

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN SCHOOLS - A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

A program presented by Marist Youth Care for Primary and Secondary Schools

Background

The Restorative Justice Program is a whole school commitment to quality relationships. It establishes a philosophy and a set of practices that reflect a commitment to inclusiveness and collaborative problem solving. It provides schools with strategies to manage students with challenging behaviours while maintaining the respect and dignity of all parties.

To date there have been seventy five schools involved in the Restorative Justice Program from 2003-2006. From the Pilot Program there is clear evidence, both statistical and anecdotal, that the Restorative Justice Program is responding extremely well to the emerging needs of schools to manage student behaviour and interpersonal conflict.

Teachers are skilled in how to interact with students following a misbehaviour and how to problem solve with students and parents. Middle managers and executives are skilled in techniques to resolve conflict and restore damaged relationships. Student leaders are trained in how to problem solve with the younger students and act as mentors for them. School communities develop a Restorative culture that is committed to inclusiveness. A Restorative culture is grounded in the Gospel values of compassion, forgiveness and inclusiveness.

Program Components

Schools are asked to commit to the program for one year. During this year the following components are offered.

1. Staff Development Day - One Day

This initial staff development day provides information about Restorative Justice Principles and is coupled with a continuum of practical strategies to better manage student behaviour. This course challenges school communities to reflect on their school culture in order to foster positive relationships.

2. Middle Manager and Executive Training - Two Half Days

These workshops explore strategies to manage conflict and develop skills in Mediation using a Restorative script. Skills are explored in how to challenge staff in a Restorative way. A model is provided for managing difficult parent interviews.

3. Student Leadership Training - One Day

Student leaders are taught a set of structured skills to engage younger students in situations of conflict based on Restorative Problem Solving.

4. Parent Education - One Evening

This explores the challenges parents face in raising children and teenagers. A range of strategies and guiding principles are provided to encourage parents in their endeavor to develop quality relationships that reflect a Restorative approach.

5. Spirituality Day- One Day

This workshop explores the values of compassion, forgiveness and inclusiveness. Teachers are encouraged to see the connection between these values, Restorative Practices and their own sense of spirituality.

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