

Case studies of good practice

Rozelle Public School

Case study title <ul style="list-style-type: none">Title of your case study.	<i>Restorative Practices at Rozelle Public School - A way of Being and Learning Together</i>
Background information <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe your school context. For example 'We are a small primary school of 90 students in a coastal farming community'.	Rozelle is an inner city primary school in Sydney. The school has 310 students comprising a diverse population of 4% Aboriginal and 29% with a language background other than English. Families are from differing socio-economic backgrounds and the community is dynamic and involved.
Aims and rationale <ul style="list-style-type: none">Details of the issue to be addressed. For example, what was happening? i.e. increasing tension as some groups felt their beliefs weren't being respected.	<p>Rozelle had a Student Welfare Policy based more on rewards and punishments rather than acknowledgement and accountability for choices made. Students were very competitive but needed to develop a real sense of cooperation on a whole school basis. Relationship and trust building was needed between all stakeholders.</p> <p>Mostly it was the elite students who seemed to enter competitions and the students were reluctant to take risks with their learning. There needed to be an empowerment of staff, parents and students alike.</p> <p>The community was very involved but some groups needed to be encouraged into the school more as an integral part of a valued and inclusive learning community.</p>

Getting started...

- How did you decide to address the issue?
For example, through improving relationships between cultural groups, developing a more inclusive curriculum.
- What research basis/other programs did you use as a basis for your initiative?

By taking all staff, parents and students through a reflective process of what we did well, what we could do differently (we reflected on if we were happy with how we challenged children around inappropriate behaviour and commitment to learning) and what we would find to be the hardest challenges, we hoped to achieve the following via our visioning process.

- To promote a feeling of well-being in our school through a whole school approach to the building of respectful relationships based on accountability and repairing harm rather than focussing on blame and punishments.
- To promote values and empower individuals through a restorative practices philosophy which has at its core doing things 'with' rather than 'to' or 'for' students as the foundation for quality teaching and learning and other proactive programs.

Open-ended questions led to accountability and personal empowerment in both the social/emotional and academic areas. Questions focused on: What happened? What harm has resulted? and What needs to happen to make things right?

To promote an inclusive, resilient school and classroom environment characterised by fair and firm processes, accountability, critical thinking and reflection where all stakeholders had leadership opportunities and an acknowledgement of their strengths leading to engagement, connectedness, a sense of belonging, enlightened learning and building of social capital.

The practice draws on the research of:

- Professor John Braithwaite, Brenda Morrison, Donald Nathanson and Terry O'Connell & Ted Wachtel on restorative practices and empowerment of the individual
- Dr Christine Richmond on language, Dr Helen McGrath, Martin Seligman and Andrew Fuller on promoting optimism, well being and resilience
- Alfi Kohn and Louise Porter on strategies that promote intrinsic motivation.
- Lingard, Hayes, Christie & Mills on the *Quality Teaching Framework: Teachers & Schools Making a Difference, Productive Pedagogies and Productive Performance*
- Michael Fullan on *Leading in a Culture of Change*

<p>How we went about it...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has been involved? For example, in planning strategies and applying them. • What actions have been taken to address the issue? • How long has it taken? For example, timelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders (parents, staff and students) were trained in the philosophy underpinning restorative practices. It is a paradigm shift not another 'tool in the toolbox'. Working together with a cluster of schools enhanced collaboration and support. A positive change in culture has occurred over the past 4 1/2 years. • A whole school approach to the implementation of the <i>Bounce Back</i> program by Helen McGrath has enhanced our restorative philosophy. Our school was involved in a cluster project with four other schools to work on an action research project looking at the 10 aspects of the program: <i>Core Values, Elasticity, People Bouncing Back, Courage, Looking on the Bright Side, Emotions, Relationships, Humour, Bullying and Being Successful</i>. • Other inclusive circle programs in which whole school training has occurred include <i>Help Increase Peace (HIP)</i>, <i>A Partnership Encouraging Effective Learning (APEEL)</i> social skills program for students, teachers and parents K-2 and <i>Seasons for Growth</i> for children suffering grief and/or loss. • Promotion of the school's philosophy through distributed leadership opportunities for all. This has included peer-based workshops with older students co-facilitating groups in buddies and restorative practices such as corridor, playground & classroom conferences. Newsletters, posters and other visuals displayed around the school ensure the foundations of this philosophy are continually reinforced.
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What we are learning...

- What has changed?
For example, outcomes for students, staff and community members.
- Comment on any related issues.
- Refer to evidence where possible.

Our practice has been evaluated during the cycle of school improvement and includes qualitative and quantitative data.

- Parents and students have indicated a positive response to the program through surveys, questionnaires and focus groups and attendance at school functions. Pre and post data indicate a change in culture has occurred. A respectful, listening climate has been cultivated. As a result personal accountability for actions has occurred and students have been empowered to 'make things right' both academically and socially.
- Student achievement has increased with the value added component in 2005 BST results showing at 9.0 compared with state and regional growth of 6.5.
- Student suspension rates were higher at the start of the program but have now dropped dramatically to nil in the past 3 terms.
- Staff and students are empowered to repair and rebuild relationships at their level negating the need for children to be referred to the office and executive.
- Mistakes are viewed as opportunities for insight and there is a real 'can do' attitude.
- Data on the student engagement matrix indicate a more motivated and engaged student population.
- Student attendance rates are excellent and have particularly improved amongst our Indigenous students.
- A higher participation rate of students in events such as swimming carnivals, where previously only the 'elite' entered.
- Staff feel more confident, valued and supported as they see the positive results of this collegial approach to teaching and learning and relationship-building through circle time and firm and fair processes.
- Wonderful attendance rates by parents and friends at assemblies and other school events indicate a community that feels included and valued.

Where to from here...

- How does your school community plan to maintain/improve the present situation?
- Are you going to use the solution in any other area?
- Would you do anything differently next time?
- Any suggestions for other communities?

To continue the journey in restorative practices as a way of being and learning together. Our school has been awarded the Director-General's Award for Achievement in Being & Learning Together in 2006.

- This belief extends to a restorative way of teaching which encompasses Philosophy with Kids, Multiple Intelligences, Blooms, De Bonos Six Thinking Hats and the Habits of Mind. Using Socratic questioning techniques it's possible to lead students from the past to the present and in to the future in the academic arena as well as the social, emotional arena. Just as we ask the questions in the welfare area we would ask in Mathematics 'What were you thinking when you solved the problem that way?' What are you thinking now?' What will you do next time you encounter that sort of algorithm, problem?
- By continuing to build on peoples' strengths the building of social capital occurs and capacity for a community to make responsible decisions regarding their actions and learning occurs. This capacity is enhanced through our intensive Transition Program in which parents participate in workshops on aspects of school life including our restorative philosophy.
- Continuing our practice of student-led 3 way conferences involving parents, teachers and students. Sitting in a circle the children outline areas for celebration and those requiring further development in both the academic and social areas.

Having been awarded a Churchill Fellowship the Principal has had the opportunity to visit schools around the world.

She presented at the International Conference on *Restorative Practices: Building Restorative Communities* in Pennsylvania and met experts in this field. It has been her experience that in schools where this foundation has been embedded as a way of being and learning and not just as an intervention for difficult students or problematic situations, there has been an increase in student achievement levels although there are other variables to consider for this increase as well.