blue form. Outside it is a bit more difficult because it is hard to remember who is on the first

warning and who is on the second warning. It does work well in the classroom because the blue form makes them think about what they have done, and things can usually be sorted without a referral. It makes them responsible for their actions and not just saying “get out” and they are not sure why things went wrong. I think that one of reasons we have got teacher buy-in is that the system is easy to follow. It also gives the teacher 20 minutes away from the student while they fill in the blue form. Rather than act on the spot, both parties have time out. Another thing is that the teachers know that once a referral is made the problem will be fixed. It makes the Deans much more accountable - they have to act on every referral. I think for students it also provides them with the chance to restore the relationship with the teacher and most students do want that (North Island provincial secondary school).

The issue of empathy is a theme raised by the teachers and the guidance counsellors at a state school. The restorative process leads to teachers understanding a lot more about their students, and as a corollary, learning to care much more about the students. This puts an additional burden of caring onto the pastoral duties of teachers. As they have more at stake in working with the students, so their personal burdens get larger. While it is more satisfying for the teachers to know their students better, there is a price to be paid.

“It only works because we all work at it. If we went to other schools it would be impossible to do it” (teacher, state secondary school).

One teacher noted that the new system took a long time to learn, and it took her ages to “break the habits” of the previous system. But there were huge advantages for her and the students now:

I had already started thinking about restorative practices, in trying to be a reflective practitioner. This always raises the question of: "how does it feel to be you?". I never liked assertive discipline because it required me to be angry all the time with the children I was trying to support. In restorative, children are emancipated and encouraged to think for themselves. It is far preferable that they are controlling themselves rather than being controlled. Restorative links to a child-centred philosophy where students are ideally in charge of their own teaching and behaviour. It makes them much easier to teach.

There are staff in some schools that are “refusers – those who don’t want to acknowledge that their own behaviour contributes to the students’ behaviour. Restorative practice requires teachers to give up some personal power, and some teachers cannot do this” (South Island secondary school).

Some schools are looking beyond the staff-student relationship as the focus of restorative practices, and are interested in bringing such practices to bear in relationships between and with teachers – for example, dealing with employment disputes in a restorative way. Both primary and secondary collective agreements support the notion of low-level solutions to disputes, and at least one of the case study schools is keen to implement such an approach.



## Governance and boards of trustees

In the schools in this study, the boards of trustees were all highly supportive of the move to restorative approaches. In an integrated secondary school, the approach was seen to link strongly to the school's special character as a Catholic school. That linkage was seen to encompass the strong emphasis placed on education in the school community and the basis of Christianity in building relationships within communities.

Probably the key factor in gaining support in that school was acknowledgement of the contradictory position of the school: "the board always had a commitment to social justice but we kept on being punitive – why was that?"

The main reason for board support is the various advantages for the school community in their school being restorative. It is important to remember that members of boards are mainly there because they are parents. One principal noted that parents used to be called into the school and be terrified, now the engagement is always positive and about restoring relationships, not punishing.

Formal training (external or internal) was given to the board in three schools, but in the rest the restorative approach was said to have 'rubbed off' on all the boards. Some get frequent updates on how restorative practices are going, and a number have changed the name of their discipline committee to a restorative committee (but others have not).

A number of board members commented that restorative practices were "intuitive", "fair" or "made sense straight away". With far fewer suspensions and stand-downs in many of the schools, the boards have less to do in discipline terms, but when the occasional full conference is held, members get a chance to see the restorative approach in action.

The following account is a summary of a wide-ranging interview with two members of a board of trustees, where they explain their commitment to the system:

The two board members interviewed were very strong supporters of the programme. Both board members had students at the school before the restorative practices were brought in. In both cases the children left school early, and their parents believe that the children would have thrived under the current regime.

The daughter of one of the board members had a very hard time at the college prior to the instigation of the restorative practices. She switched off school completely, and went to an alternative school, she was a bright girl but couldn't stay at the college. Under the new regime she would have been fine, as the new processes, and especially the minichats, would have shown her that the school cared about her. She herself says she would have done better at the school now.

The other board member interviewed talked about her son who got into a lot of trouble at school. She was very frustrated with the school, even as a board member, because she knew that it wasn't listening to her son's needs; "if they listen to me",

she said “he would have been a totally different kid”. Like the other board member, she believes that her son would have done well under the current regime.

They believe there has been a lot of change. Even the children have changed, listening more and behaving better. They told us a number of stories about the system. One was of a child who was quite violent, and who had a confrontational father. As a result of the restorative process, not only did the student change, and go on to become the head of his house and a leader of sports, but the parents also changed, becoming interested in the child and the school.

The board members talked about living in a community where marijuana use is highly normalised, and extremely widespread, especially at harvest time. The children therefore come to use the drug at an early age, and this is treated as normal. Under the new restorative scheme brought in by the school, children caught with the drug are asked to participate in a programme that includes drug education and random drug testing. They are not expected to stop using the drug immediately, but over time urine samples must show a decline leading to zero. This programme has been highly successful in stamping out drug use among students, and has kept students in the school who would otherwise have been suspended or expelled.

The board members say that the system is working well but not perfectly. The mini-chats only work when students have respect for the teachers, and they mostly do. Parents are much happier now. There are sceptics, but they tend to send their children to other schools (North Island rural secondary school).

The adoption of restorative practices is primarily a management matter, and therefore outside of the scope of the board. In two respects, however, the board must be involved: through the work of the Discipline Committee and in the area of strategic planning and charter development. This is considered below, followed by a brief overview of review processes in place in schools.

### **School charter and strategic development**

The question of whether restorative practices are in the school charter and strategic planning is an important one. It relates to the extent to which such practices are core strategic goals for the school. In six of the schools in this study, restorative practices are part of the school charter:

Yes it's in the school charter, under vision and values, under relationships and strategic goals. The aim is to make it sustainable. We got a strong ERO report in 2007 and again in 2010. The review highlighted the impact of restorative practices (North Island rural secondary school).

In the other four schools, restorative practice is either on its way into the charter, or the charter is deemed to reflect broader values of which restorative practices are a part, or RP reside in the staff manual and other places:

I don't see it as being a label, it is an ethos of caring. I don't label things as restorative, it's just a sense of being.

This may be the case, but where it is missing as a strategic goal, it may be overlooked in the planning and reporting cycle.

### **Review of restorative programmes**

Formal review of restorative practices is fairly sparse in the case study schools. One school stood out in this regard:

There is a regular analysis of behavioural issues, a daily meeting of deans about kids who were removed from class, a term by term analysis of reasons why kids are being stood down, and an annual review of major issues (Principal, North Island rural secondary school).

Two other schools had formal spreadsheet-based or student management review process, which allow them to track the progress of the programme, and network on the background and history of individual students.

One school runs an annual self-review programme for teachers, which is seen to be in line with the philosophy, while others wait for external outcomes such as ERO reviews and suspension and achievement figures.

One school had been through a formal process evaluation, aimed at understand the effectiveness of the programme, and a number of changes had been made subsequently. Since then, there is a weekly review process of problem students and lots of informal discussion within syndicates.

As a result of these patchy processes, there has been no formal review of the effectiveness of restorative processes across schools. This project, in considering 10 case study schools, is the first to evaluate characteristics of effectiveness across schools, but it is only a start. It is clear that a formal review of success factors is needed to test the findings of this study further.

## The school community

Do restorative practices change the relationships between schools, parents and other agencies in the community? Our overall finding was that, with some exceptions, schools did not have a formal engagement process with parents and communities. A few schools engaged in a substantive way with parents, like this one:

We encourage parents to come into the school and work alongside their children and the teachers. More have been coming since the earthquake. Groups of staff actually work on community relationships. We have a yearly IN4M (Inform) conference, short sessions, one on restorative. Parents share stories about the community (South Island primary school).

This school has a policy of drawing teacher aides from among good parents in the community, and we interviewed one of these. As the child she was looking after had recently been suspended for violence, this parent was about to lose her job. Nevertheless, she had a most positive view of the school:

I love this school. It has a good feeling and is part of the community. My children first went to [another school] but we were not impressed - but [this one] was really welcoming. In the classrooms, everyone is much more at ease, the other school was quite noisy (not in nice way), here there are quieter classrooms. Busy noisy! My son has had issues - has a fiery temper - but they just deal with it restoratively. The school has made me a better parent. As my son has got older he just says "Mum, I just want to talk to you". If things aren't fair, he doesn't like it. He'll voice his opinions. It is all about fairness - about having everyone's voice heard and getting to the bottom of the matter. Even the perpetrator - it seems odd but I like the idea - not just punishment but is also expected to fix victims (parent, teacher aide).

Another school sought engagement with parents, largely when things went wrong:

The school brought in a philosophy of 'No child leaves this school with nowhere to go'. The parents saw a shift in the way the school worked with students. A lot of parents had bad education experiences themselves, and we made it easier for them to come to the college and not feel that they were bad parents of bad children (North Island provincial secondary school).

The principal talked about building relationships by extending school processes out onto local marae:

I've had some parents get pretty fiery, but at the end of the process they have ended up with a good outcome. We have had hui at the Marae with parents, grandparents, kaumatua get involved, and have the opportunity to listen and to have their say. It is a fair structure for the victim and the bully and their families to sit down together face to face. Parents are able to talk about their disappointment. It is a really culturally sensitive process. Māori parents feel culturally safe - it is all about showing respect. We have a mihi to welcome, and a karakia, and if both families are Māori

we speak in Māori more as a sign of respect to the families. It is a way of showing them that they are respected and valued.

A number of the schools try to educate through media such as the school newsletter, interviews and other points of contact. These relationships with parents are generally not as close as the schools would like, but they are lower on the priority list.

One area where parents do come into contact with the schools is during the process of a restorative conference. Quite a lot has been noted about this in other parts of this report. Parents tend to be initially wary of the process, but many come to value it highly:

Parents have always been led by the school's example. Under the old system, parents used to come into the school terrified that their children were facing suspension or expulsion. They used to be very angry. Now, the school's interactions with parents are open and honest, and the school is perceived as being open to solutions that don't involve getting rid of the students (North Island rural secondary school).

Schools also reach out to other agencies to support the restorative approach. Six of the schools noted the Police as the agency they liaise with most often. Many of the youth justice teams are very interested in how the restorative approach works in school, as it is utilised a lot for work with young people. The schools get external agencies involved in finding solutions for young people, and in turn support work in the community such as family group conferences. The North Island provincial secondary school held a major local hui in the community around student drug use:

About this time there was also a major restorative hui held at the Marae for 16 students who were all involved in drug and alcohol in demanding incidents at the school. The hui had very good outcomes and the student involved came back to school and most did well in the classroom. Teachers were able to see a change in the behaviour of these students. Success breed success.

One school specifically mentioned special education services as having initiated elements of the programme, and a number of schools work closely with the RTLBs. Indeed, in one secondary school an RTLB acts as the primary co-ordinator of restorative practices.

Several of the schools noted that they struggled to engage agencies in the larger community in the restorative process, even though they would like to. The decile 1 school, in particular, finds that agencies rely on it, not vice versa, for support (see box re community relationships). That school received a four year grant to extend its practice across the local cluster of schools, and had made significant progress

The board members say they see a difference in the children now. The kids are doing better. The restorative practices have improved the reputation of the college. In the early days, there was some flak from the community about keeping their children in the school. But the community has now changed its mind, and sees it as the school standing up for the children. "What we were doing before, led to kids being out on the streets. Now, with Te Kotahitanga and restorative going hand in hand, we have built relationships with the community".

when the programme was closed and funding withdrawn. The school believed that the work was very valuable and had significant implications for local communities in the area. They would like the programme re-instated.

The research team were interested in how restorative schools worked with other schools, and whether their influence spread. The intermediate school is adjacent to both the local primary and secondary schools, and are sharing the costs of on-site Margaret Thorsborne training in August. The school says that the secondary school is substantially restorative as well, and the primary school is moving in that direction.

One of the two primary schools has no specific relationship with other schools, but the other is part of a regional network of restorative practices that is becoming quite strong, and includes the local Ministry of Education and local trainers.

One secondary school is interested in using the Ministry's PB4L<sup>2</sup> framework to work more closely with other schools over the next two years, but has no current relationships. Both integrated schools are part of the Edmund Rice Justice network. The more established restorative school has been working with local feeder schools – primary integrated schools – but has found this a challenge. The process is perceived as too slow and as having few results. However, that school is currently sharing its campus with another integrated school, and was of the view, at the time of interview, that restorative practices would inevitably “rub off”.

The often revolutionary changes made to a school ethos and practice by the introduction of restorative practices does not automatically extend into local families, agencies or other schools. Schools tend to focus their energy on upholding and strengthening their systems and supporting the teachers and students, not on converting the rest of the world.

Having said that, all schools hoped that their approaches would be contagious, as when parents came to a restorative meeting and found a severe problem successfully resolved with everyone satisfied with the outcome. Through boards, parents and professionals who work with the schools, the influence undoubtedly does spread, but not as far as the schools would like.

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<sup>2</sup> Positive Behaviour For Learning

## Student voices

In the following three sections, this report will examine the effect of restorative practices on the school ethos, discipline and academic achievement. All of these beg the question: 'what is the effect of this programme on the students?'. We were able to interview groups of students at most of the case study schools. We left the choice up to the school, but were pleased when most of the students we spoke to had been involved in a restorative conference or with problems that had been restoratively resolved.

Our very first attempt to interview students was a group of eight Year 12 and 13 boys and girls at the decile 1 secondary school. All of them had been through the drug programme and were now free of drugs. Under the old regime of this school, they would essentially have been out on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday (if not before), with their drug problems untreated and with very limited choices. However, our attempts to interview them were somewhat difficult, as it is hard for strangers to come in and want information about such personal issues, and the group was too large for good communication. However, we made the following summary note about the meeting:

The students do know that when there is conflict, that restorative practices is the way things are done. They believe that they and the school have changed a lot. When asked if the school was calm, they stated that it was very laid-back - almost too much. One student was concerned that students were not pushed enough academically, and that they may have done better at a school which was much stricter. However, that same student had admitted that she would not have been in school had it not been for the restorative approach, as one of those caught with drugs on several occasions and a graduate of the anti-drug programme (North Island rural secondary school).

They also told us, as did others, that there were some teachers who were better at being restorative than others, and some teachers they connected with. The issue of good relationships was raised by these students, and by the principal who thought the previous system had a missing link: that the aim was to change behaviour to keep children in the classroom, but the restorative approach was about changing classroom *relationships*. The students' views of teachers were interesting at this school:

The staff are pushovers but they care. The school is like a community, and there is strong peer support. We're responsible for our own behaviour - 100% effort, 100% achievement... relaxed, kicked back, calm.... Some teachers are more understanding than others. What has gone is the concept of 'bad'. As a result our work effort has increased.

A key to the success of these young people (and they are doing well – see chapter on academic achievement) lies first in keeping them in school, and then engaging them in learning. The principal of the North Island provincial secondary school explains:

If we can keep students through to the end of Year 13 and they are happy to be at school, and they are able to have good relations with teachers and other students,

that is a major achievement. These students will leave school with Level 1 and level 2 NCEA, whereas in the past they would have dropped out and been causing chaos in the community.

The counsellor at the South Island secondary school saw that restorative practices meant that “there were many more things that the school can do before we reach the point of suspension”. The use of student contracts is one way of making changes. The large urban secondary school in this study currently has around 30 students on contracts, including at least one ‘major sex offender’.

That school runs a dual system of restorative and punishment, and students notice the differences from one class to another:

Some teachers give you lots of chances but others have you out of class so fast. Restorative means calm down and someone will sort things out. Resolve a situation. Solve your issue. Detentions don’t work. But the restorative sheet feels a bit like a punishment.

We interviewed a group of students from the North Island integrated school who had recently gone to a restorative justice conference with some of their teachers. They came back with strong views about restorative practices:

Restorative practices are about reducing the hierarchy between teachers and students so that it is nearly even. There is a lot of pressure on teachers to get results – they really, really want you to do well. It is about us learning things about ourselves, becoming more responsible for ourselves. You become more aware of other things, too. It’s not very well known by most students yet, and they are sceptical. As seniors, we are creating awareness about it.

This groups zeroed in immediately on the change in power relations that restorative practices enables, which is interesting. But the essential shift - students get more power but they also get more responsibility - is clear. The same shift can be read in the primary school getting children to call the teachers by their first name, and by the children of the decile 1 school talking about responsibility.

Restorative practices promote a range of changes in students. Areas include more empathy (understanding the effect of behaviour on others), taking responsibility, learning new ways of dealing with anger and problems, a “better understanding of their rights as individuals” and learning mediation skills (and the importance of mediation):

We work from a range of angles. For example, the health teacher works on the angle that boys and men need to have good anger management skills to deal with their anger and rage throughout life, and prevent violence. Health programmes target how to deal with feelings and articulate them. This is still a theme at assemblies - fixing it together. What it is to be a man - fronting up to relationships. A whole school message. Students are also trained as mediators (South Island integrated secondary school).



The idea that restorative practices educate the emotional and relational side of students (and possibly staff) came up on numerous occasions during this study. The changes outlined in the next chapter on calm schools were caused by a more mature and effective school community. Those leading change in restorative practices believe that nearly all children can be taught the empathy, self-awareness and responsibility needed to work effectively in a restorative community and in society. Such skills are omitted from punishment-based systems, as they are not necessary. The additional power in restorative approaches is that there is a whole hidden curriculum of what might be called emotional skills training, or developing emotional intelligence. We were only able to see glimmers of this in the current study.

### **Two stories**

We finish this section with two student stories, to show how they view the restorative processes that they have been through.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had two restorative things, one this year and one last year. This year I got into a fight after school just down the road. It was videoed and blue toothed and everyone saw it. Some people still have it on their phones. Mr ... and the cops got involved. I got called into Mr ...s office the next day and the cops were there. I got told that I had to think about my consequences of the fight. She wasn't at school because she was hurt.

We had a whānau hui with parents and caregivers. My dad was there and her sister who is her caregiver. For punishment we had to clean police cars for two weekends and mow lawns four times. She had to mow five lawns. It didn't make any difference having dad at the meeting - it was just the same. He was probably cross in his own way, but he wasn't angry and he didn't say anything. I didn't mind the meeting, because I didn't get charged.

\* \* \* \* \*

Last year I got into a fight after school. I started it and my mates jumped in too. We hit him and then with boots. It got out of control, and when a teacher showed up we scattered. We were both hurt - he was bruised and I broke my hand. The people hanging around named me, and Mr ... came to my house that night. I came in the next day and apologised to [other boy]. In a couple of days there was a meeting with all us boys and our parents. I had to say what I had done and apologise. My parents were saying how disappointed they were and it made me feel real ratshit. I was the one who started it and I got all my friends into trouble too. It was important having the parents there. Some were crying as one of my friend's uncle had got into a fight and killed someone. We could have done that. We didn't realise what we had done was so serious.

I was put on a contract that if I am involved in any more violence the police will take me to court. The meeting was resolved and I apologised and shook hands with him. He has left school now, but I see him around sometimes, and things are OK. What I have learned is that violence is not OK and I have got to walk away, and not bother with things like that.

## **Calm schools**

The overwhelming evidence from this study is that the implementation of restorative practices, whether whole-school, partial or piecemeal, has a remarkably calming effect on the daily life of the school. This effect is noticed by everyone, and occurs regardless of the approach taken. For example, the following are comments from various people in the school that was in only its second term of partial implementation:

- Definitely calmer.
- The school is a lovely place to be.
- This is the most settled start of the year we have had. It is due to a combination of things – the training is still fresh and there have been changes to processes and looking at ways of doing things.
- Never had a smoother start to the school year. A friendlier happier place. There have been fewer detentions too (North Island integrated school).

This perception does not come only from staff. As the section on student voices shows, students also notice the changes in the schools that follow from the introduction of restorative practices.

A core factor is the change in relationships within the school. Restorative practices promote caring, close relationships between students and staff. In the lowest levels of interaction when things go wrong, staff become aware that a student who is unsettled may have a sick parent, a family crisis or problems with friends. In one school, this increased communication was seen to cause “a burden of caring” for the staff, as in getting to know each student, they come to care more.

These better relationships lead to a breakdown of traditional hierarchies based on authoritative relationships. As noted above, this means that staff abandon some of the professional distance and power traditionally held in the classroom. For example, in one of the school case studies, we learned that in most cases the students now call their teachers by their first names. We interviewed one teacher who preferred the more traditional ‘Mrs...’ approach, but not because she disliked restorative practices, simply that as an older person, she felt more comfortable. For the school, the naming of teachers was a non-issue.

The way that the ethos in the schools has changed for all case study schools, regardless of whether some or all of the teachers have adopted the approach, indicates that the model has a powerful effect on school relationships. The various elements of this are considered below.

### **General ethos of the school**

Those interviewed all noticed significant changes in the general ethos of the school. The introduction of restorative practices often brought with it a range of other changes, for example teachers donning ‘peer mediator’ jackets and strolling around playgrounds chatting, or hopping on community bikes (including a rather fierce-looking penny farthing) to get around the wider school grounds during breaks. The overall impact of the changes on

the schools were evident to all participants. Some emphasised the friendliness of the schools, with lots of laughter and happy faces:

Friendly, humorous, relaxed, good relationships, few physical events (Principal, South Island integrated school).

Friendly, calmer, giddy, happy, content. We now focus on the important things (intermediate school).

One large secondary school emphasised the improved safety for students, in talking about: “a safer and a more caring place” (North Island city secondary school). In two cases, interviewees had not really thought about any changes until they were asked about them, and responded as follows:

Over the past two years there has been a change in the school - it has been gradual but is noticeable when you look back. New staff recruited work with restorative practices, and this is one of the recruitment criteria. As staff see success they accept the practice. For example attendance has improved hugely, not simply due to restorative practices, but also a new truancy system where parents are texted if a child fails to turn up to school (North Island provincial secondary school).

Yes I think so. Most definitely a better place (North Island secondary school).

One principal saw some powerful changes were due to a package of measures introduced to make the school a better-run community. This was a school that had previously had a poor reputation and was run along very disciplinary lines, with little opportunity for staff or student innovation. The changes have been effective:

We don't get as much blaming now, it's more about working through the problem. This is the case because of restorative approaches, but also because of improved management practices in general - more staff on duty, better wet day routines, staff are easily identified through high visibility vests. Generally, we are more proactive (North Island primary school).

In one secondary school, the reason for the change in tone was put down to a more relaxed management style by the principal, while the principal noted an improvement as “one by one, the teachers are spreading the word”. Another secondary school put the calmness down to a family atmosphere, seeing the school as “a calmer and more caring place” (North Island urban secondary school).

### **In the classroom**

Most schools interviewed noted changes in the classroom. In one primary school, the changes were best seen when a relief teacher came into a classroom and began adopting traditional disciplinary methods, including ‘naming’ students on the board. The students got angry at these ‘unfair’ practices and the dispute became a little heated. Such disruption is never generally seen in that school, and the incident underlined the difference that the new

system had made to both the ethos of the school and the expectations of the students. Classrooms are better places:

The teachers are better, stricter and calmer. Classes are calmer, more peaceful and more work focussed (North Island urban secondary school).

Calmer and better working relationships (North Island rural secondary school).

Another benefit that is recognised by the community of parents is that their children are in classrooms that are well managed. They might not know about the ins and outs of RP, but they do know that their children's education is not being disrupted in the classroom. Or the playground - things are very calm in the playground (North Island provincial secondary school).

### **Level of punishment**

All schools reported a reduction in incidents, and in particular serious incidents:

Incidents we have are nowhere near as frequent or as serious. There have been no conferences this year or last (South Island primary school).

One school noted a pattern each year of the new Year 9 students coming in and behaving badly, and then learning the ropes and calming down over the year:

Yes, calmer, but there is no reduction in first offenders, just being repeat offenders. However the situation improves each year now while before it didn't (North Island rural secondary school).

Other schools talked about a marked shift to problems being of a more minor nature, due to the calmer environment:

The kind of interventions that are needed now are far less high-level and stressful than in the past - the programme has changed the nature of the school (South Island integrated school).

### **Implication for school rules**

Rules are a form of benchmark in traditional schools: they go far beyond those needed to attend and participate in education, to defining a range of social behaviours that are desirable in school participants. As noted earlier, some of the schools in this study have gone through a process of rule relaxation. This partly has to do with overall behavioural improvements, but also with a view that children should be able to learn self-management skills that remove the necessity for many rules. Whatever the reason (and these are often not articulated), a number of the schools mentioned the gradual removal of both school rules and of disciplinary processes (discussed earlier as the "withdrawal of withdrawal"). One school noted that health and safety elements were able to be relaxed:

There has been a huge decline in disruption - the culture of the school is now very different. The children are allowed to climb trees (intermediate school).

Both of the primary schools recounted a process of a steady reduction in externally-imposed rules, in favour of systems of peer support and playground mediation. For these schools, so much progress had been made in reducing hierarchies and working with the children, that many rules began to seem quite pointless and have been abandoned.

We don't have a lot of rules, and there is no punishment linked to rules. The example is slide walking - it used to be against the rules for children to walk up the slide. But what was the point – the children do it anyway, so the rule was relaxed (South Island primary school).

The gains described in this section are remarkable. Even where relatively poorly or only partially implemented, restorative practices in schools transform the environment, calm everything down, require all children to take responsibility for themselves and become self-directed, foster good behaviour and bring about a reduction in rule-based approaches. The next two sections examine the implications of this for serious punishment and for educational achievement.

## Effects on school discipline

In theory, restorative practices lead to the removal of punishment-based tasks in school. One school, commenting on a change in policy, noted the “withdrawal of withdrawal” as an element in the repertoire of responses available to the school. Most, but not all, of the schools in this study have removed the technologies of punishment – writing of name on board, being sent out, report, detention and so on – with a programmatic technology of restoration based on a single set of goals: name the harm, understand the harm, fix the harm.

From a restorative perspective, traditional school penalties do not fix the harm, but instead perpetuate and continue the alienation of perpetrator, victim or both. Because the bad feelings caused by any incident are not dissipated, but overlaid by punishment, they are seen to simmer under the surface, ready for later eruption. In particular, there is little intelligent learning that takes place in traditional models: it is subjugation that is required, not transformation. The notable changes in the ethos of restorative schools discussed in the section on ‘calm schools’ comes directly from students taking responsibility for their behaviour. At various times in the study this was called ‘emotional intelligence’ or ‘engagement’.

Alongside the improvement in behaviour is a reduction in the number and type of school rules. In particular, rules relating to student behaviour beyond the classroom, or that have little impact on school life, increasingly come under scrutiny. While school uniform rules continue to be enforced, for example, the uniform itself may become more adaptable and suitable, and the school’s response when someone does not have the proper uniform may not be to punish but to fix the problem.

We were given a good example of rule reduction at one school, where a previous ban on riding wheeled vehicles between the road and bike sheds was first non-enforced, and then was removed. The rule was seen as unnecessary. Rules relating to hairstyles and other personal appearance factors may also be rescinded as unimportant.

Reducing the number of school stand-downs and suspensions was the strongest single reason given by schools for adopting restorative practices among case study schools. The case study school that had only introduced restorative practices at the beginning of 2011 has seen a remarkable and instant change:

In the first term of the school year there are usually ten stand-downs and several suspensions. This year there has only been one stand down. This was an irritating and annoying kid from year 11 who did not want to take responsibility for his actions. The BOT discipline committee has had nothing to do yet this year (North Island integrated school).

Yes, we have a graph that shows on the one hand the reduction in suspensions and expulsions, going south very quickly, and an increase in achievements, in particular qualifications (North Island rural secondary school).

From 50-60 stand downs and 20ish suspensions, down to zero last year. But there are issues. We often do not get any assistance because we are seen to deal effectively with all our students, even though the resource cost of doing so is great. We had to suspend a student in 2009 just so that he could get access to an alternative school which had the right services to meet his needs, As well, we are seen as a school that copes with difficult boys well, so we are put under pressure to take students suspended from other schools (South Island integrated secondary school).

Last year we had two stand downs – one of these in first two weeks of the school year. Three or four years ago there were 15-20 stand downs and 2-3 suspensions. It is early 2010 since someone was stood down (Intermediate school).

There was a strong positive relationship observed between the extent of implementation of restorative practices and the number and pattern of school suspensions in the case study schools. The more ‘whole school’ the initiative is, the more marked the reduction in suspensions. This result occurs regardless of the decile rating or other characteristics of the school.

The Ministry of Education figures on the suspension rates of the case study schools between 2008 and 2010 are outlined below in Figure 1.

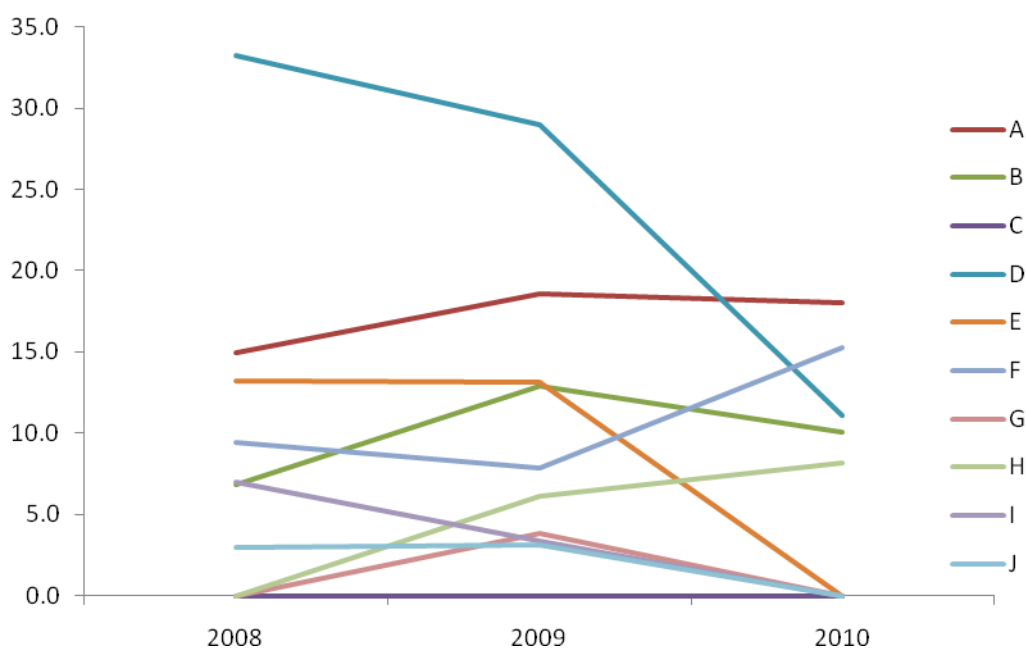


Figure 1. Rate of school suspensions (per 1000 students) 2008-2010, case study schools

The graph shows some interesting patterns. Five schools (C, E, G, I and J) recorded zero suspensions during 2010, and four of the five schools have been below or well-below the mid-decile mean of around 6.8 suspensions per 100,000 population (Ministry of Education, 2009 figures) for three years. These are the five schools that have made the greatest progress in introducing whole-school restorative practices.

A sixth school (D) has seen sky-high suspension rates plummet since the introduction of restorative practices. This school was supported by the Ministry of Education as part of the initiative to reduce suspensions, and after some staff training and workshops, the programme was introduced in early 2009. There was about a 20% reduction in suspensions in that first year, and in 2010 the rate dropped by two-thirds. As a result of this success, the school is now fully restorative, nearly all the staff are now trained, most are 'on board' with the approach and new initiatives are being planned, especially an in-house drug reduction and rehabilitation course.

School B has only introduced restorative practices in 2011, so the figures above relate to before implementation. That school has not needed to call in the board discipline committee yet this year, and is hoping for zero suspensions in 2011.

The other three schools (A, F and H) show an increase in suspensions over the three year period. In the case of school A, this large school considers that a lack of resources is making it difficult to reduce suspensions. However, it was relatively clear that the school was running essentially a dual system of punishment and restorative processes. When first implemented in 2004, the school believed that it was important to "start small and let it grow", in order to bring teachers on board gently. Since then, however, the responsibility for restorative practices has essentially been vested in the student support services.

In this school, both the scheme itself, and related PD, are voluntary activities for teachers. One senior staff member noted that it is easy for schools to fall back into old ways when under stress, and it appears that this is what has happened here. While the school support unit where the restorative programme is located contains staff dedicated and committed to restorative practices, that dedication does not necessarily extend to the classroom. As well, senior management at this school appeared somewhat disengaged from the programme. As a result, despite a range of voluntary initiatives the programme appears to have stalled.

School F has seen its successful restorative programme go backwards as a result of two key staff members leaving the school. The commitment is still clear but the performance has declined. This school is currently talking about a need to 'restart' its restorative programme.

School H has gone from zero suspensions in 2008 to around eight per thousand in 2010. This has been caused by a number of external and internal factors, including taking on a number of very difficult students. On the day that we arrived at the school, a very violent boy, taken on by the school at the behest of the Ministry of Education, had been suspended.

In this school, the senior team are still highly committed to a model of restorative justice, and are currently working on new models to improve the system. However, to an extent this school is still working on a dual model, with the principal noting:

A restorative approach does not mean that there is no punishment and the staff and students need to be kept safe in school.



The Ministry of Education analysed suspension figures for the ten schools and put in the context of changes in all other schools. The results are reported in Table 1 below. Note that an increase in suspensions is recorded as a negative figure.

<b>Suspension Rates Pre- and Post RP Work</b>	Baseline Suspension Rate (Three year ave prior to RP)	RP Suspension Rate Av since implementation	% Reduction in Suspensions	Number of years doing RP work
SI primary	8.3	2.2	74%	5.5
NI primary	3.7	4	-9%	3.5
All NZ Primary Schools	1 (2004-5)	1 (2009-10)	-0.02%	n/a
SI secondary	23	9.4	59%	3.5
NI integrated	10	0	100%	0.5
City secondary	33.7	16.8	50%	8.5
Rural secondary	33	0.4	99%	5.5
Regional secondary	22.3	7.4	67%	3.5
SI integrated	14.3	3.1	78%	4.5
Provincial secondary	28.3	14.7	48%	1.5
All NZ Secondary Schools	14 (2004-5)	14 (2009-10)	0%	n/a
SI Intermediate	4.7	2.9	39%	3.5
All NZ Intermediate Schools	6.5 (2004-5)	7 (2009-10)	-8%	n/a
Average Reduction in Suspensions Across the Ten Schools			60.50%	

Table 1. Reductions in suspension rates, 10 restorative schools. compared to overall changes by school sector.

Other schools have found that staff and student safety is best dealt with by an active and vigilant use of restoration, rather than the application of punishment. However, this school has shown an enormous improvement in its social and learning environment in recent years.

The tendency for restorative schools to be asked by the Ministry of Education to take on difficult children from other schools was evident from some of the interviews. Some of these children thrive in the new environment, but others are seen as too difficult.

Restorative practices require engagement by all parties, and some children have intellectual or emotional issues that make engagement impossible:

We expelled someone last week. She has major behavioural problems and she head-butted and hurt her teacher aide. The Ministry of Education asked us to take her on and offered support, but the support was not forthcoming. This girl - there is no way she could do a conference. But we used to have six children with severe behavioural problems in every classroom - now we have two or three in the whole school (South Island primary school).

There was a clear relationship observed between the level of restorative practice implementation in the case study schools, and outcomes in terms of stand-downs and suspensions. There are two caveats to this finding. The first is that the sample is small and not representative, and the findings cannot be generalised. The second is that other

internal and external factors may cause the differences. However, the findings of this study demonstrate the gains that can be made in keeping children engaged at school, when restorative practices are used.

## **Bullying**

The principal of the South Island integrated school noted that “bullying problems are tailor-made for restorative justice”, and many of the other schools agree:

Bullies need to be held accountable, and they often don't understand how bad they make the victim feel. The restorative conference makes them aware. There are also power issues that can only be effectively resolved at that level. Bullying is complex as perpetrators are often also victims.

As noted in the section on calm schools, the number of incidents reduces dramatically in restorative schools, as a result of students taking responsibility for their own (and often their peers') behaviour. The finding that restorative schools are happier, funnier, more relaxed environments has obvious implications for bullying: students get on better with each other, or at least manage differences in a more effective way:

The school-wide level of bullying is now so low for a decile 4 school. Many higher decile schools have much worse problems (South Island primary school).

The school quoted above stated that a key factor was that students were treated as intelligent, rational beings. Where there are problems, the school always works to get at the heart of the matter. One teacher recounted the story of a “serious” incident where a boy pulled a knife on another boy. It was found, on investigation, that the victim had been hounding and persecuting the other boy for weeks about his mother, who had psychiatric problems and was in and out of hospital. The matter was resolved restoratively.

However, there are still incidents of bullying, many of which are dealt with at low levels, and some of which can lead to full restorative conferences. Some of the schools noted that students who are victims of bullying are now more likely to report incidents, due to increased emotional intelligence, better self-esteem, fewer incidents or because staff are more likely to notice that something is wrong and ask about it.

As noted above, restorative practices involve a hierarchy of responses by the school, from a basic chat to a full restorative conference. When bullying cannot be prevented by low-level interventions, a “full monty” conference may be convened. These are usually under the direct control of the school principal, and involve the victim and perpetrator, their parents, teachers, sometimes community agencies and the principal as chair.

Often cases of recidivist bullying occur as a result of difficult home circumstances, including cases where the parent may be a bully. Such parents often resist the school and the conference process, running the gamut from denial to angry repudiation. But once they have attended the conference their attitude may change markedly. We were told of cases where large, bullying and threatening fathers were reduced to tears on hearing about the

effects of their child's bullying on the victim. A full restorative conference drains resources and is emotionally tough, but is remarkably effective in fixing the harm and healing emotional damage.

Even at the sub-conference level, we were told of "miracles" where an intervention in a bullying matter by a teacher or dean would see previous sworn enemies spotted the next day, arm in arm, crossing the school grounds. It is the general view of the schools that, in the restorative context, bullying is reasonably easy to fix. With school hierarchies diminished and petty rules removed, it is harder for a bullying environment to thrive. This is due to the change in the emotional temperature of schools.

## Raising student achievement

Significant investment has been put into schools in the past decade to raise student achievement, especially for Māori and Pasifika students. A number of the schools in this study are involved in some of these schemes. One school told us they had a contract under the 'Extending High Standards Across Schools' initiative for two years, and was using that to initiate a cluster of restorative schools in the area. However, that funding was withdrawn due to a policy change. The same school is "strongly involved" with Te Kotahitanga, which the principal describes as a "programme that focuses on building relationships with Māori students to improve learning".

This raises the question of how restorative practices can be implemented alongside other programmes to raise achievement. The schools that are doing both together state that a restorative approach comes from the same 'relationship' base as many of the targeted interventions for low achievers. The link is that these approaches all note that engagement, developing relationships and whānaungatanga ("reconnecting, maintaining and extending relationships") (Berryman, MacFarlane, & Cavanagh, 2009), are key features in raising achievement. They are also, of course, key features in restorative approaches.

Berryman et al note that classical restorative approaches have a lot in common with traditional Māori practices. A formal approach or appraisal, with clear rules understood by all parties (this can apply to any part of the restorative process), a process of developing relationships that enhances all parties, and outcomes that strengthen the community are features of both kinds of approaches.

This points to the potential for restorative approaches to engage relationally with alienated students and potentially lead both to improved achievement in itself, and also to the easy fit between restorative practices and specific programmes such as Te Kotahitanga:

The school is strongly involved with Te Kotahitanga, a programme that focuses on building relationships with Māori students to improve learning. There are strong synchronicities between TK and restorative practices. Between the two programmes, the aim is to improve attendance, improve behaviour and raise achievement in the school. The school motto is "100% effort, 100% achievement" (North Island rural secondary school).

The promise of good restorative practices is a more effective school with happier students, parents, board and teachers, more effective learning and better outcomes. It is not an easy option. It takes time, very stable leadership, high emotional intelligence, commitment and goodwill to make it work. But at the end of the rainbow is, to quote one principal, a school that is "friendly, humorous, relaxed, with good relationships and few physical events". And, to quote the students of another, "we are responsible for our own behaviour. The school is calm, relaxed, kicked back...".

At the heart of improved learning is the classroom environment. When asked whether restorative practice is effective in raising student achievement, one principal noted:

Has to be because if classrooms are quiet and calm the children have to be learning. There are good relationships between teachers and students - we will be there for you. Classes are better. Relationships with teachers are stronger. The general tone has improved. Our children are more engaged in their learning (Principal, South Island primary school).

The better classroom context is achieved because “teachers have better management of their classes”, students “are taking better responsibility for their learning” and schools “are working to improve and lead overall achievement”, and keep children at school for longer.

There is also a role for wider school engagement and leadership in raising achievement.

Some parents had low expectations of the school, and of their kids, and we believe that it is important to break that cycle. We try and keep our kids through until the end of year 13. Retention is important, and success is not just in terms of academic qualifications. If we can keep students through to the end of year 13 and they are happy to be at school, and they are able to have good relations with teachers and other students, that is a major achievement. These students will leave school with Level 1 and level 2 NCEA, whereas in the past they would have dropped out and been causing chaos in the community. We are punching above our weight with the number of passes in level 1 and 2 NCEA for a decile four school. Our level of excellence and merit are quite poor though. We have been very effective in bringing up the tail of achievement, but now we need to work to get teachers to strive for excellence. We have been working on establishing relationships and getting away from the culture of crisis management, so the next move is to push teachers to raise scholastic achievement across the board - not just the tail. We have the management in the class - it is now how they use it (North Island provincial state secondary school).

In the box at left, one principal explains the community context, school process and ongoing issues around raising student achievement. In this model, improved engagement and a better classroom context has raised the achievement of the academic “tail” – those who would previously have left school early through disciplinary or other action. The next step, as he sees it, is to raise the achievement of the school as a whole. With manageable classrooms and a good environment, teachers can be encouraged to “strive for excellence”.

That school also noted that “we measure student achievement in many ways, not just academic”. These themes were taken up by another school, which is developing high aspirations for its students:

In the past we have been too relaxed about outcomes but now we are taking on a series of challenges. Our message to all in the school – teachers and learners – is that we are absolutely capable of being the best in country. Our leadership now is about inspiration, reaching for the sky (Principal, South Island integrated school).

From the perspective of the schools, raising achievement has three distinct steps. The first is the changes to the general school environment that make the learning context much calmer, friendlier and better for teachers and learners alike. The second step is improved engagement with school, both through improved attendance and issues being resolved, and finally through initiatives to improve learning outcomes.

One teacher in the South Island primary school talked about strategies to improve student learning. Her comments provide a clue to the link between restorative practices and student achievement. She noted that: “I strongly believe that engagement is the first priority when a person is not achieving at school- NOT literacy and numeracy programmes”.

A trend in the secondary schools is that behaviour in Year 9 tends to be poor, until the effects of the restorative regime kicks in. One school, which has seen behaviour improve dramatically in the two years since implementation, is now working on a project to enhance academic outcomes at Years 9 and 10.

Restorative practices cut down suspensions and exclusions, in some cases almost to zero. But this does not in itself guarantee ongoing engagement with education, even though an improved school environment can be welcoming for students. In one of the schools that rarely suspends students, early leaving is still a problem in a predominantly Māori, decile one setting:

Yes, we have a graph that shows on the one hand the reduction in suspensions and expulsions, going south very quickly, and an increase in achievement, in particular qualifications. The NCEA results at levels two and three have seen a rapid increase. The main challenge facing the school is that 30 children, of which about 29 will be Maori, leave school each year with no qualifications. Apart from the issue of leaving, the gap between Maori and non-Maori students is very narrow (North Island rural secondary school).

An extract follows from a recent (June 2010) ERO report of this school, which paints a glowing picture and brings together many of the themes – leadership, relationships, better outcomes – that are illustrated in this evaluation.

The board works closely with the highly capable and professional principal and senior leadership team who have a clear vision for school direction and development. The principal's strong leadership is helping create a collegial, collaborative and proactive culture where improved outcomes for students are a continuing priority.

On entry into the college, at Year 9, the majority of students are achieving significantly below expected levels in literacy and numeracy. Students make considerable progress during their time at [school]. NCEA results have trended steadily upwards in recent years and now compare favourably with national averages. Māori students achieve at levels well above those of Māori students nationally at all NCEA levels.

ERO observed respectful and trusting relationships between staff and students both inside and outside the classroom. The teacher appraisal process, including regular classroom visits by senior leaders, is contributing effectively to teachers' individual development. Students appreciate that their teachers have high expectations for behaviour and learning and support them in achieving their personal best.

Committed, caring teachers work hard to ensure students have every chance of success. Students' sense of belonging is encouraged by the bicultural perspective and strong links with family, whānau and iwi. Seniors are encouraged to take an active role in mentoring juniors through programmes such as peer support. The restorative culture being established in the college encourages teachers and students to work through issues focusing on solutions. Students' wellbeing and achievement are effectively monitored and supported throughout their time at the College.

The relationship between restorative practices and academic achievement lies in the better environment in schools and classrooms, better engagement by students and improved learning opportunities. These factors together open up the opportunity for better learning outcomes for students, but do not guarantee them. The project provides some evidence (which needs further work) that achievement is enhanced for students in the average range.

But for at risk students, younger secondary students and Māori students, the effect may be weaker. The school quoted above has this year adopted Te Kotahitanga, a learning programme based on Māori relationships, which is seen as highly compatible with a restorative approach, and targets those Māori learners who are leaving early. Other schools looking at raising achievement are also considering new initiatives to sit alongside the restorative approach.

Perhaps the best way to characterise the relationship between restorative practices and academic achievement is that the improved school environment enhances learning opportunities for all, but that more at-risk students need additional assistance to benefit academically from the improved context.

Even where the academic outcomes for individual students are not always enhanced, the gains in emotional intelligence, relationship management and problem-solving described in this report are worthy outcomes. The ERO reports of most case study schools comment on the positive environment created in the school through the restorative approach. One Auckland secondary school was reported to be “leading the secondary sector” in student support services.

The final point to be reiterated is that most of these schools have a range of initiatives aimed at improving student achievement. Most feel “such a pressure” to show improved achievement statistics, and feel that both the measurable, and the unmeasured, outcomes of restorative approaches are important.

## Conclusion

In this conclusion we are going to identify and summarise the factors that have been identified throughout this report as bringing about the success of restorative practices in schools. The first thing to be reiterated is that they are successful, and in some cases stunningly, remarkably so.

### Success factors

The Positive Behaviour For Learning Action Plan 2010-14 (Ministry of Education) sees restorative practices as a key programme and activity, among a range of others. The plan notes that there is a need to review these programmes and document critical success factors, and develop support for consistent implementation and outcomes.

This report is not the answer to those requirements. It should be seen as a small-scale, qualitative preliminary investigation into the effectiveness of restorative practices, not a full evaluation. However, the factors that led to successful implementation, at least at the broadest levels, are very clear, and are summarised in this section. This does not constitute a blueprint for action, but a series of observations about what ten schools have done and their effects.

The philosophy is important. Those schools that have, and articulate, a philosophy around justice, fairness and inclusiveness, reducing inequalities and improving relationships do the best in implementing restorative approaches. Those who see restorative practices as merely a set of tools or a model of conferencing find it hard to make whole-school changes.

The leader(s) must be able to articulate and inspire people with the philosophy, but must also be able to develop good change models, muster the resources needed and work through the inevitable resistance of some teachers. They will promote professional development and organise top-level, time-consuming restorative conferences, and will not waver in their support for the model. Some leaders find this difficult and end up with a sort of hybrid model, a little restoration and a little punishment. While even this is beneficial to the school ethos, the major benefits will not be felt in such approaches.

Professional development that deals with both the philosophical and practical elements of the approach is crucial. It is remarkable how much difference a single person, Margaret Thorsborne, has made to New Zealand schools with her inspirational and engaging seminars. But ongoing professional development is needed, and is expensive, and is sometimes not available.

Effective school systems are crucial. We were very struck by a teacher's comment at the first school we researched, who said: "As a teacher, I always know what to do". If the teachers feel supported and have faith in the system, they will implement restorative practices. When implemented properly, those that are sceptical soon see the benefits in calmer classrooms and better learning. There is a price to be paid by teachers in restorative systems, in that they come to care more about the outcomes for their students, and they



carry that burden of caring with them, especially when something goes wrong. In the best schools, the guidance counsellors reach out to the teachers as well as the students.

We had mixed feelings about restorative rooms. At worst, they appeared to combine the features of a detention room plus time-out – they felt like a punishment, not a restoration. On the other hand, the filling out of the restorative exercise provided both parties with a time out and a structure for thinking and restoring relationships. Where there is a restorative room, it needs to be in a supportive and effective environment.

Restorative practices place burdens on senior and supervising staff. In the best schools, restorative became a large and acknowledged part of the workload of numbers of Deans or cluster leaders. Unless there are people with the skills and time to back up and support the teachers and the processes, then the success of the system will be limited. The decile one school has around nine senior staff in an after-school meeting every single day, in order to deal with the issues. That order of commitment may not be necessary in all schools, but this example shows that appropriate systems must be in place.

We were often told that implementing restorative practices in schools was extremely difficult and demanding. Often the reward was having other schools' difficult children placed in the school. However, the rewards are very great. Restorative schools are nicer places in which to teach and study. They are calmer, funnier, more relaxed and need fewer rules. Hierarchies are reduced and the school feels like a community. Students talk to each other in better and more engaging ways, and bullying falls away as it cannot easily be sustained. The environment for learning markedly improves.

Successful restorative schools do not rest on their laurels. They are always seeking to improve the engagement and performance of their school communities. One of the schools was keen to extend the process to staff, especially is there are employment disputes that might be settled at a low level. Another, who has overseen huge gains in student achievement, wants to target the 30 or so children in his school who still leave as soon as they can. A strong ambition to do better is a success factor for the best schools. Policies and strategic plans are always subject to ongoing review.

The final aspect is the most important. It should not be under-estimated that these schools are keeping, and educating, young people who in other contexts would be suspended, excluded or removed from the school community. These young people are severely at risk of poor outcomes. Restorative practices prevent the downward spiral and turn children around.

### **Teacher education**

It appears that only the University of Waikato offers a voluntary course in restorative practices as part of its teacher education programme. Beginning teachers are generally not learning these skills in their programmes, although some do so through the in-school placements. If these practices are so successful in bringing about some core goals for New Zealand education – especially the engagement of at-risk learners – it is surprising the approach is not covered in all courses. The only options for schools wanting teachers to

learn the classroom skills that underpin the restorative school is to bring in expensive professional development, or to hire a graduate from Waikato that has done the course. The addition of a restorative practices course at each College of Education, for both primary and secondary students, would boost the national implementation of these practices.

### **Resourcing change**

Part of the requirements of the leadership of restorative practices is the provision of enough resources to ensure that the process can work. This is described by Buckley and Maxwell as follows (p.221):

The second change that is necessary to enable the growth of restorative practice is increased support for the programmes and strategies that provide an alternative to exclusionary measures. In part, this means greater funding for restorative programmes. Direct funding is needed for the training of staff and the employment of additional staff who can respond quickly to problems, arrange conferences, mentor students, support parents and follow up on absentees. In addition, schools need better access to effective community non-government organisations and state services that can meet other student and family needs. Such funding and service support would also enable schools to provide a range of restorative tools (such as those earlier discussed) and the training of more staff in restorative practices, as well as enabling them to better engage extra services that would respond to the wider needs of students and families (Buckley & Maxwell, 2007).

There are significant up-front costs in resourcing restorative practices as well as a range of ongoing costs. The main expenditure required is around professional development for teachers, the investment of senior and support staff time and the systems and structures to support the approach.

The cost of implementation falls somewhat over time. First, behaviour improves so there is less need for discipline at all levels. Second, an increasing proportion of problems are dealt with at the lowest levels (which are also the least resource intensive). Third, new staff may tend to be better educated in restorative approaches and require less professional development.

### **More research needed**

This is a small, qualitative study of ten schools. It has provided rich material and information to assist in understanding restorative practices in these schools, but does not and cannot provide an adequate basis for policy or resource development nationally. A larger study incorporating qualitative and quantitative elements, and with a focus on barriers to implementation – strengths and weaknesses – is needed. The evidence so far is that a further shift to restorative approaches will benefit at-risk students, so this approach needs to be pursued.

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