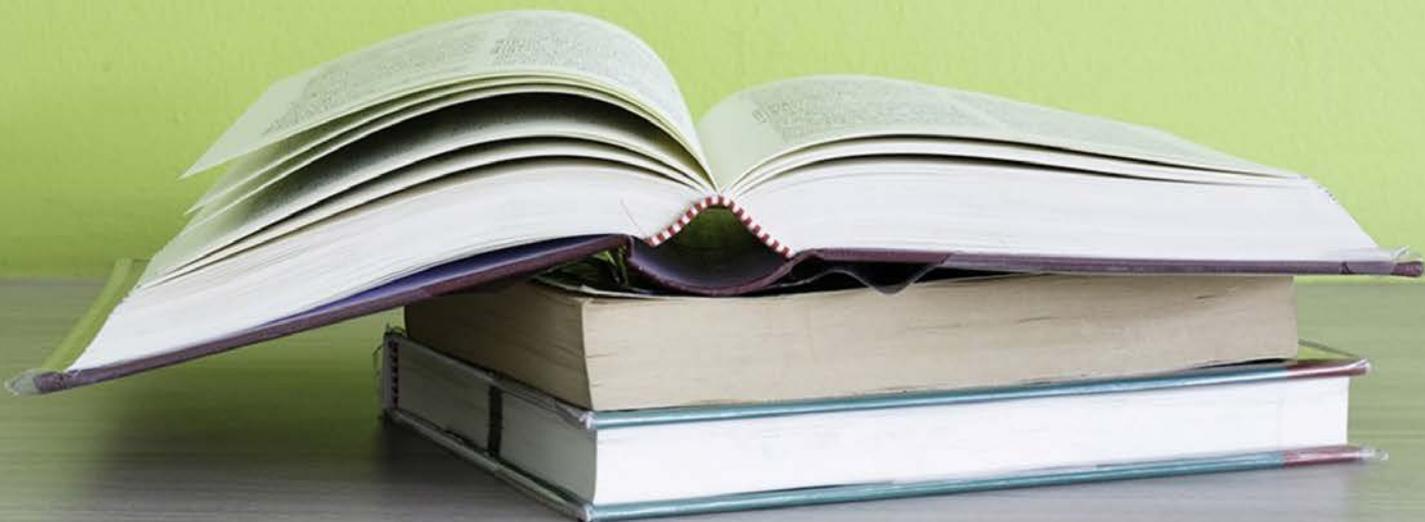
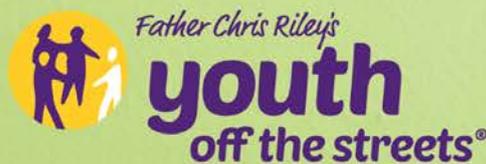


School Based Research Project

Final Report

Restorative practices and
student learning outcomes

Youth Off the Streets



School Based Research Project

Final Report

Key College



‘How does the use of Restorative Practice in Youth Off The Streets school settings improve student outcomes?’

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Youth Off The Streets

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Executive Summary

This report details the process and findings of a school-based investigation into the implementation of Restorative Practice (RP) in Youth Off The Streets (YOTS) school settings and the impact on student outcomes. YOTS provides an alternative school for young people who have high needs, are socially marginalised, have low literacy and numeracy skills, low employability skills and have difficulty remaining in a mainstream high school. YOTS schools provide a safe environment that fosters learning in an atmosphere that enables students to work toward reaching their full potential.

The first section of the literature review establishes that RP theory is grounded in building social capital, a network of relationships that can effectively respond to wrong-doing and restore social order. RP moves away from punitive practices and isolation as punishment and towards inclusion. RP creates a safe space where individuals can take responsibility and ownership of their actions and is characterized by doing things with people rather than to them, or for them.

The research utilised numerous methods combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection. Surveys were used to ascertain student experiences of conflict resolution and their ideas surrounding best practice. Parents were surveyed to determine their awareness of RP and whether there were noticeable changes in their child's manner of dealing with conflict. Staff members were surveyed to determine their professional development, confidence in using RP strategies and desired future directions for training and development. Student interviews illuminated an overall picture of RP as implemented and embedded at YOTS schools. School staff were actively involved in the research project through school site specific action research projects. Staff at each site developed inquiry questions based on perceived needs of their students. Staff planned methods of data collection, planned interventions and conducted two iterations. An external audit was undertaken using The Restorative School audit tool developed by Thorsborne and Blood (2013). School staff participated in focus groups at the end of the project to establish future directions for their practice.

The research revealed a number of factors contributing to the effectiveness of RP in YOTS schools. Among the key strengths was the high degree of professional interest in RP shown by staff, along with their commitment to engaging in continued professional development. Such commitment was indicative of YOTS staff's experiences of the utility and impact of an RP approach in their everyday work with students. Another key factor identified was that YOTS schools employ a continuum of practice that is flexible, reflective of a sense of staff agency and choice in how best to meet the needs of students. Restorative strategies were consistently utilised across school settings, in particular Affective Questions, Learning Circles and Restorative Mediation. Use of such strategies are underpinned by teachers' energy focused on developing students' social and emotional competence and positive behaviours so that students are supported in developing the capacity to engage effectively in restorative problem-solving.

The research further revealed some avenues for future strategic planning in YOTS schools and across the organisation as a whole. Key implications emerged from staff focus groups and for YOTS staff these include: the need to explicitly teach RP to students; to include information about RP in the induction of volunteers; to ensure that Youth Off the Streets policies, procedures and processes at an organisational level integrate restorative language and processes, and to increase the visual displays of the restorative conversation and language throughout the school spaces.

This research project has enabled YOTS staff to systematically gather data in order to better understand how the RP philosophy effectively underpins a range of strategies that enable them to promote students' attainment of a wide range of outcomes. The research project has highlighted the need for YOTS to address gaps in RP implementation across the school sites as well as informing future directions for the schools. Beyond the YOTS school contexts, the project and its findings add to a body of education research that frames RP as an embedded philosophy, not simply as tools in the tool box of behaviour management. The research potentially has relevance for other schools and organisations that seek to productively engage vulnerable young people and their families.

Literature Review

The research project is located within current literature that investigates how, when and why schools implement RP. Whilst there is a dearth of literature focussed on Australian schools, the research draws on international research that outlines what constitutes effective implementation of RP in schools for achieving academic and social outcomes that benefit students, staff and communities. Beginning with an overview of the current context of Australian education values and directions, we clarify the differences between Restorative Practice (RP) as a philosophy and practice to build community and Restorative Justice (RJ) as a reactionary procedure to re-establish community. The research considers the evolution of RP in Australian schools, characteristics of effective implementation and suggests that in some cases the implementation of RP establishes a relational pedagogy that provides equity and social justice.

Overview of the Educational Climate in New South Wales

The vision for Australian education is articulated every ten years by State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers. Currently, the Melbourne Declaration (2008) outlines the commitment to ensure high-quality schooling for all young Australians. The Declaration states at the outset that education plays a central role in building a democratic, equitable and just society. The Declaration underscores two goals:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- successful learners
- confident and creative individuals
- active and informed citizens. (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, (MCEETYA) 2008, p. 7)

The first goal of equity and excellence embodies the expectation of inclusion and social justice as a fundamental prerequisite. For many students, this is not their experience (McGregor, Mills, teRiele & Hayes, 2015; Mills, McGregor, Baroutsis, teRiele & Hayes, 2016). For many schools, the traditional model of pedagogy, curriculum delivery and behaviour management has been unable to provide the support necessary to student outliers: students who struggle to achieve the learning outcomes, the social capital or assimilate into the dominant culture of the school – students who deviate from the school norm (McGregor et al, 2015).

Restorative Justice or Restorative Practice

The distinctions between Restorative Justice (RJ) and Restorative Practice (RP) lie in the capacity to build and sustain community. Terminology used in RJ and RP have similar connotations and differences in practice. RJ is differentiated from the conventional criminal justice system in the following ways: (1) rather than crime being seen as a violation of law and committed against the state, it is perceived as a conflict between individuals which has resulted in harm to victims and communities (Latimer & Kleinknecht, 2000); (2) where the traditional approach seeks to determine guilt and impose punishment, RJ is more concerned with repairing the harm caused by offending and restoring relationships (Strang, 2001); and (3) RJ processes provide an opportunity for ‘active participation by victims, offenders and their communities’ (van Ness, 1999, cited in Strang, 2001, p.3). RJ is accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders and often leads to transformation of people, relationships and communities.

Restorative Practice has its origins in RJ; however RP is in the first instance proactive in developing community and building relationships. Restorative Practice emphasises proactive informal practices to build social capital prior to an offence though it continues to follow RJ in managing conflict by repairing harm and restoring relationships (<https://www.iirp.edu/>).

Restorative Practice: Theoretical Underpinnings

Terry O'Connell pioneered the establishment of conferencing in Australia as a tool to use in restoring relationships and repairing harm in offences that were better kept out of juvenile justice courts. O'Connell orchestrated an emotional encounter complete with a script devised for the facilitator adopted from conference training he had undertaken (Watchel, O'Connell & Watchel, 2010). In conferencing, there is a progression from negative affect to positive affect. Tomkins' affective resonance (1962) begins with negative affect and as the conference proceeds and participants relate their experiences and feelings, there is a noticeable shift to positive emotions (Nathanson, 1998; Tomkins, 1962; Watchel, O'Connell & Watchel, 2010). Moore (2004) notes a strikingly similar emotional dynamic occurs in conferences, irrespective of the nature of the case, the numbers present, or their cultural backgrounds (Moore, Forsythe & O'Connell, 1995).

Moore (2004) cites Braithwaite's (1989) *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* as the philosophical basis for reflections in RP and conferencing. Braithwaite's theory posits that the more people have to lose from involvement in crime, the more likely they are to desist from criminal activity placing emphasis on psycho-social factors such as a sense of personal control and the presence of social support. If individuals feel they have some sense of dignity, a sense of hope for the future and significant positive relationships, then they have a great deal to lose from behaviours that damage those relationships (Moore, 2004). There were also positive claims as to the psychological benefits about the nature of processes, or "ceremonies" and the circle in particular has a long and colourful history associated with healing (Krippner, 1997).

Evolution of Restorative Practice in Australia

Restorative Practice is an evolution of RJ. One of the central characteristics of RJ is conferencing and it is this practice that sparked an alternative model in child welfare and youth justice in Australia (O'Connell & Moore, 1992). Regular formal use of conferencing began in New South Wales in 1995 with Moore and Transformative Justice Australia (Moore & O'Connell, 1994) and was formally introduced with the Young Offenders Act in 1998. Hayes, Daly and Marchetti (2006) report findings where youth offenders who were observed to be remorseful and whose

outcomes were reached by consensus were less likely to reoffend. Conferencing differs from other similar restoring traditions such as victim-offender reconciliation and circle sentencing in its definition of community and the collective agreement (Larsen, 2014). Conferencing emphasises the community of family and friends and colleagues rather than state officials and the agreement is just that, an agreement not a sentence. Further differences arise in which relationships the conference is designed to repair. Conferencing is designed for all participants and not just the offender or the victim with the focus on interpersonal conflict (Moore, 2004; Watchel et al, 2010). The reparation of relationship is reflected in the questions asked in the conference: *What has happened? How have people been affected? What do we do now to make things right?* The direction staged through the questions is designed to transform conflict into cooperation.

In Australia, two schools in particular have documented some successes, processes and outcomes. For O’Callaghan (2005) a framework that addressed student behaviours and engagement in learning was the impetus for introducing RP. Doppler (2006), a Churchill Fellowship Trust recipient, articulated the change in culture that accompanied the implementation. Doppler’s investigations concentrated on “investigating student achievement in schools around the world where restorative practices have been embedded as a way of being and learning” (Doppler, 2006, p.3).

How is Restorative Practice used in Australian schools?

The absence of literature on Australian schools that have embraced RP as a whole school practice hinders the illumination and articulation of RP in Australian school organisational practice. However, there appears to be a distinct set of characteristics that colour the successful implementation of RP within Australian schools. Those characteristics appear to be, at a minimum, both the will and the capacity to change. While a ‘whole school approach’ is a solution, it is also a challenge in itself, requiring the whole school to shift to a more democratic ethos (Varnham et al 2015).

Schools within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) trialled RP as a platform for cultural change as schools increasingly understand the shift that is required to move from the management of

inappropriate behaviours, to a school that values relationships (Blood, 2005). Mountford (2005) has described this as a four-layered process to implementing RP, with the essence of the change process reflected in the four processes for sustainable practice.

Processes for sustainable practice are firstly engaging and establishing leadership commitment to the implementation of RP which includes training in RP (formal and informal practices) (Blood, 2006); mix of external & internal professional development (Blood, 2006); circles and classroom management; incorporated into whole school policies such as Grievance Procedures (Varnham et al, 2015); part of: welfare policy, peer mediation etc and Annual School Report (Varnham et al, 2015). Secondly, the development of localised expertise and support networks which involves: training in RP (formal and informal practices) (Blood, 2006); whole school/cluster workshop (Blood, 2006); regular forums (networking/up-skilling school personnel). Thirdly density of quality RP in schools incorporates support staff developing expertise in the range of restorative strategies and fourthly, whole school/cluster workshops (strengthening connections between schools). This fourth layer integrates facilitated workshops (whole school community); parents; regular forums (networking/up-skilling school personnel) and incorporation into whole school policies such as Grievance Procedures (Varnham et al, 2015) and also welfare policy, peer mediation and Annual School Report (Varnham et al, 2015).

Similarly in 2004 in South Australia, 45 school sites across Adelaide South West Metropolitan Education District began a journey of implementing RP (Oliver, personal communication, 10 April 2017). In the schools successfully implementing RP, social emotional learning (SEL) has become a priority and schools are building partnerships and becoming central to their community (L. Oliver, personal communication, 10 April, 2017). These schools are experiencing:

- reduction in suspension rates,
- building of inclusive pedagogical practices
- improved problem solving and conflict resolution skills amongst students
- shift from punitive to relational approach - focus on relationships and the harm that occurs through inappropriate behaviour (L. Oliver, personal communication, 10 April, 2017).

The successful schools reflect the Social Discipline Window (see Figure 1).

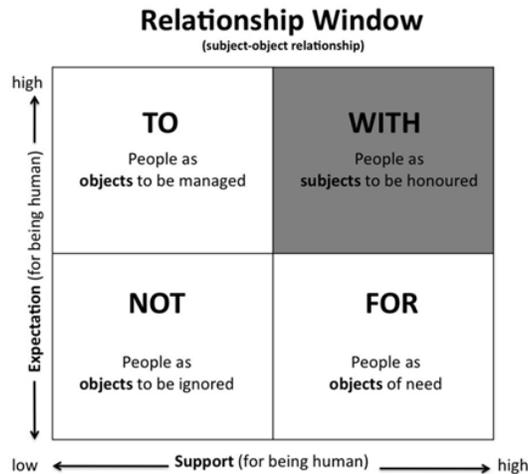


Figure 1: Social Discipline Window (Watchel et al, 2010)

Some schools have implemented a program based on RP to specifically address bullying and/or behaviour management issues and have experienced varying levels of success. Morrison (2002) reports a study which evaluated a Responsible Citizenship Program delivered to all year five students in an Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government primary school. Students spent one hour twice a week over five weeks engaging with ideas and concepts introduced through posters and role-play and making a video. The evaluation utilised the Life at School Survey (Ahmed, 2001) and Morrison (2002) reports that following the program, students felt significantly safer.

Traditionally, schools respond to behavioural issues through control and punishment techniques such as detentions, referrals, stand-downs, suspensions, and expulsions (Cavanagh, 2009; De Nobile, London & El Baba, 2015; Rogers, 2003). Student behaviour and inconsistent or a lack of whole school approach can be identified as a major source of stress for teachers. A unified school approach is defined as both necessary and logical (Rogers, 2006). The concept of whole school behaviour management (WSBM) necessarily involves leadership, teachers and students, resulting in a culture of responsibility, support and positive relationships (De Nobile et al, 2015; Rogers, 2006). Restorative Practice programs are a ‘promising approach’ to bullying (Morrison, 2005).

In 2004, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales conducted an evaluation of the Restorative Justice in Schools Program. Established to counteract bullying and victimisation, the evaluation of the practices concluded that RJ is not a panacea for the problems in schools but, if implemented correctly, “it may be a useful resource that improves the school environment and enhances the learning and development of young people” (National Evaluation of the Restorative Justice in Schools Program, 2004, p.65).

Conclusion

The paucity of literature on Australian schools that have embraced RP as a whole school practice hinders the illumination and articulation of RP in Australian school organisational practice and conveys the significance of this research to the Australian educational context.

The literature review reiterates the importance of student inclusiveness in attaining the educational goals of equity and excellence for young people. Further to this, what is presented draws a picture of how educators can be inclusive and provide just schooling for students who have endured less than satisfactory experiences. Literature has highlighted concerns of professional development to increase research knowledge and understanding practice.

The literature review concentrates on the school level of programs and planning, discipline and control in order to illuminate not only how schools can be socially inclusive but focuses on investigating best practice when embarking on the RP journey with students to find their potential.

The opportunity to investigate how the use of RP in YOTS school settings improves student outcomes is underpinned by the literature outlining four key areas of implementation for sustainability:

1. engaging and establishing leadership commitment to the implementation of restorative practices
2. the development of localised expertise and support networks
3. density of quality restorative practice in schools
4. planning for sustainability

Aims and Research Questions

The research aimed to evaluate how the use of RP impacts and improves student outcomes in the school setting.

The study sought to identify and describe the current use of RP in YOTS schools and develop and improve school and teacher practices through professional learning and collaboration. Further to this, the evaluation of results has informed future directions and further improvements in use of RP and student outcomes in YOTS schools.

‘It often takes hard data to debunk the myths around behaviour management and what makes a difference in delivering hoped-for outcomes’ (Morrison, 2005).

These considerations are reflected in the overarching research question:

‘How does the use of Restorative Practices in Youth Off The Streets school settings improve student outcomes?’

An assumption inherent in the research question is that RP impacts positively on student outcomes. Anecdotally, the experience of staff at YOTS is that RP does impact positively; the research aimed to investigate the processes and factors that contributed to this success. Additionally the research explored the benefits and limitations of the whole school approach to provide examples of evidence-based practice and aimed to better understand how creating safe and harmonious school environments allowed learning to flourish and social interactions to develop.

Methodology

Action research is the methodology utilised in the project. Action research typically consists of four steps (Mertler, 2006):

1. “Identifying an area of focus;
2. Collecting data;
3. Analysing and interpreting data; and

4. Developing a plan of action.” (p. 2)

Typically, each step is repeated in an ongoing, potentially non-linear cycle, to inform continued innovation and development through evidence-based practice. Action research is usually conducted by teachers and facilitates study of their own classrooms in order to better understand them. The goal of action research is to improve quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning (McGrath, 2013; Mertler, 2006). Mertler (2006) emphasises that action research is often a collaborative process amongst teachers, and that when the findings are subsequently shared with other teachers, focuses on relevance and practicality.

Action research was chosen as a suitable approach because of its focus on educational improvement, and compatibility with the research questions generated by YOTS school staff. The research questions focused on (a) systematically gathering information about current practice of RP, (b) identifying areas for specific change and development, (c) developing professional knowledge and skills to inform the change (reading research literature, professional learning sessions, peer mentoring), and then (d) gathering data to evaluate the impact of the specific changes, to (e) inform a plan for continued development of the practice of RP.

Professional Learning Interventions

YOTS planned interventions were in the majority professional development exercises for staff. The interventions were planned as followed (see Table 1):

Table 1: Research Interventions

| Date | Intervention |
|--|---|
| 5 th and 6 th April 2016 | Dr Frieda Rundell - International Institute for Restorative Practices. Workshops on LSCI, Compassionate Witnessing, Anger Intervention, Compass of Shame |
| 18 th July, 2016 | Term 3 SDD Dr K. Pressick-Kilborn workshop on action research in the classroom for phase one of the action research projects |

commencing in Week 5 term 3.

| | |
|---|--|
| 20 th December 2016 | Staff briefing on the research project to date Staff sharing of action research projects |
| 30 th January 2017 | SDD where teachers discussed their action research projects and data collection |
| 20 th -22 nd March 2017 | External provider training for 2017 new staff who had not been formally trained in RP. |
| 24 th April 2017 | SDD where all school staff members were inserviced on basic RP by Father Chris Riley |
| 22 nd September 2017 | Staff briefing and project conclusion Staff given latest data to analyse Staff asked to plan for sustainability. |

Further to this the YOTS research team met every month to discuss progress, data collected and to plan future data collection, student and staff survey questions and student interview questions and timeline.

Data

The research design included collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, including surveys of staff, students and parents at various points, site-specific action research projects, student interviews, a staff focus group and an external audit of each school site's use of RP.

Surveys

Students were surveyed at three points during the school year; a baseline survey at the beginning of the year (2016 and 2017), a midline survey approximately six months into the school year (2016 and 2017), and an end-line survey during term four in 2016 and term three 2017. Data gathered at varying time-points enabled comparisons between when a student enters YOTS and when they have had exposure to, and experiences using RP.

The survey collected students' responses in relation to their perceptions of conflict resolution in their previous school, participation in circles, restorative conversations and conflict resolution at YOTS.

YOTS school staff were surveyed about their professional learning in RP, what strategies were used in their own school-based practice, their perceptions of success using RP and how the concept of RP is used and with whom. Further to this staff were surveyed about future directions for more effective implementation of RP in their school site. These surveys were conducted in November 2015, February 2017 and September 2017.

Further qualitative data was collected via the surveys of staff and consisted of open questions on levels of confidence; professional development needs, how they used RP strategies and reasoning behind their action research focus. Student open responses on surveys included comments on previous school experiences of conflict resolution and their ideas on the best way to resolve conflict.

Parents/carers were included as research participants through a survey completed at Independent Learning Plan (ILP) interviews at the start of term two 2016. Parents/carers were asked whether they had heard about RP, whether they received information about RP in their referral pack, and any changes they may have witnessed in the way their child handled conflict at home.

Interviews and Focus Group

Over the course of the project, 10 interviews with individual students across all participating school sites were recorded and transcribed. The interviews included student reflections on their character and schooling prior to attending YOTS, insights into their YOTS schools' current use of RP and considerations of the positive and negative aspects of the practice.

Focus groups with staff were conducted as part of the professional learning on 22nd September, 2017. Staff engaged with the data and investigated changes in both student and staff data over the course of the research project. Results were incorporated into the final research report findings and conclusions.

External Evaluation

Maurizio Vespa, an ex-school teacher and current RP consultant conducted an audit of each participating school site and presented his findings to all school managers and school executive.

Results were gleaned from observations of school spaces, observations of practices, language and conversations with students and staff.

School site Action Research projects

School sites each investigated an aspect of their RP practice which they collaboratively identified as relevant and meaningful, thereby establishing a specific focus on an issue pertinent to the individual school site. With guidance from the YOTS project team members, school sites were responsible for formulating the question, collection of data, intervention and post intervention data collection.

The possible research methods that the teachers used to systematically gather data about their school's use of RP included a range of qualitative strategies such as 'critical friend' observations and reflective conversations, surveys, focus groups and interviews, written reflections, and document analysis. School site-specific projects are thus considered as case studies that illustrate an example of the YOTS approach to implementing RP.

Engaging YOTS staff in conducting this project ideally equipped them with skills and strategies in conducting practitioner research that they can adapt and apply in future.

Data analysis

Surveys

The surveys contained both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data in the student surveys were used for comparison between baseline with midline then midline with end line. The open ended questions were combed by two separate members of the YOTS research team to ascertain the emergent themes. The two team members combined to discuss observations. A similar process was applied to the parent and staff surveys.

Case Studies

The case studies contained quantitative data from closed questions and the results were scrutinised by staff to ascertain meaning. Open ended questions were categorised to provide a detailed picture of responses. From these findings further patterns and trends were identified. This process was followed during both iterations of the action research projects.

Student Interviews

Two students from each of the five school sites were interviewed about their perceptions of self, RP and the personal benefits or otherwise of RP. Each recording was transcribed and transcriptions were read carefully twice. Categories were developed for the different emergent themes. Words and phrases found in the responses were used as codes in the margins of the transcripts. Each interview response was assigned a category. Major patterns and trends were identified.

Findings

Survey Data

Evaluating how the use of RP improves student outcomes in the school setting necessitated an empirical understanding of:

1. students' perceptions of their previous school compared with their current YOTS school;
2. students' perception of strategies;
3. student understanding of RP;
4. staff perceptions of the use of RP; and
5. staff professional development needs to inform improvements and sustainability

The research project used SurveyMonkey as the platform for surveying students and staff because of the user friendly interface, results in real time and automatic evaluation of tick/flick questions. This platform additionally has capacity for qualitative questions and can clarify responses through input of language filters.

Student Surveys

Student baseline surveys found the overwhelming majority of students engaged in physical fights, verbal fights or they tried to ignore the problem and walk away in their previous schools. The conflict resolution strategies employed by their previous schools were meetings with the principal, meetings with parents, teachers and/or the other young person or the conflict was ignored. Students expanded on this finding with comments about suspension, being expelled and the police being called. Students, in the main, felt these strategies were a waste of time, they weren't listened to, felt they were lied to and that it wasn't necessarily a fair process. When students enrolled in YOTS schools the majority of students had little knowledge of the nature of conflict resolution under the RP banner. The following figures identify the changes in student perceptions of conflict resolution practices through comparison between their previous school (baseline data) and their YOTS school (midline and end line data).

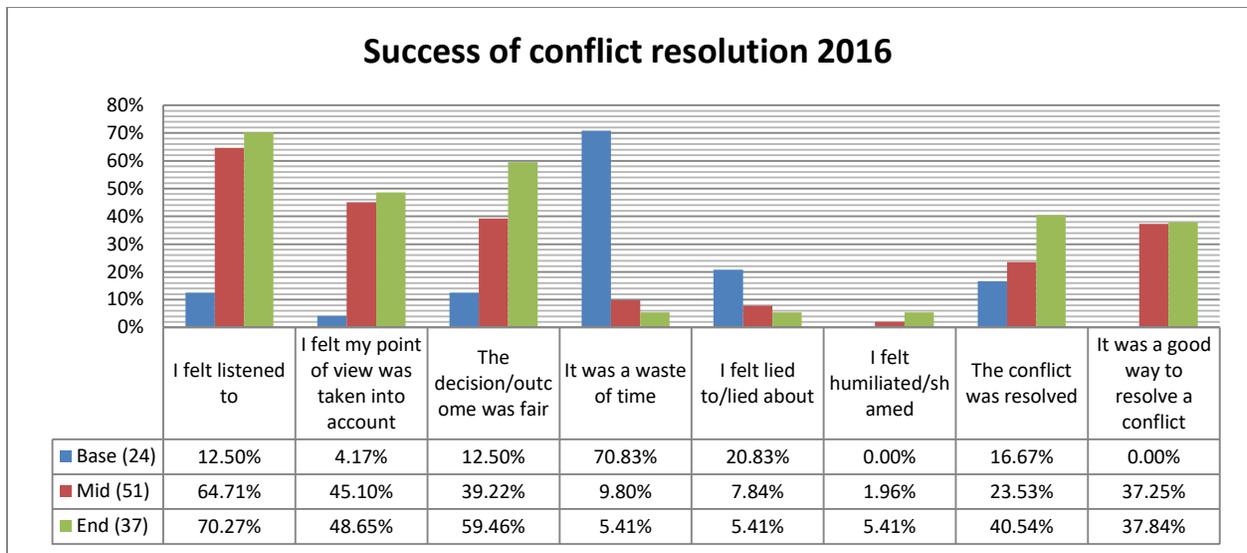


Figure 2: Success of conflict resolution 2016 including baseline, midline and endline surveys

Student perceptions of conflict resolution at their previous school were captured in the baseline surveys administered early in term 1 of 2016 and 2017. In figure two above and figure three below it can be seen that at the baseline level students did not feel they were listened to. This rose significantly from 12.5% on the baseline survey to 70.27% on the endline survey in 2016 and 13.24% to 68.33% in 2017. Students felt their point of view was taken into account rose from 4.17% in 2016 to 48.65% in 2017 and similar results were found in 2017. Their perception of fairness in the outcome rose from 12.5% in 2016 to 59.46% whilst in 2017 perceptions rose from 7.35% to 38.33%. Student judgement about conflict resolution at their previous school as a waste of time rated 70.83% and fell to 5.41% on the endline survey at their YOTS school. Similar judgements were recorded when students were asked about their perceptions of being lied to and feelings of humiliation and shame. Students' sense of resolution rose from 16.67% in 2016 to 40.54% with similar numbers in 2017 and their perceptions of the better way to resolve conflict rose from 0% in 2016 to 37.84% and in 2017 it rose from 4.41% to 33.33%.

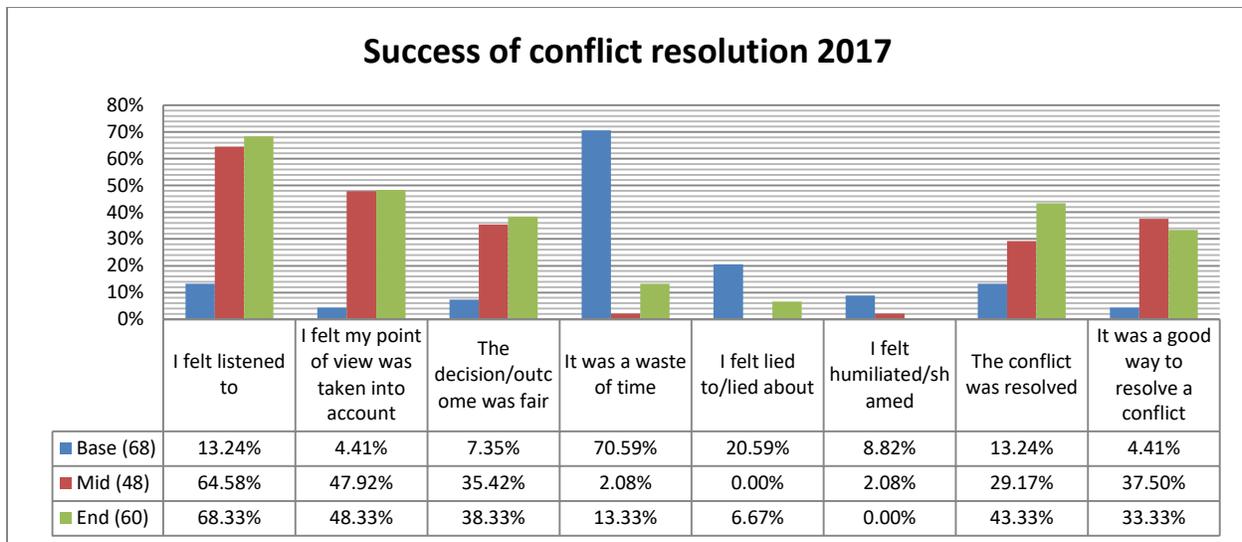


Figure 3: Success of conflict resolution 2017 including baseline, midline and endline surveys

Conclusions

The survey data paints a broad picture of the success of RP in YOTS schools. The student data makes direct comparisons with student perceptions about their previous school and their YOTS school in managing conflict. The contrast between the baseline and the midline data is significant in many ways. The students' perception is that YOTS is successful at resolving conflict between young people, as well as young people and staff. Students felt listened to and that their point of view was taken into account. One of the underlying principles of RP is that all parties involved in conflict have a voice and this is borne out by the data in the midline survey and is reinforced in the student end-line survey (see Appendix A for more detailed results).

Parent Surveys

Parents were surveyed to ascertain their level of knowledge and understanding of RP in their child's school. Parents were given the survey at the Independent Learning Plan (ILP) meeting at the beginning of term two, 2016. The parents who responded to the survey totalled 41 and the significant amount is attributed to the distribution during ILPs which all students are required to attend with their parent or care giver. Of the 41 responses, 21 indicated that they were aware of RP, 20 were not aware and two did not answer this question. Of the two that did not respond, it can be surmised that the parents did not know about RP. This is in line with the

findings from the external audit where the recommendation was to provide parents and carers information/education about RP.

It is important to determine whether the parent body received the information about RP or not and through what means. YOTS schools take referrals from a variety of avenues and supply a referral pack with pertinent information about the services offered. This question and the corresponding answers shed light on the difficulties of communication with a vast drawing area and differently situated school sites. There were 39 responses with 11 parents responding 'yes', 28 responded 'no' and 4 skipped this question.

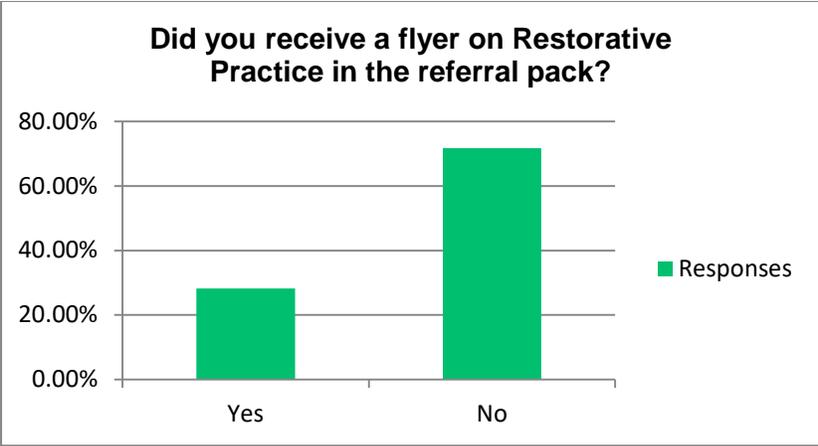


Figure 4: Did you receive a flyer on Restorative Practice in the referral pack?

Parent survey question four was an open question which sought information on parent knowledge about RP. There were only 21 responses to this question which correlates to the 21 responses in question two that asked about awareness of the RP program. Of the 21 responses in question four, only four responses revealed any knowledge of RP. This is significant for YOTS schools in their pursuit of a restorative school community. It is clear that YOTS schools need to examine their means of communication and improve the delivery of information to all education stakeholders.

Question five asked parents about their perceptions of their child’s preferred method of dealing with conflict. This was reflective of the student baseline survey where students self-selected verbal fights and ignoring it as an effective means of conflict resolution.



Figure 5: How has your child handled previous conflicts?

Parent survey questions six and seven asked parents about their observations of their children, “Have you observed any changes in the way your child approaches conflict?” (question six) and “If you said Yes to question six, which statement(s) best describe the changes noticed:” In figure six, the clear majority have noticed changes in their children, 31 responding in the affirmative and nine in the negative and three skipped this question.

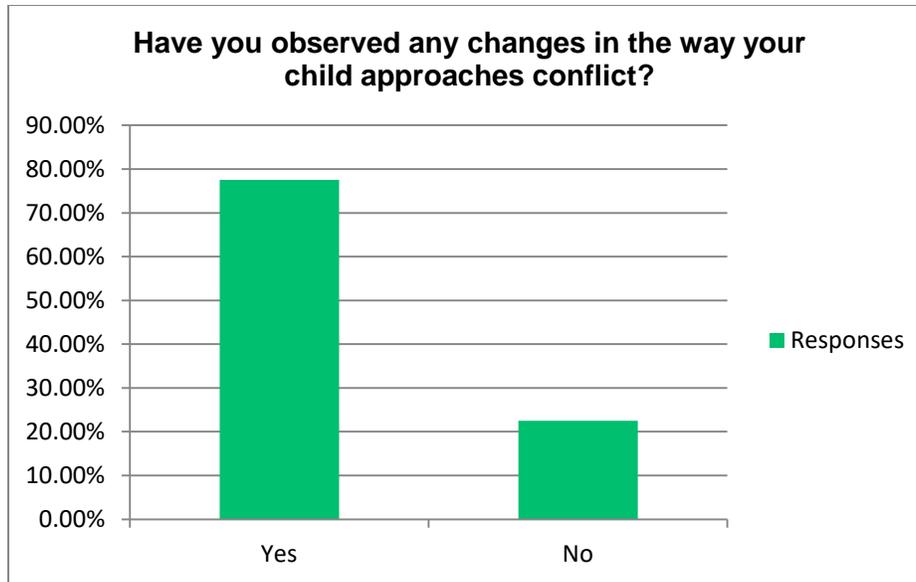


Figure 6: Have you observed any changes in the way your child approaches conflict?

The parent survey underscores the student survey in terms of how students resolved conflict prior to enrolling at YOTS and further to this, how some of them manage conflict after being at YOTS schools for a period of time. The external audit recommendation of informing/educating parents is further indicated by parent response and non-response.

Conclusion

The parent survey was conducted at the beginning of term two, 2016 and it underscores external audit findings of the need to educate/inform the school community, and parents/carers about RP. The data collected concerning the referral pack is again an indication that YOTS schools could improve their communication with parents/carers and external stakeholders. The parent survey underscores the student survey in terms of how students resolved conflict prior to enrolling at YOTS and further to this how some of them manage conflict after being at YOTS schools for a period of time. The external audit recommendation of informing/educating parents is further indicated by parent response and non-response. There was no follow-up survey of parents in 2017.

Staff Surveys

Staff were surveyed at the end of the school year 2015 (N=21), mid 2016, beginning of 2017 and the end of term three 2017 (n=26) to garner levels of training in RP, situations where staff used RP strategies and frequency of use. Further to this staff were surveyed on their perceptions of the success of RP in improving learning and social outcomes and their viewpoint on the most effective measure of evidence of RP success.

Questioning staff about their level of RP training revealed significant differences. The 2015 baseline revealed over half of staff were trained in-house by YOTS. Subsequent questions revealed greater gaps in training levels over the course of the research project and differences in confidence in using RP strategies. By 2017 the staff baseline highlighted and perhaps is indicative of changes in staffing, 33% of staff had not had any formal training in RP and only 38% - down from 62% - felt that their training had been of value in working with young people. Reinforcing this is the fall from 33% to 19% of staff trained by an external organisation and the decline from 67% to 29% of staff trained within the last three years. However the 2017 end line survey revealed that project interventions had enabled 86% of YOTS school staff to be trained in house by YOTS and 31% by an external organisation.

Questions asking where RP is used underscore the figures from the training and confidence levels. The most frequently used RP strategy is circle for the daily check in/checkout and conflict resolution between individuals. Using RP strategies for lesson commencement and conclusion has risen from 50% to 67% and goal setting has risen from 65% to 71%. Less frequent is conflict resolution between groups, declining from 85% to 67% and setting group expectation falling from 80% to 67%. RP for reflecting on challenges has seen a decline from 90% to 54%.

Staff were surveyed about their perceptions of the success of RP in improving learning and social outcomes. Staff discernment rated RP use as very successful 35-45% and successful as 65-45%. The decline in the successful rating could be reflective of the knowledge and understanding of staff given changes in staff make-up and training levels. This is reinforced by the 15% of the 2017 cohort who selected "don't know". Staff felt that YOTS could improve their use of RP. Staff indicate their desire for more training and of interest is the response to "Our

site has the potential to expand its use of RP to benefit student outcomes” having declined from 76% at the end of 2015 to 67% at the beginning of 2017 possibly indicating the building of local expertise.

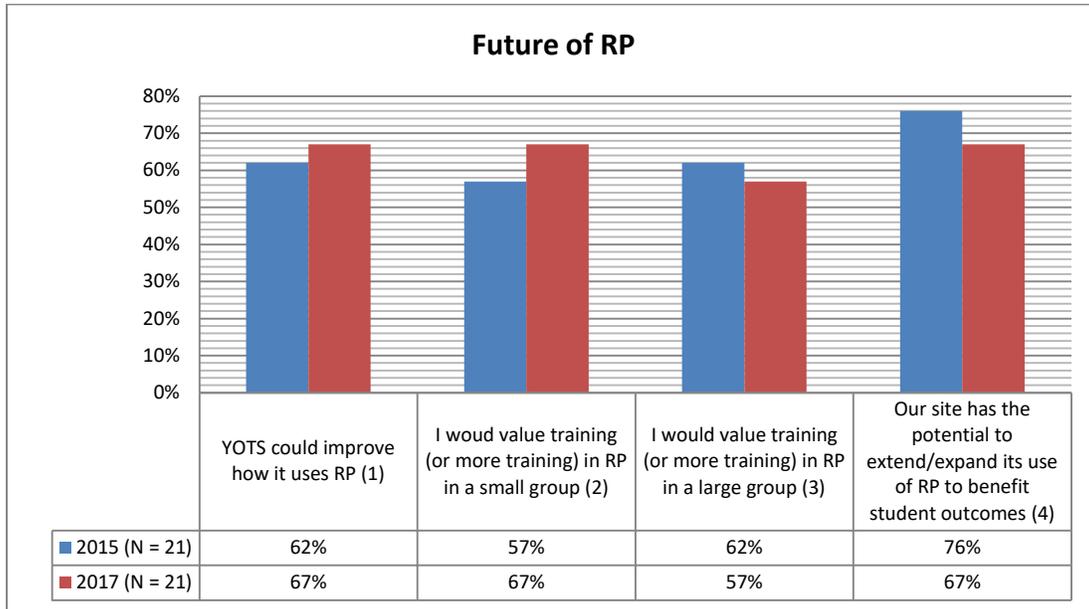


Figure 7: Future of RP

Conclusion

Staff surveys revealed changes in staff across the two years and as such a decline in the numbers of trained staff. This is notable in the areas of conflict resolution between individuals and groups, facilitating student reflection on challenges and setting group expectations. This is further reinforced by the responses indicating that staff do not know how often they use RP and do not know whether RP is successful in improving student learning and social outcomes. Staff who are trained in RP and aware of its use believed that RP is successful in improving student outcomes. The greater percentage of staff would value professional development in RP and believed that the use of RP could be improved and expanded and expressed interest in further training in specific applications of RP such as Compassionate Witnessing, Compass of Shame and Mindfulness.

Case Study

As a result of the contextual information gathered through student, parent and staff surveys, all five participating YOTS school sites undertook an action research project developed to address issues in their own context.

There are five school sites involved in the research project and all elected to develop an action research project specific to their context. The action research projects were designed to use the embedded RP strategies. One action research project is highlighted here and the other four can be accessed in the appendices.

Key College

Key College is an accredited independent secondary school for homeless young people in metropolitan Sydney. The school offers individual learning programs for students in Stage 5 and focuses on a one year program for Year 10 students.

Action Research Project Phase One

The action research project Key College focused on was school attendance. The students have complex issues and as such regular school attendance is often not a priority. The question ***“How can Restorative Practice be used to improve student attendance?”*** was formulated and a plan to encourage and support student attendance developed. At the heart of the issue is the impact that school absences have on the student, their peers and the teachers. Staff developed a questionnaire to be filled out by any student who had been absent. On return, the student would complete the questionnaire and then later in the day have a conversation with a teacher. Questions on the form included:

- What happened?
- Did I let Key College know I wasn't coming?
- What was I thinking when I decided not to attend?
- What did I miss out on?
- How did it impact others?
- How will it impact on me?
- What do I need to do to catch up?

- How can I stop it from happening again?

Introduction of the new process took place during morning circle time. Initiated by the school manager, the conversation focused on absences and students were asked to consider the reasons for being absent, who is affected by absences and how does their action impact on others? Student responses were indicative of capacity/awareness that exists for understanding the impact of their actions. Responses ranged from being absent because they simply couldn't be bothered or that they hated school, to attending school because they knew they would be fed, to wanting to turn their life around. Discussion turned to having personal goals and how to achieve them.

Data Collection

Key College attendance data from terms one and two were used to generate quantitative data for statistical comparison. Qualitative data was gathered through: questionnaire completion and interviewing process; and through post intervention interviews with two students and conversations with the two teaching staff for their perceptions of the project.

Results

Quantitative evidence is affected by the transitional nature of many of the students. However, of those students who were enrolled at the beginning of the school year through to term three, increases in attendance were significant (see Table 2 below)

| Student Attendance | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Term 1 2016 | Term 3 2016 |
| Student A | 68.75% | 77.5% |
| Student B | 50% | 65% |

Table 2: Example of Student increased attendance

Evidence suggests that as the process evolved and became embedded in the daily routine, students revealed their awareness that their actions impacted the teaching staff

Using a core RP question “How do my actions impact others”? the project demonstrates how the supportive nature of staff encourages students to attend which in turn impacts their learning and social outcome. The process for personal accountability has been demonstrated to have a positive impact. When students turn up to school they have a greater opportunity to learn and make a change in their trajectory.

Phase Two

Staff at Key College decided to continue with their original investigation into improving attendance. As they only take students into Year 10 it is difficult to provide previous attendance statistics.

The absence forms that staff require students to complete are designed so the student can consider their own responsibility (see Table 3 below).

| Absence Form | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| | Reason | Number |
| In my control | No Reason given on the form | 8 |
| | Slept in | 3 |
| | Didn't want to come | 2 |
| Out of my control | No reason given on the form | 5 |
| | Sick | 5 |
| | Family Issues | 2 |
| | Appointment | 1 |

Table 3: Number of Absence Forms Collected

Interviews with students new to Key College outlined that they are attending Key College more than they did their last school.

One young person had stopped attending her previous school for two terms and was currently attending Key College about three or four days a week citing reasons such as feeling “more comfortable and liking it more”. The young person states that it is the teachers who have made the difference in coming to school though she still has difficulty getting up in the morning and the relationships she has built at Key are a positive influence.

Another student was very proud of her attendance at Key describing it as “awesome” because she was attending 85% of the time. Comparisons with her previous school revealed the student barely attended because she hated it “They didn’t care” and recounted that at Key College she felt more supported and a more relaxed atmosphere. “The staff are encouraging and I am close to them and I can tell them anything I want to tell them”. The few days absent that still occur are a result of simply not wanting to attend and she states “That’s just me”.

Evaluation

Quantitative data show signs of attendance improvement and staff believe that the process creates an opportunity for students to take ownership and accept responsibility for their learning. It could be surmised that student attendance is improving because of the caring nature of staff, the staff support and the growth in responsibility encouraged by staff and the use of RP strategies. Staff intend to continue the process.

Student Interviews

A founding principle of RP is to give all parties a voice so that they can be heard and understood. It aims to build stronger, safer, more inclusive and caring communities by investing in all stakeholders in finding positive solutions to perceived challenges and obstacles.

Young people who come to YOTS schools often have a chequered history of school experiences. School sites accept students via school referrals, Family and Community Services and Juvenile Justice recommendations, family, peers or self. The students face numerous considerable difficulties on a daily basis which may include but are not limited to mental health issues, drug and alcohol, dysfunctional family and parenting, social inadequacy, and or homelessness.

Students from each site were interviewed to gauge their perceptions of the impact that RP has on their learning and social outcomes. The following themes emerged from the data and reflect students' previous school experiences, their thoughts about where they might be if not at a YOTS school and how the inclusive nature of the schools has helped them find a vision for their future.

Previous school experiences

Students were open and honest concerning their previous behaviours and school experiences. Articulating the past allowed students to acknowledge how they had changed.

(I was) a trouble maker, always in trouble, with the cops, at home, at school...Getting into fights, wagging, swearing at teachers, lying about it, not owning up to what I actually done...They just used to suspend me .. in school suspensions time after time which didn't really help me at all I had I think only one counselling session and that helped a bit but it never happened again (Male,

"A", 16)

This student has highlighted how much he has changed and in the language used, he touches on the principles of responsibility and accountability underpinning RP. He further recounts the importance of support in order to make positive changes and decisions.

I was like a very violent person .. I sorted everything out with actions and I didn't care if I got in trouble or not and I wasn't really focused in school so I didn't really care if I came to school or not and the worst part about it was I didn't learn nothing at school. Like I used to be very violent, I used to be suspended like a lot of times (Female, "S", 15)

"S" recounts her behaviour honestly and her experiences with school disciplinary measures such as suspension had little impact since she didn't care if she was there or not. Her recount is quite reflective in her admission that she didn't learn anything and presupposes that she now recognises she is learning in school.

Inclusive Community

Restorative Practice aims to encourage recognition of impact on others, empathy and understanding of other people. For "A", circle time has helped him to understand others and treat them with respect.

so if someone was pissed off you'd know not to get them even more angry to make them blow up and cause a fight and if they are in a happy mood you'd know you could get along heaps good for the day which is really helpful ... it helps me know that they are on the same path as me and they have had a rough night like me or they are not in the best head frame and you know you're kind of the same so you're trying to help each other out and by the end of the day to be in a better mood than what you came with in the morning. (Male, "A", 16)

The inclusive community gives everyone a voice and this again is one of the underlying principals of RP – everyone gets a chance to be heard. Part of having a voice is having people listen and this student articulates that when she says "teachers are focused on you".

the questions that go around like how was your day? Or week? Does anyone want to say anything? It feels like you have a voice like you can speak for yourself. It feels like the teachers are focused on you not like at xxxx ... I feel like somebody not a nobody (Female, "S", 15)

Restorative Practice strategies

Whilst schools develop ILPs for students, under the RP banner YOTS schools develop these each term so that students determine personal goals. This enables discussions about their responsibility and accountability for reaching those goals.

ILP's at the beginning of every term so with mum all the time, setting goals for the term and it does help because through the term you've got goals that you want to set like an attendance goal, 85% or 90% or whatever and you try to get as close as you can to it or over it and some were like behaviour ones and like if I am feeling angry I just take time out go outside for 5 minutes or whatever and like it does help knowing that you have set them goals and to know by the end of the term you had achieved them(Male, "A", 16)

The nature of ILPs and goal setting for this student is a source of pride in having achieved them. Setting them each term allows students to continually experience successes and understand responsibility and accountability as success.

(In circle) Sometimes I'm like come back to me and I see others struggling and I feel Ok because others are struggling as well and someone says it simple and I think why didn't I think of that and they did pretty good on it. (Female, "K", 16)

Principles underpinning RP encompass empathy and for "K" it helps her to see that she is not the only person who struggles at times.

Impact of the Restorative Practice Culture

The impact on students in Youth Off The Streets schools are many and varied and students express this impact in terms of what has mattered to them the most.

Opening up, trust .. I am starting to get trust back cause I lost that ages ago with all my mates and everything, like my mates used to snitch me into the police
(Male, "J", 15)

"J" further admits that trust has been an issue for him. Trust is gained through the non-judgemental manner encouraged in circle and RP conversations.

It's really different now and now when I talk to her (mum) about driving, I get really angry and she just yaps off ... now I just say ok mum ok we will talk about it another day and I just end it so we don't stress out, where normally I'd be like this and that and be angry and explode .. (Female, "K", 16)

"K" is proud that she has developed a sense of calm and is in control of her emotional reactions. This stems from the RP method of dealing with conflict and the conversations that support and guide students to develop healthy self regulation.

Conclusion

One student summed up her experiences of RP at YOTS schools, and it could be said of all the students interviewed that they were speaking about the same concepts. In answer to the question, "What do you think RP achieves for all the people here at XXX"? ...the student replied "Peace". Further to this, when asked if she had been involved in any dramas and subsequent restorative conversations with her teachers and whether they were effective her reply was "It was good, I got my best friend back" which reinforces the prime aim of RP in healing and restoring relationships. Whilst this student stated that at times talking through issues makes her want to "scream" she was delighted to have her best friend back and the most valuable thing was "to see the other person's side". Developing empathy, being able to see another point of view, recognising another, has been reinforced through the interviews particularly in relation to circles when all members of the group express how they feel.

Discussion

The YOTS research into its implementation of RP was designed to ascertain the impact on student outcomes. The aim of RP is to develop social capital and manage conflict by restoring relationships. This identifies the development of responsibility, accountability and empathy for those who have been affected by an offense. In schools, RP circles and groups provide opportunities to build community and relationships through sharing of feelings and solving of problems.

To discuss the relative merits of YOTS schools using RP to improve student outcomes, the paradigm presented by Mountford (2005) and Blood (2006) will be employed.

Successful implementation of RP as a four layered approach:

1: engaging and establishing leadership commitment to the implementation of restorative practices

Student survey data highlights that RP has allowed these students to be validated and included within the school community bolstering their sense of belonging. What follows from this is an environment that is conducive to learning and growth. The data further indicates a variety of ways in which RP is used. This variety is evidence of engagement and commitment to RP and its application to improvement of student outcomes.

The success of RP would not be possible without the leadership commitment to embedding RP and promoting those strategies to build community. Leadership commitment has been demonstrated through the professional development training offered and at the school manager level, the opt in on action research projects. The staff survey data reflects the ongoing need for training for both new and seasoned staff and awareness by the executive of what professional development is desired by staff.

The external audit found that the majority of staff had been exposed to RP. Whilst this is a positive for implementation and commitment, interpretation of exposure is unclear. The audit further found whilst most paid employees in the YOTS school education sector have been exposed to training it would be of further benefit to offer volunteers the opportunity to learn about RP as part of their induction and share information and education with parents. Therefore for all school staff training rather than exposure would be necessary to grow and maintain the effectiveness of RP on student outcomes.

2: the development of localised expertise and support networks

Students' knowledge and understanding of RP is an indirect experience at YOTS schools. Restorative Practice is articulated in enrolment interviews with students and parents and as revealed in student interviews many students are confronted by circle time on their first day and it isn't till further down the track that they have an understanding of the purpose. Students find the manner of conflict resolution favourable however their knowledge and understanding of the process is implicit.

Whilst the majority of parents surveyed were aware that YOTS implemented a program of RP, a significant group were not and even more had not received information in the referral pack. Parents as a group have little knowledge of what, why and how RP operates. Whilst many could see positive changes in their child's approach to conflict resolution they are unable to attribute those changes to RP or support their child at home with RP strategies.

The development of localised expertise and support networks for staff encapsulates professional development, sharing of experiences, challenges and successes and future ideas. The table of interventions (Table 1, p.15) present how local expertise has been built and sustained throughout the research project.

The external audit found that the level of expertise in staff manifested in a number of areas. Of particular note was the level of emotional intelligence, awareness, commitment, attitude and skills of the teaching staff in RP use and facilitation. Reinforcing this find is the manner in which

the teachers instruct, guide, correct, redirect and encourage students while in and out of the classroom.

3: density of quality restorative practice in schools

Surveys showed a significant increase in the success rate of conflict resolution and students' perceptions of being listened to and having their point of view taken into account. Student participation in six different types of RP extended from sharing an experience, check in/checkout, lesson introduction, goal setting, conflict resolution and talking about behaviours. Whilst the majority of these happen in circle format, these experiences demonstrate that RP philosophy and practices are used extensively in YOTS schools culminating in density of quality RP.

The density of practice reinforces the inclusive community of RP and is most keenly observed in the access to a wrap around support for the students (inclusive of psychologists, administrators, youth workers and ancillary – all of whom have had RP exposure/training); the dignified manner in which the teachers engage with the students - language and tonality; each individual school environment has an uplifting and optimistic energy. Further to this and underscoring the density of quality RP is that the parents are kept highly informed by staff, and are aware of and supportive of RP. On an academic learning level the density of quality RP is exhibited through: the restorative approach as part of teaching and learning pedagogy and the diversity of the learning experiences provided for the young people. Staff expertise was observed in the external audit and the restorative strategies being consistently utilized are: affective questions, learning circles and restorative mediation. It was further felt that all staff are familiar with affective questioning language and that circles and restorative mediation are used to resolve conflict issues between students.

4: planning for sustainability

The student data reflects a need for greater understanding of the philosophy and practice of RP. Knowledge and understanding would reinforce the concept of impact – that words and actions have an impact on other people, that someone cannot control how another perceives those words and actions and if the result is an offence then it can be resolved and relationships

healed. The external audit reinforces the need for explicit teaching of RP, its whys and wherefores. Similarly the parent data supports education of the wider community so that further support is possible for students enrolled at YOTS schools. Parent education as a first step would broaden the applicability of RP strategies and possibly strengthen the relationships between parents and their children.

Staff data reflects enthusiasm for the RP processes and results. Planning for sustainability of RP across schools necessitates further involvement with staff to confirm ideas on how use of RP could be improved and how RP could be extended and expanded to further benefit student learning and social outcomes. Greater sharing across sites of experiences and understanding how circles can be used and facilitated is an avenue to explore for ideas and practical suggestions on how school sites can manage timing and staff issues when there is an incident. School staff as daily practitioners of RP could benefit from clarity around the restorative mediation process - when, how and who, time frame, and roles; constant review and participation by staff will cultivate opt in, foster ideas and provide ongoing support, recognition and cultivate further sustainability of RP in schools.

Limitations of the Study

There are several possible limitations of the study. The limitation here is whether or not the conflict resolution methods experienced by students is sustained outside of school. It is difficult to know whether students continue to act in a manner that is conducive to relationship building and self-regulate when they are with friends or family and whether they continue to employ RP strategies in the long term post school. Whilst some parents observed improved behaviour and some students reiterated their approach outside of school, it is not known whether this continues for the young people without the influence of YOTS or whether they revert to their previous default behaviour.

Implications

By investigating and ultimately showcasing RP as a philosophy and practice for empowering students through strategies that teach and promote responsibility, accountability and self-regulation, the success of YOTS' schools could be disregarded by larger schools because of YOTS' unique context. The embedded nature of RP across all school sites and the ongoing professional development and school site sharing of experiences, successes and challenges creates a context of acceptance of the philosophy and YOTS educators reconcile their personal philosophy concerning education and embrace RP. It is without doubt that many larger schools may find an RP approach difficult given traditional approaches to behaviour and discipline complemented by large numbers and teacher workloads. Given the growing concern about social and emotional learning and the push for continual school improvement, it behoves educators and education policy makers of all ilk, to question policies, processes and procedures that excluded students because they have become a 'problem'. Changing a deficit viewpoint or examining long held practices takes time however the choice to disrupt traditional school practices suggests a desire to move to greater social inclusion, "equity and excellence" so that "all students can become active and informed citizens" (Melbourne Declaration, 2008, p.7). Continuing in the same vein that tradition and historicity has demanded will only provide more of the same.

Recommendations and directions for future research

Based on the research and findings contained within this report, suggestions for further research would include:

- 1: Continued tracking of students' groups coupled with surveys of parents and workshops for parents enabling them to have greater knowledge and understanding of RP with the possibility of using such strategies with their young person outside of the school environment. Given that parents' involvement in their child's education is a necessary component for the students' success and uptake of opportunities, it would be of great benefit to ascertain parent views and include them in the knowledge transfer and ultimately research project;
- 2: Continued investigation into the students' groups and how explicit teaching of RP, modelling and use of strategies can extend knowledge transfer to enable students to mediate conflict without teacher facilitation and to expand to outside of the school environment;
- 3: A longitudinal study of students from YOTS schools into their ability to self-regulate, set goals and achieve said goals and what impact RP may have on their successes post YOTS or do they slip back into old habits of withdrawal and anger;
- 4: Having students as participants in the research where they contribute to the decisions on what type of data, what type of interventions, evaluation of data and interventions with a view to recommendations for improved use of RP and school processes; and
- 5: Teaching RP explicitly to students as part of their course work and tracking the effect on their well being and their ability to self manage their cohort.

Conclusion

The impact of RP on both students and staff cannot be underestimated. It is sustainably embedded within each school setting and staff operate in a restorative manner when dealing with students in complex situations and contexts. The restorative manner of staff creates a school atmosphere of sharing and caring and students benefit from this approach both socially and academically. The focus on the impact of RP in YOTS schools has opened avenues for improvement to ensure best outcomes for all stakeholders.

Students at YOTS schools have come from a wide range of school and home environments and yet share a common experience of mainstream schooling as less than satisfactory. The overarching goal of YOTS schools is “to help disconnected young people discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices”. The students who come to YOTS schools to complete their high school education do so in an inclusive community in an atmosphere of active caring and support. Restorative Practice is an all pervasive way of being for the staff and students in their care develop positive living skills, accept responsibility and accountability and evolve with new found understandings of empathy and their place in the world.

Restorative Practice works with young people disaffected by life circumstance through an approach that fosters active listening, non judgement and building relationships. It is this approach that recognises the young person and allows them to find their voice and speak their truth. In doing so, students gain an understanding of themselves and a greater realisation of what is possible for them to achieve.

The research project findings substantiate and authenticate claims made by proponents of RP. The empirical data confirms improvements to student outcomes as a result of the implementation of RP and serves as a beacon for any school searching for positive alternatives to traditional education.

Research to Practice Impact

The research project has afforded opportunities to investigate the implementation, impact and sustainability of RP on student outcomes. Investigating how it has been implemented through the lens of researched successful practice, has allowed YOTS staff to feel comfortable in the knowledge that over time RP has become an embedded philosophy and practice of school staff. The research project has also permitted investigation to find areas where perhaps more work needs to be done such as a continued staff professional development, inclusion in policy such as grievance procedures, employment interviews, student interviews and procedures.

The research into conflict resolution application of RP has uncovered areas that are difficult to address in not only a small school setting but also a school setting with campuses across many locations such as: clarity around restorative mediation process with staff – when, how and who, time frame and roles. Further to this there has been movement towards an RP approach to team building where staff also have a safe space in which to discuss issues surrounding management, processes and procedures.

The data is especially powerful in its confirmation of the good work that staff have done and continue to do in their school sites. The connections with students post school would be significant in ascertaining whether the restorative practice is lasting outside of the school environment.

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Appendix A - Student Surveys

Baseline Surveys administered at the beginning of the school year 2016 and 2017

In the baseline surveys students were asked: “If you had a conflict with another young person or a staff member, how did you usually try and resolve it? Students could tick more than one response and there was provision for “other” at the bottom of the question (see Figure A1).

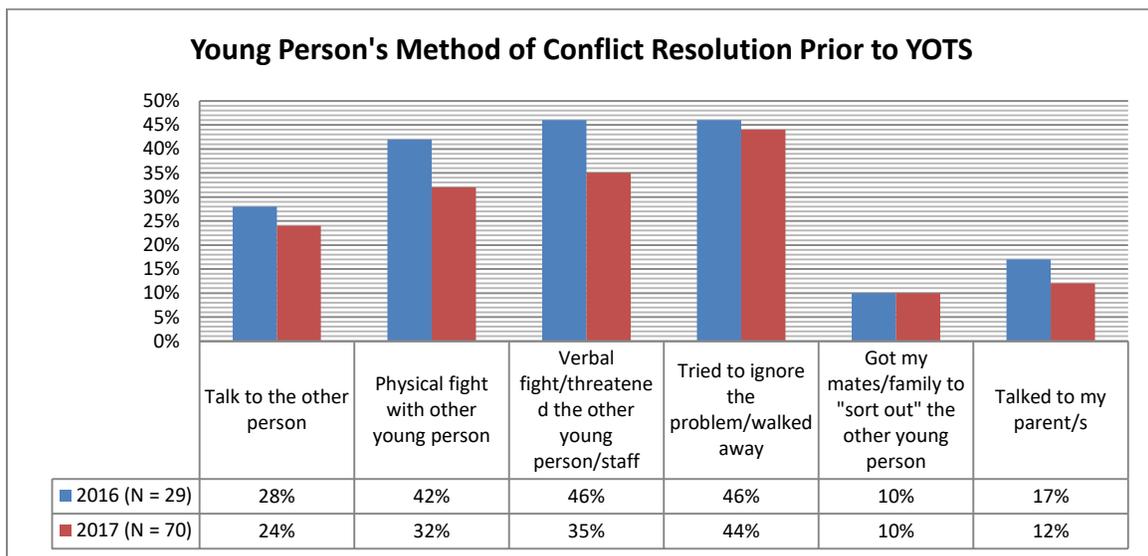


Figure A1: Young Person's Method of Conflict Resolution Prior to YOTS

Students were asked about the method of conflict resolution in their previous school and could choose more than one response from the following list: Meeting with a teacher, meeting with a teacher and parent, meeting with school principal, meeting with school staff and other young person, they ignored the conflict. Their method of conflict resolution as physical or verbal is reflected in the responses about the school and meetings with the Principal and meeting with staff and parents (Figure A2).

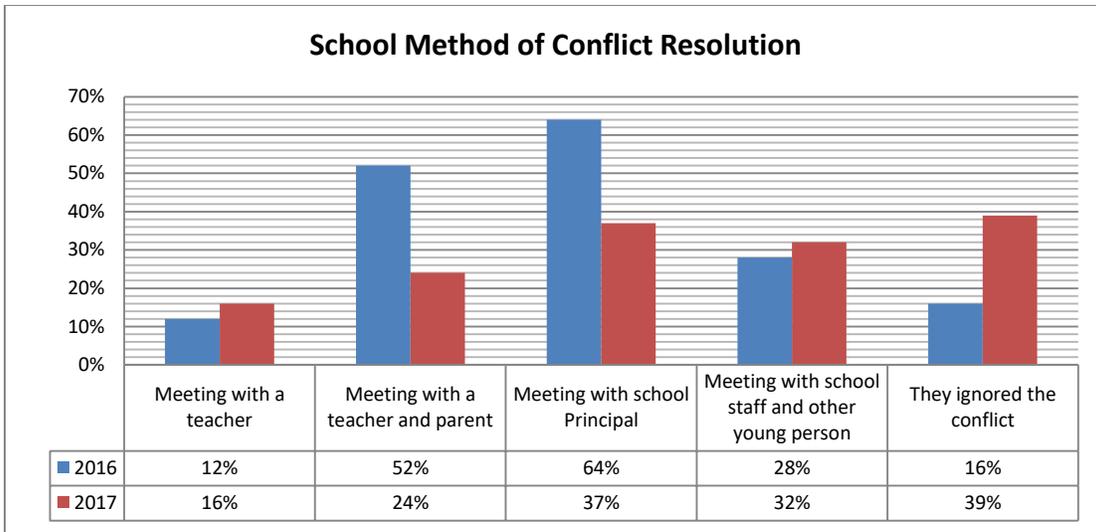


Figure A2: School Method of Conflict Resolution

Students' prior knowledge of RP was surveyed across all school sites. These results underscore the external audit where RP was observed to be "discussed at enrolment interviews with parents/carers and students".

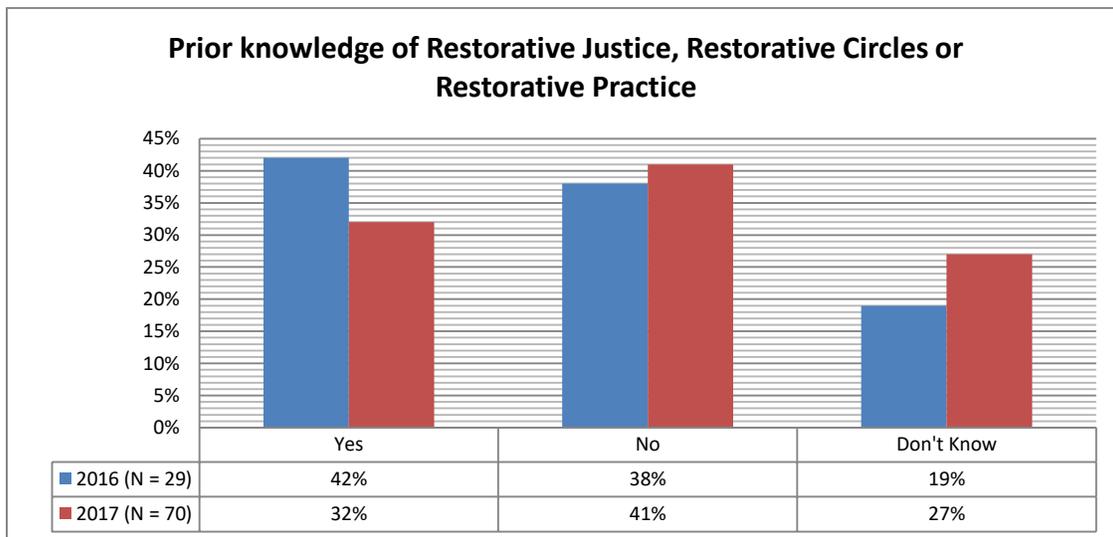


Figure A3: Prior knowledge of Restorative Justice, Restorative Circles or Restorative Practice

Student Midline Surveys

Students were asked about their experiences with the circle strategy (see figure 6). The circle is the most widely recognised RP strategy and at Youth Off The Streets is used in a variety of ways. The only uniform method across school sites is: circle is used first thing in the morning and for some conflict resolution. Some school sites participate in circle at the beginning of a lesson, at the end of a lesson, at the end of the day and for goal setting. The figure below indicates student experiences with circle with the most common usage being daily check in/check out.

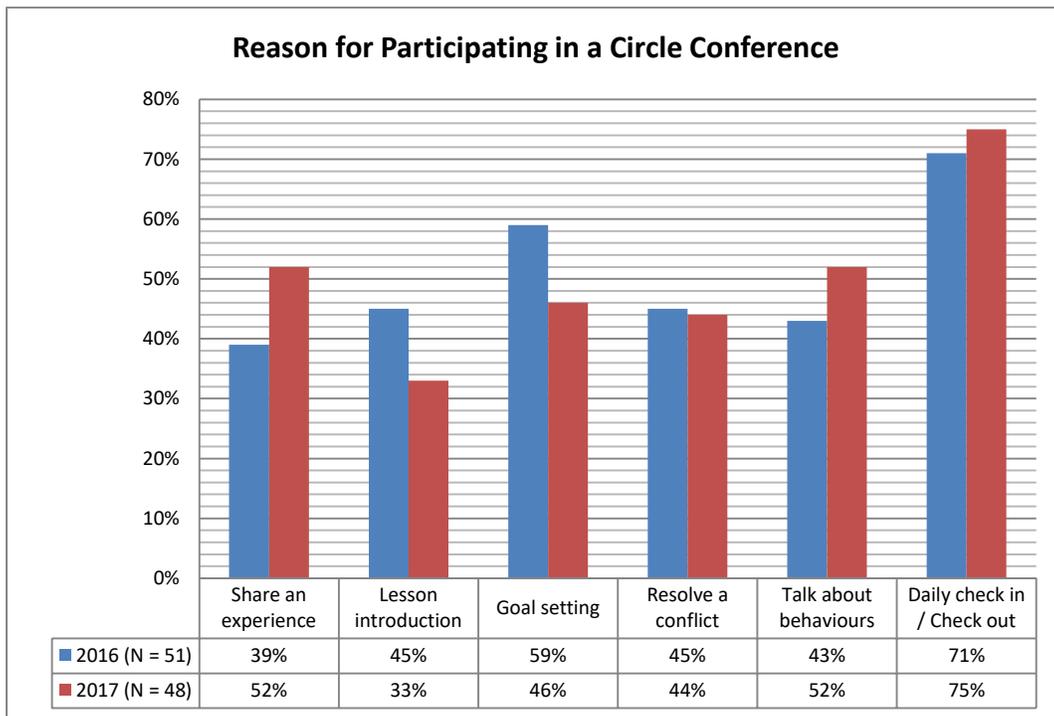


Figure A4: Reason for Participating in a Circle Conference

Supplementing the data on RP strategies used was a question asking about their knowledge of RP and the different types of RP conversations. Some students have experienced different types of RP conversations. Whilst other students may have no experience with RP conversations, they may know of their utility. As indicated by figure A5 below, 53-56% of students have experienced a restorative conversation with another young person and 28-29% of students have experienced no informal or formal restorative conversations.

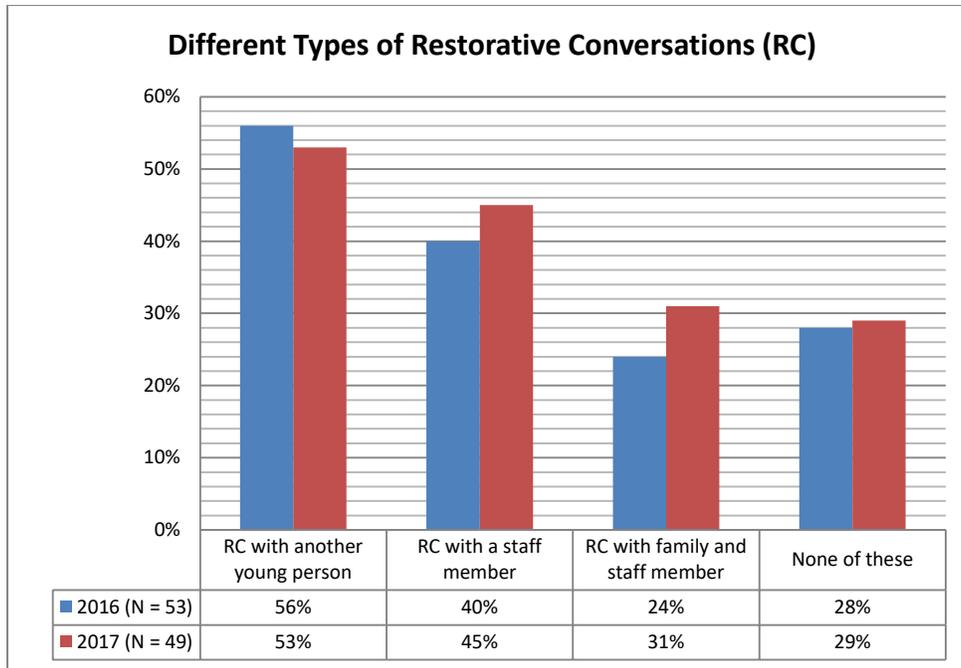


Figure A5: Different Types of Restorative Conversations

Student End-line Surveys

Student end line surveys demonstrate similar findings to the midline surveys in terms of the rating the success of conflict resolution. There was slight upward movement in the results for “I felt listened to”, “I felt my point of view was taken into account” and a slight decline in perceptions of fairness and a good way to resolve conflict which could be indicative of the smaller number of students involved in restorative conversations between individual students.

Of note in the 2017 end line survey was student perception of their improved ability to handle conflict with 32.81% of respondents recording “Yes a lot” and 57.81% “Yes a bit/sometimes”. Their ideas about “resolving problems between young people” was an open text response where 50% stated talk about it, have a conversation or generally communicate. There were nine responses of “I don’t know” which possibly indicates the need for explicit teaching of the concepts highlighted in the staff surveys.

Appendix B - Staff Survey

Staff were surveyed at the end of the school year 2015 and February 2017 to garner levels of training in RP, situations where staff used RP strategies and frequency of use. Further to this staff were surveyed on their perceptions of the success of RP in improving learning and social outcomes and their viewpoint on the most effective measure of evidence of RP success.

Questioning staff about their level of RP training revealed differences across staff as to the nature of the training they had received. Over half of staff were trained in-house by Youth Off The Streets. Subsequent questions revealed greater gaps in training levels and confidence in using RP strategies. By 2017 and perhaps indicative of changes in staffing, 33% of staff declared they no formal training in RP. The possibility exists that staff have applied differing interpretations of the word “formal” when it comes to professional development.

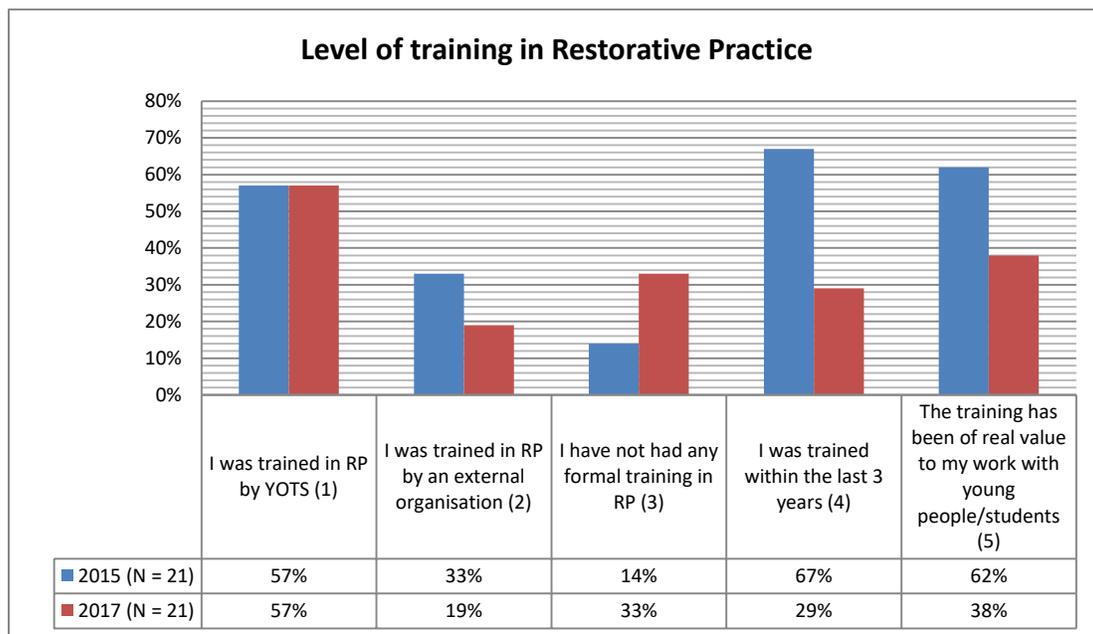


Figure B1: Level of training in Restorative Practice

Questions asking where RP is used underscore the figures from the training and confidence levels. For example in the figure below (figure B2) the most frequently used RP strategy is circle for the daily check in/checkout and conflict resolution between individuals.

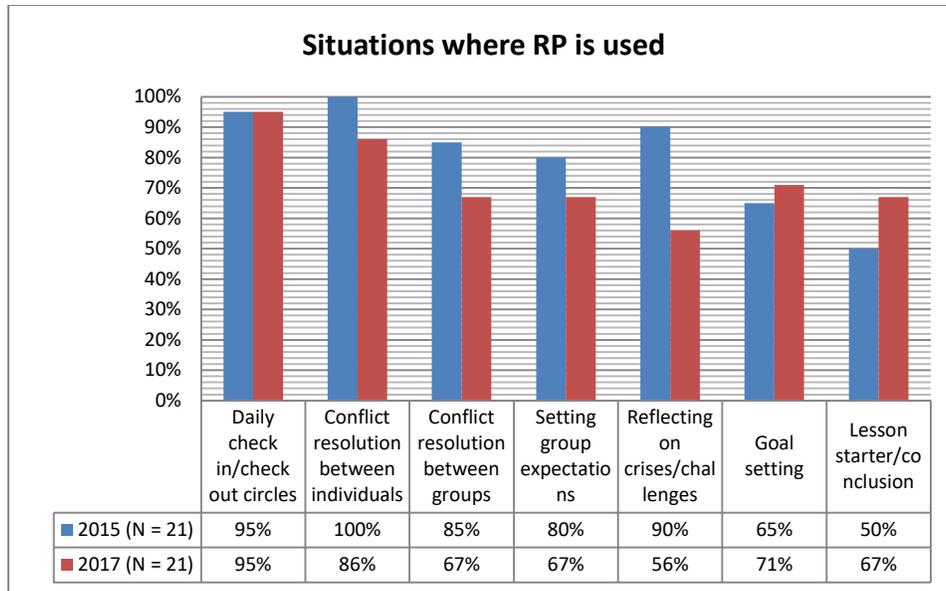


Figure B2: Situations where RP is used

The figure below (Figure B3) indicates the use of RP as needed and reflects the use of RP for conflict resolution between individuals in Figure B2. The bars for daily use could be indicative of morning/afternoon circle though the wording of the question is not specific and could be a further recognition of the knowledge and understanding of staff. The wording may have been interpreted as RP for conflict resolution given that the majority use RP circles for daily check in/checkout. Further to this is the 10% who have replied “don’t know” as an indication of the need for training and development.

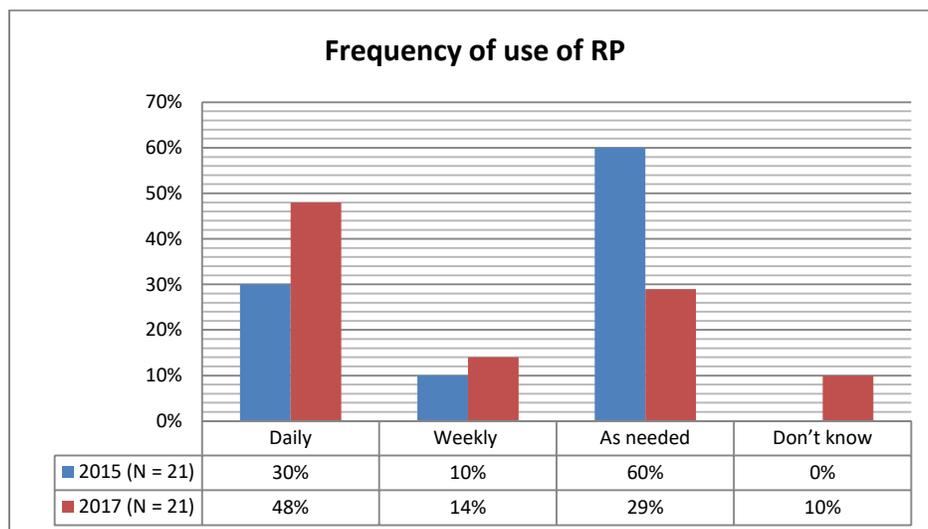


Figure B3: Frequency of use of RP

Staff were surveyed about their perceptions of the success of RP in improving learning and social outcomes. Staff discernment rated RP use as very successful 35-45% and successful as 65-45% the decline in the successful rating could be reflective of the knowledge and understanding of staff given changes in staff make-up and training levels. This is reinforced by the 15% of the 2017 cohort who selected “don’t know” (see figure B4 below). The external audit revealed that students felt similar success with learning and social outcomes “Students appreciate the help they receive in and out of class and value the personalized attention from the teachers”

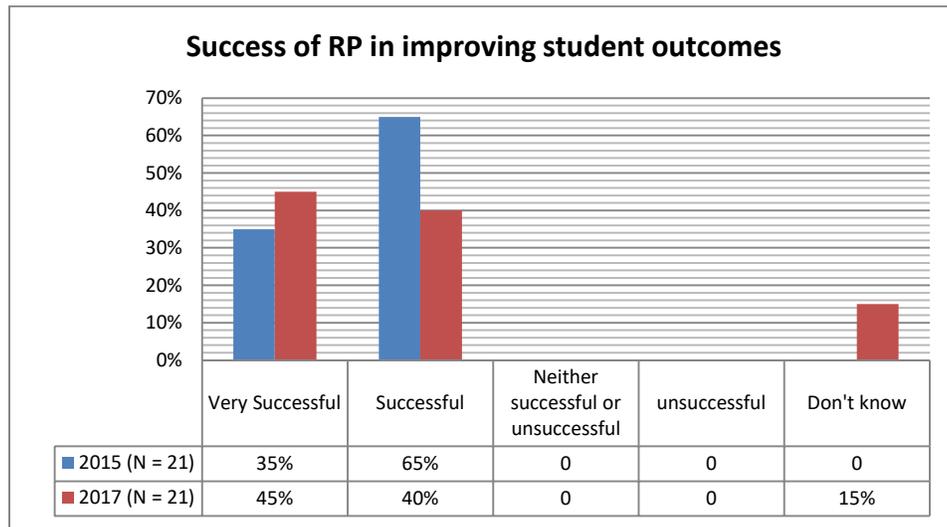


Figure B4: Success of RP in improving student outcomes

Future RP directions are indicated on figure B5. Staff felt that Youth Off The Streets could improve their use of RP though.

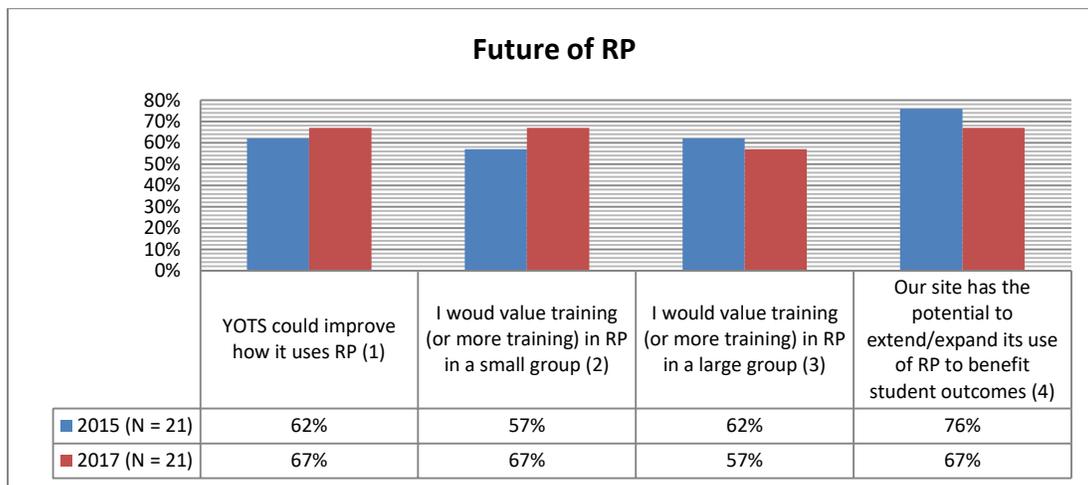


Figure B5: Future of RP

Appendix C

Case Studies – Action Research Projects across all school sites

Craig Davis College

Craig Davis College (CDC) is an accredited independent secondary school supporting students in the Wollongong area and surrounds to complete Years 9 to 11.

Action Research Project Phase One

The Action Research Project at this site focused on social responsibility through cleanliness in the shared kitchens. Students at CDC are supplied food and equipment to make themselves breakfast and lunch every day of the week. With up to 10 students using the kitchen at any given time, cleanliness became an issue with students reluctant to take responsibility for any of the mess and passive aggressive about cleaning up. The inquiry ***“How can we encourage social responsibility through improved community cleanliness and high expectations of hygiene?”*** was established and a plan formulated that included interventions and data collection methods.

Data Collection

The project proceeded as follows:

1. The focus was introduced during already established morning circle time.
2. A pre-intervention survey was conducted where students were asked what chores they performed at home and who they thought was responsible in other areas of the school and wider community.
3. A diary was affixed to the rear of the pantry door where teachers could record their evaluations of the kitchen on a daily basis.
4. Students were asked to generate a list of rules for the kitchen area.
5. Students were recognised at weekly assemblies for their responsible conduct.

- A post-intervention survey was conducted to investigate student perceptions of their kitchen responsibility.

Results

The pre-intervention survey (Figure C1) revealed the majority of students engage with standard household chores such as washing and drying up and cleaning their room while two students do nothing at home. Questions regarding the school and wider community revealed that students declared their social responsibility in terms of “their own stuff”.

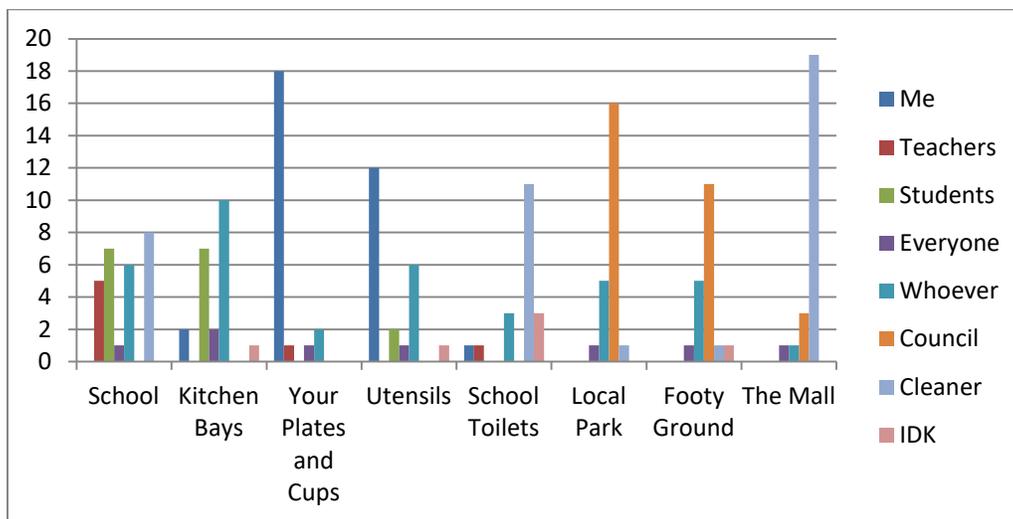


Figure C1: Students perceptions of “Who is responsible for keeping it clean?”

The kitchen diary was an evaluation by staff rating areas 1 (poor) -5 (excellent) and is a visual representation of the journey undertaken. The first few days were rated ones across four areas – bins, bench, sink, floor, however by the end of the term the ratings across the four areas was fives with some hiccups in the middle where rating of one was again appearing.

Rules governing the kitchen were established. Suggested rules included:

- If you don't eat all your food put it in the bin.
- Wipe benches clean when everyone has finished eating.
- If you make a mess in the kitchen you clean it up.
- Clean dishes with hot water and soap.
- If the bin is full, empty it and get a new bag.

The post intervention survey asked students to respond to question about their feelings surrounding kitchen mess and responsibility. Responses indicated students were aware of the communal space and responsibility for keeping it clean. Students were angry if they had been singled out for the mess and deflected responsibility “angry because sometimes it is not me”, “aggravated because it’s not my mess”, “upset because no one cleans their mess” and “I don’t mind if I have made the mess”. More revealing was how students felt when everyone pulled their weight with two thirds of respondents happy when this was the case and rating their own performance in the kitchen.

The encouragement of social responsibility for shared spaces and making explicit everyone’s role, has enabled CDC to improve student social outcomes. It has focused students’ attention on their impact on others and how that impact affects their own wellbeing and that of others.

Phase Two

Craig Davis College (CDC) staff elected to continue with a focus on social responsibility concentrating on the communal kitchen, responsibility and accountability. The approach differed from phase one in one significant aspect – students were actively involved in the project evaluations of the kitchen and future directions to improve performance.

Evaluation

Over the course of Term 1 and 2 2017, the cleanliness of the kitchen has improved and the success has been attributed to:

- Kitchen Rules: developed by the whole group and displayed in both kitchens
- Kitchen Diary: before the kitchen was used each day one person gave the kitchen a cleanliness rating and at the end of break another person would rate the kitchen.
- Weekly Circle: the weekly circle was a good way to evaluate the progress and limitations of the project. It allowed staff and students the opportunity to discuss concerns and problem solve. It became an opportunity for those who consistently cleaned the kitchen to speak up and come up with solutions.

- Rewards
- Staff Awareness and Participation: The staff are the driving force and their constant participation and dedication to teaching the students social responsibility has culminated in changing the culture within the school.

Challenges

The same students being left to clean up: Restorative Circle focusing on the kitchen was implemented on a regular basis and students developed a roster system which gave everyone different responsibilities on different days.

Long term students were the hardest to influence and to combat this issue it was decided that the groups were divided among the kitchens i.e.: stage five 2017 use one kitchen and stage six the other. This provided each group with their own equipment and own area. Not only was the problem sorted but a competition arose as to who had the cleanest kitchen and therefore who would receive the most auction points.

Students out of class using the kitchen and not cleaning up their mess: this created many issues between students. During a Restorative Circle, students proposed using plastic cups/disposable cups which can be thrown out or student names written on them and reused during the day.

Eden College

Eden College is an accredited independent secondary school for young people in south western Sydney who wish to complete Years 9 and 10.

Action Research Project Phase One

The Action Research project focused on gratitude and thankfulness. The question: ***“What happens to student perceptions of gratitude if we teach and model thankfulness?”*** was formulated in response to staff perceptions that students felt entitled and lacked gratitude. Staff believe that students in their care are grateful but perhaps don’t show it because other

issues come up for them creating a cycle of negative thinking. Staff intended to show students how much they have to be grateful for on a daily basis.

Data Collection

Their research plan included:

1. Pre-intervention survey
2. External experiences such as the Refugee Centre.
3. Explicitly teach and model thankfulness using films.
4. Post-intervention survey
5. Staff reflections.

Results

The pre-intervention survey indicated that students were most grateful for their families, mothers and friends. They were also grateful for being at Eden College with 15 out of 23 respondents rating Eden five (where five was the best).

The project focus was introduced during morning circle time. Initiated by the school manager, the conversation focused on being thankful and students were asked to consider what they might be thankful for in their life. Student responses were indicative of capacity/awareness that exists for understanding the impact of their actions, how they are impacted by others and what do other people do for them that they don't have to but choose to do.

Students were taken to a refugee centre where they learnt about the plight of refugees. This was linked to gratitude and thankfulness and students were asked to write on a whiteboard at the end of the day if there was something they were grateful for - most of students wrote "family". During Pastoral Care time staff presented films that could promote thankfulness. 'The Pursuit of Happiness', "Pay it Forward" and "The Blind Side", and students were asked a relevant question in circle the next morning. Students were shown "On The Wall", a film about Turia Pitt overcoming horrific burns to raise money by walking on the Great Wall of China.

Post intervention surveys revealed similar responses to the pre-intervention survey. Using a Likert scale of one (least) and five (very much) students overwhelmingly responded to how they “felt when they were thanked” with 60% rating that five, and 20% rating of four. There was no response below three. That it was “important to tell people thank-you” rated 66.6% at five and 33.3% at four and three.

Phase Two

Teachers decided to continue their original action research project and use a variety of different techniques for data collection such as an initial student gratitude survey, a student gratitude journal, an end of project student gratitude survey and staff survey.

The student gratitude survey revealed that on average students rated their “whole of life thankfulness” at 69/100 and that “if they had to list everything they were thankful for it would be a very long list” which scored 68/100. Respondents acknowledged that as they matured they were thankful for more “people, events and situations” scoring 80/100 culminating in their thankfulness that “their teachers were there for them” scoring 81/100 again reflective of phase one of the project.

Student gratitude journals were similar to phase one survey responses. Students placed family as what they are most grateful for which directly echoes phase one of the project.

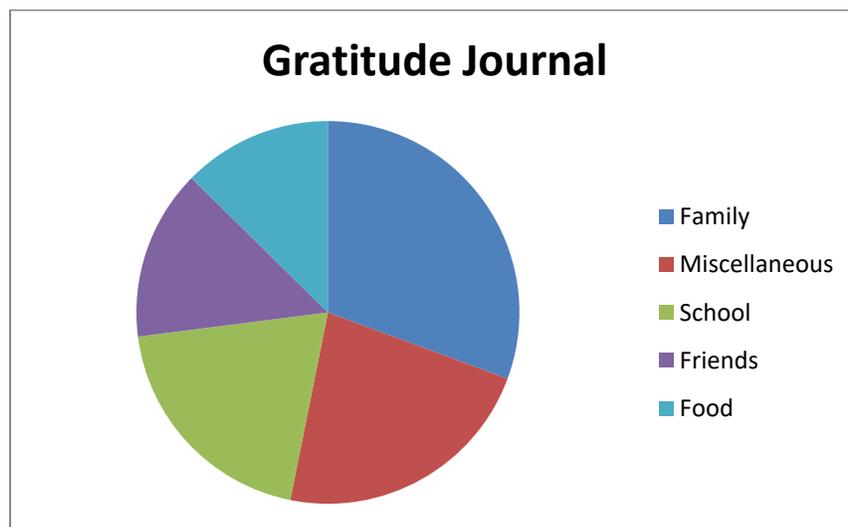


Figure C2: Gratitude Journal responses at Eden College

Evaluation

The successes were witnessed in one on one discussion and through positive reinforcement. Teachers evaluations of the project were in the main positive and as one teacher expressed, “I have experienced differences in some students but I think it was more to do with the consistent work we do with the students ...It seems that when they know we are on their side and here to support them that they are able to realise they have things to be thankful for”.

Discussing the process staff considered the literacy ability of students, the time taken for journals and surveys, consistency of pastoral groups and a lack of staffing. Staff however have seen subtle changes in the students’ attitudes. The action research project highlighted staff practice and what is possible.

Chapel School

Chapel School located west of Sydney, is an accredited independent secondary school for young people who wish to complete Years 9 and 10.

Action Research Project Phase One

The Action Research Project at Chapel School was ***“How does student understanding of circles impact their resolution abilities?”*** This project aimed to see students become confident mediators of social conflict amongst the group. Staff decided they would explicitly teach Restorative Practice to students and highlight why it is used and how it makes a difference. Strategies would include the morning circle, student reflections and student surveys.

Data Collection

Chapel School endured significant disruption during this period. The school manager and one staff member took leave, the school manager gained a position outside of Chapel School and casual staff were employed at the school. The disruptions made it difficult to conduct the entire action research project most notably the explicit teaching of Restorative Practice as the most knowledgeable and experienced staff member was absent.

Phase Two

Teachers at Chapel school decided to expand their action research project to “***How does student understanding of Restorative Practice impact their conflict resolution abilities?***”

Teachers felt that this question better reflected what they wanted to find out about their practice with formal and informal conferencing.

Teachers suggested their data collection incorporate an intervention of explicit teaching of Restorative Practice concepts and post conference student surveys that complement the five Restorative Practice questions used in conflict mediation. The focus of the intervention was relationships, empathy and responsibility. During the explicit teaching of Restorative Practice concepts, empathy and relationships, responsibility and accountability were the focus.

- 1: What was your relationship like with that person at the time of the conflict?
- 2: Do you feel your point of view (opinion) was taken into account?
- 3: Was the decision/outcome that was made fair?
- 4: Was the conflict resolved?
- 5: What is your relationship like with that person now?

There were 32 post conference responses gathered. Students felt that: their point of view had been taken into account; that the decision/outcome was fair and the conflict resolved. The overwhelming majority of students felt their relationships with those they had been in conflict with had been repaired or improved through the process.

Figure C3 indicates the state of the relationships prior to participating in a restorative conversation.

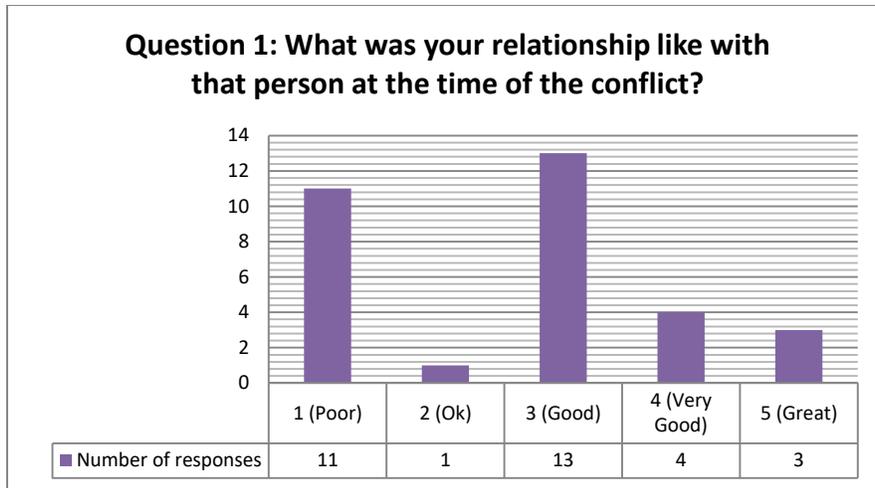


Figure C3: Relationship at the time of the conflict

Figure D4 shows student perceptions of the relationships, post restorative conversation.

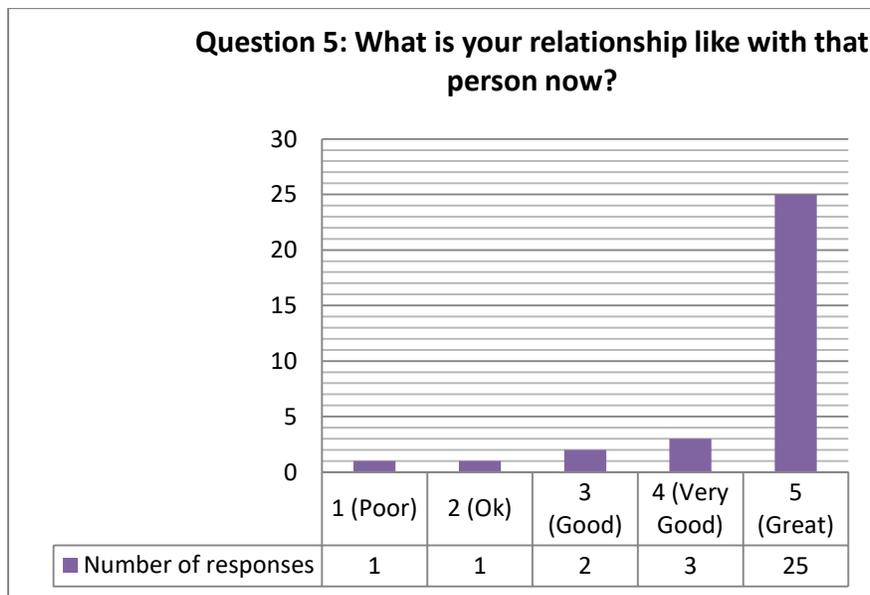


Figure C4: Relationship post RP

The figures indicate the growth in relationship between students and is directly correlated to the intervention of a restorative conversation where each student is given the opportunity to voice their perceptions and work together to come to a mutually agreed resolution.

Evaluation

Whilst the results indicate that restorative practice conversations work well in restoring relationships and community, the results do not show how the intervention of explicit teaching of RP may have influenced results. The action research project has validated the use of restorative conversations and has shown the importance of empirical data to drive improvement. Explicitly teaching students about RP was not followed up with further teachings and feedback from students about their understanding. This process has shown the importance of guiding questions and how the collection of data needs to be specific to the question.

Challenges

The project has evidenced the need in many cases for time and personnel to address issues of conflict and tension between students. The restorative conversations were in some cases judged to be late in the conflict and thereby extracting more focus and attention from staff in order to rectify difficulties.

Challenges in answering the action research project question and what data to collect have been demonstrated. The feedback questions did not incorporate questions on whether or not the students could see connections between what they had been taught and practice.

Step-Up

The Step Up program helps students finish school and get on track for further education, training and employment. Step-Up provides students with the opportunity to complete their Preliminary Course (Year 11) and their Higher School Certificate (Year 12).

Action Research Project Phase One

The research project for teachers at Step-Up was ***“How can we encourage and strengthen student accountability for actions and behaviours through a Restorative Practice approach?”*** and centred upon attendance and work presented. Driving this focus was firstly that

some students' purpose for attending was for Centrelink payments rather than a desire to learn and achieve. Secondly it was felt that students were generally reasonable at problem solving in the immediate present but these skills were disabled if issues emerged.

Data Collection

Data was planned for circle time and Pastoral Care time where lessons would be delivered as a means to help students problem solve. There were a few issues out of the control of staff and students and data was increasingly difficult to collect. Discussion revealed that staff felt the question was too complex and it needed to be more specific, concentrating on one area and determining actions.

Phase Two

During the second cycle of the action research project Step Up elected to modify their original project. Teachers felt their inquiry question was too big and too general and suggested that the focus should be on 'our impact on other people' and focus on the bus and the kitchen. The intake of new students into Year 11 from a variety of contexts necessitated acclimatising students to the structures and processes of the school and as such the focus was the communal areas of the bus and the kitchen. Their action research project was guided by ***"How can we encourage student responsibility and accountability when using the kitchen and bus?"***

The focus was introduced into the morning circle and charts were put into the kitchen and the bus. Unfortunately data collection on the kitchen was haphazard as the primary collector was part time and other staff members were transporting students at the end of the day.

Circle time was used to focus on the impact of a dirty kitchen on other YOTS staff members who used the kitchen. The focus on the bus included rubbish and graffiti. Students were prone to leave rubbish and clothing items behind on the afternoon. Students were given two official warnings of unacceptable bus presentation. On the third occasion where the bus was unacceptable the students were informed they would have to make their own way to the train station in the afternoon. This occurred on 2 occasions. Following the walk to the station

students were more respectful of the bus and the supervisory teacher noted the bus has been clean ever since.

Evaluation

Staff believe that teaching students how their actions impact others is significant and requires an ongoing focus. Part of the project was haphazard due to staffing limitations and this highlights the need for consistency. Clarity around outcomes, data collection and interventions would possibly benefit staff uptake in the project.

Action Research Case Studies - Overall Conclusions

The difficulties experienced served to exasperate staff and create a heavier workload, particularly when staff were absent – an often ongoing issue in small schools. School staff involved in the action research projects appreciate the difficulty of an overarching question and the related methods of data collection. Having said that the insights gained into how to investigate their own practice illuminated the value of classroom research, the needed direction from planning and how the project is improved through collaboration.

Appendix D - Student Interviews

A founding principle of RP is to give all parties a voice so that they can be heard and understood. One or two students from each site were interviewed to gauge their perceptions of the impact that RP have on their learning and social outcomes. The following themes emerged from the data.

Previous school experiences

K” details her behaviour in school and the difficulty the school experienced in handling her behaviour. Her behaviour is of a student disengaged with schooling and the measures of detention and suspension appear to have had little impact.

I had a really bad temper especially with my mum and I was disrespectful to her. I was really bad at school, I went to school but I didn't do any of the work, just sit around and truant. (I got into trouble for) disrespecting teachers, I would always talk to my friends a lot and they would tell me to be quiet, and I would back chat, I'd be angry I didn't like being sent out of class and I would get into trouble... I never went to them (detention) truanting, once for fighting with a student, a physical fight and a teacher nearly got hurt but I stopped it after it like yeah I didn't want to hurt her, but disrespecting, swearing at teachers, yeah I was really a bitch! (Female, “K”, 16)

Beginning at Youth Off The Streets

Starting in a new school environment is often fraught with fear and anxiety and students beginning at YOTS schools have similar emotions. These emotions are possibly compounded by rhetoric from family or school authorities surrounding their enrolment.

(I was) shy, yeah it was bad, I remember the first day and I hated it...I got told this was like my last chance and that really hit me (Male, “A”, 16)

“A” openly admitted his shyness at the beginning of his time at YOTS. He clearly feels he can speak about his feelings, one of the hallmarks of RP – being listened to without fear of judgement.

Nervous (why) well I wanted to start new and I didn't want anyone knowing what I was like and I was nervous about what the teachers thought I was like and I changed and I made a promise to mum she didn't like me getting suspended and I had to change (Female, “K”, 16)

“K” describes how she felt and why. Her focus on what she was like previously and not wanting anyone to know, speaks to her fear of judgement, fear of the future and her mother as her source of support.

I found out about it on the website and cause this juvey (juvenile justice worker) who used to work with me and she came with me to apply to this school. And then yeah I started. I felt weird ..there wasn't many people and we did circles..I was just shy and it felt like rehab (Female, “S”, 15)

“S” conveys the alternative context of YOTS schools. The schools all expect that students will participate in circles from the beginning of their enrolment and the contrast to their previous school experience is clear in the words “weird” and “rehab”.

Introduction to Restorative Practice

Students new to YOTS schools are introduced to RP through participation in circle time. Whilst the concept of RP is outlined at new enrolment interviews it is not explicitly taught to students where they may understand the processes, practices and purpose. As it is an embedded process in the schools, students are in circle on their first morning.

I'm not sure how I felt but I just didn't like it – I thought of it as a roll call, like at normal schools you'd have a roll call but it was a lot different because that roll call is just to see if you are there but in the circles it's to see how everyone is going...at the beginning I didn't really see the point of it (Male, “A”, 16)

“A” was confronted on his first morning with a circle. He states the significant difference between circles and roll-call and it is to see “how everyone is going”. He also didn’t see the point which underscores the external audit findings and recommendations of education and information for students.

I was really shy and every time I was asked how I was feeling I would just say good even if I wasn’t, and so over time it has been a lot better (Female, “C”, 15)

“C” reveals her shyness and reluctance to let anyone into her world. Clearly she has acclimatised and now feels better about circles and being asked ‘how are you going?’

nervous and they were asking me questions like where I came from and I was doing a lot of talking and I didn’t like it because I didn’t want anyone to know about me, I just wanted to keep to myself (Female, “K”, 16)

“K” exhibits similarities to “C” in not wanting “anyone to know about me”, just wanting to hide from the world. “K” was quite happy to provide an interview and be asked questions by someone she did not know and this in itself is testament to her growth and development.

It is this growth and development that works simultaneously with building an inclusive community. When students see others similar to themselves, observe that people have an opportunity to speak without feeling judged, that they will be listened to, they begin to open up similar to the students who have been interviewed.

Inclusive Community

Restorative Practice aims to repair relationships when there has been an offence and one of the guiding principles is using high accountability and high support when dealing with difficult situations.

by the questions they ask (in circle), so they ask a question and you just have to answer it and there is no right or wrong answer you just answer how you want to .. (Female, “C”, 15)

“C” conveys her understanding that there is no judgment in circles. No judgment is an attribute of RP conversations and circles.

I love getting to know how the other students are feeling as well as myself and knowing that everyone is there for me when I am not feeling the best and when everyone is feeling good it is good to hear everyone is happy. And I like the questions to cause you get to know about people (Female, “C”, 15)

“C” goes on to describe how circles can build relationships and how she feels she is in a supportive place.

it makes them feel cared for and not so alone (Female, “B”, 14)

“B” has unknowingly expressed how the circles used help build an inclusive, supportive community and that she is part of that.

We are like a big family talking about problems and how to solve them, and how everyone’s day is and talking about things we should do and ask questions that you probably wouldn’t be asked and how can we resolve it and I wouldn’t do that at home before (Female, “K”, 16)

“K” has expressed how it all comes together for her as a “big family”. This is the inclusive nature of RP - talking together, solving problems together and the space to ask things without judgement. This is underscored by the findings of the external audit where “The dignified manner in which the teachers engage with the students – language and tonality – creates in each individual school environment an uplifting and optimistic energy”.

The inclusive community gives everyone a voice and this again is one of the underlying principals of RP – everyone gets a chance to be heard.

she does them in the morning to check in on us cause if we are not alright we can’t sit here all day and do the work (Female, “A”, 16)

The ability of check-in circles establishes a grounding for the day and “A” states what most teachers anecdotally understand: if students are out of balance they are unable to do the school work and in this sense RP improves learning outcomes for students. “The Restorative approach as part of teaching and learning pedagogy” was a finding in the external audit which accentuates the insight provided by female student “A” about the ability to work.

Restorative Practice Strategies

During ILPs, discussions centre on what students want to achieve, what the student is doing, whether that is working for them and how can they plan to move forward. The regular goal setting reinforces the guiding principle of responsibility and accountability.

The nature of ILPs and goal setting for this student is a source of pride in having achieved them. Setting them each term allows students to continually experience successes and understand responsibility and accountability as success.

Circles at the start of a lesson that's still about feelings but at the end of that circle she tells us about the lesson and then at the end of the lesson it's about feelings again and what have you learnt in the lesson. (Male, “J”, 15)

For “J” the lesson is reinforced through the circle and it's this reinforcement that contributes to improved learning and social outcomes for students.

well XXX is always there to help us get through the day ... it's the circles that help that (Male, “J”, 15)

The external audit found that students appreciate the help they receive in and out of class and also value the personalised attention from the teachers and “J” states openly that there is a teacher there for him.

yeah I reckon it helps a lot cause if someone is not having a good day and you go up to them and they like lash out at you but they told everyone in the circle (Female, “C”, 15)

It makes you calm and puts you in the right mindset to work, to learn, to listen
(Female, "B", 14)

*if everyone in the circle were all fine and then this one person says .. it makes me
feel down a bit, like I want to go and talk to that person but at the same time I
don't want to say the wrong thing ..* (Female, "S", 15)

Impact of the Restorative Practice Culture

The impact on students in Youth Off The Streets schools are many and varied and students express this impact in terms of what has mattered to them the most.

*Big impact inside and outside ..like XXX (manager) will always say think before
you say something* (Male, "J", 15)

This statement by "J" highlights how he makes an effort to think about what he says knowing his words may have an impact. This is encouraged through RP strategies that staff use and it reinforces external findings such as "The manner in which the teachers, instruct, guide, correct, redirect and encourage students while in and out of the classroom".

*Opening up, trust .. I am starting to get trust back cause I lost that ages ago with
all my mates and everything, like my mates used to snitch me into the police*
(Male, "J", 15)

"J" further admits that trust has been an issue for him. Trust is gained through the non-judgemental manner encouraged in circle and RP conversations. "The high level of trust and affirming learning relationship modelled by all the adults" in the external audit reinforces the environment created through RP is conducive to building relationships and inclusive community.

*So mostly the question that is asked has to do with the lesson .. like about the
hypotenuse or trigonometry and she will ask everyone and it will get you thinking
about the lesson and at the end of the lesson that just checks up on whether you*

have been focusing, if you were listening that lesson and it keeps it in your head a bit longer (Female, "C", 15)

"C" comments on the learning environment and it is clear that circle structured in this manner have had an impact on what she retains from her lessons.

it really helps with relationships especially when we do circles within groups you feel so much better letting things out than holding it all in (Female, "C", 15)

"C" reflects on the feelings gained by being able to be honest and open. She clearly knows that holding in her emotions is detrimental to her health and is glad about the safe space created for her where she can let things out.

It's really different now and now when I talk to her (mum) about driving, I get really angry and she just yaps off ... now I just say ok mum ok we will talk about it another day and I just end it so we don't stress out, where normally I'd be like this and that and be angry and explode .. (Female, "K", 16)

"K" has developed a different method of dealing with her mother. She is proud that she has developed a sense of calm and is in control of her emotional reactions. This stems from the RP method of dealing with conflict and the conversations that support and guide students to develop healthy self regulation.

When I first left XXX my attendance was about 50 now I think I am at 94, so if you looked at my school record I was about at 50, my work was all right but coming here it went to about 60 and now 90 because I have taken a couple of personal days but other than that really good (Female, "K", 16)

"K" has improved her attendance and like "A" in the previous section, she is proud of her achievements. Clearly her attendance has been a goal which she has achieved. Improved attendance at this level impacts her learning outcomes because she is in class twice the amount of time.

I have changed 100% ..my attitude – I'm more calm now, my respect is like higher now so that's what I think for myself. I've built my respect up and my confidence and to deal with the situation the right way (Female, "S", 15)

"S" is very proud of herself and the changes she has brought about. She is more confident in dealing with situations and has respect for herself and others. Respect has been taught through circle, non-judgmental listening and being able to have a voice in a safe space.

Further to this the student interviews revealed the importance of being listened to, of having a voice and not being judged.

Appendix E - External Audit

Findings

Key Strengths:

- The majority of staff have been exposed to Restorative Practices
- The Restorative strategies being consistently utilized are: Affective Questions, Learning Circles and Restorative Mediation
- All staff and volunteers participate in Circles
- All staff are familiar with Affective Questioning Language and script
- Circles, & Restorative Mediation are used to resolve conflict issues between students
- Restorative Practices is discussed at enrolment interviews with parents/carers and students
- Restorative Practices is referenced in the policy and procedures documentation
- Students are happy to be at school, they value the support of the staff and respect them highly
- Students appreciate the help they receive in and out of class, and also value the personalized attention from the teachers
- The students commented on how the teachers make learning easy
- The parents are kept highly informed by staff, and are familiar and supportive of Restorative Practices

Recommendations:

- Integrate Restorative language & processes into policies, procedures, employment of staff & student interviews
- Offer volunteers the opportunity to learn about RP as part of their induction
- Shared understanding around how circles can be used and facilitated
- Provide information/education for the students, parents/carers about Restorative Practices
- Review how RP is embraced and practiced with all staff within the organisation
- Visual displays of the Restorative conversation in the learning space
- Explore practical ways of freeing up staff when there is a need to process an incident Restoratively
- Clarity around the Restorative mediation process with staff- when, how & who, time frame, roles etc.
- Integration of Restorative language and philosophy as part of staff performance issues and appraisals
- Sharing Restorative experiences and Key Learnings with other staff at each of the schools programs

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