



in mind and heart:

one school's journey into restorative practices

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Villanova College



Vincit Veritas ~ Truth Conquers



College Context

a 'traditional' boys school

- *established 1948*
- *approx 1100 students, Years 5-12 (ages 10-18)*
- *until 2005 – Primary Years 5-7, Secondary Years 8-12*
- *teaching staff of approx 75, few changes, many >20 years*



History/Timeline

early 2003...

- *Schooling Project established (whole school renewal)*
- *Researched literature (six months!) relating to*
 - *adolescent development*
 - *middle years of schooling reform*
 - *boys' education*
 - *brain research*
 - *theories of teaching and learning*
 - *management of students*



History/Timeline

mid 2003...

- *Schooling Project* began working on reforming:
 - *curriculum*
 - *pedagogy*
 - *organisational structure*
 - *behaviour management*

*looking towards developing three 'schools within schools'
primary – middle - senior*

The 'traditional' approach

"Schools have traditionally adopted a 'quasi-judicial' approach to the management of student misconduct...

In practice, this means:

1. *When rules have been broken, sanctions must be applied*
2. *A belief that discipline = punishment = justice, and that punishment will change behaviour and achieve compliance*
3. *[A belief that] punishment is the best form of deterrence, it is important to send a clear message to the school community*
4. *There is pressure for a quick fix, therefore some penalties are an administrative convenience*
5. *Justice is seen to be done through punitive sanctions meted out by administrators often far removed from the incident*
6. *Those affected by the behaviour are often excluded from decisions about how to respond"*

from Thorsborne, M & Vinegrad, D *Restorative Practices in Schools* 2002

Problems with the 'traditional' approach

*“Too rapid an escalation to punishment
risks making young people more angry
than thoughtful”*

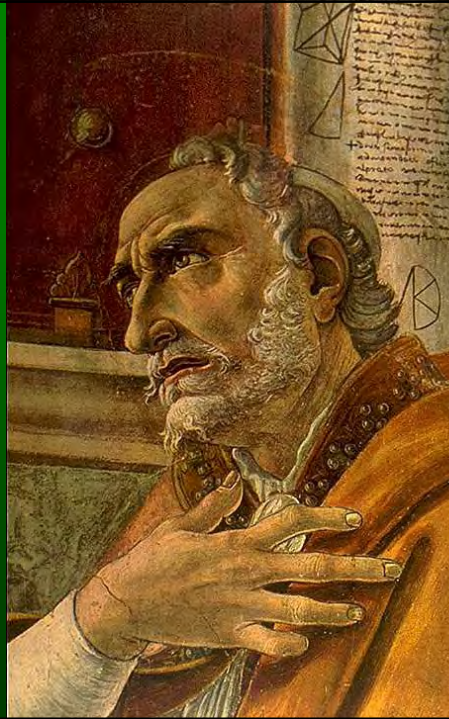
Braithwaite, J. (1989) *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Problems with the 'traditional' approach

- ✗ wrongdoers aren't really held accountable
- ✗ often doesn't involve those most affected
- ✗ wrongdoing is seen as 'breaking the rules'
- ✗ threat of punishment doesn't effectively deter
- ✗ doesn't best encourage right values
- ✗ doesn't effectively change behaviour

“children often endure the punishments which are designed to compel their learning, rather than submit to the process of learning”

Augustine, City of God XXI, 14



Discovery

‘Discovery’ of Restorative Practices

•‘Restorative Justice and School Discipline: Mutually Exclusive?’

Lisa Cameron & Marg Thorsborne

•‘Restorative Justice in Everyday Life’

Ted Wachtel & Paul McCold

led very soon to ...

• the work of Braithwaites, Pranis, Nathanson, Morrison, Hopkins

• a seminar with Terry O’Connell

*there was a framework/philosophy that was coherent,
and that echoed our central value of relationships*



Discovery

What appealed particularly in Restorative Practices

- *its central focus on people and relationships*
- *that it was a philosophy rather than just a model*
- *the coherent nature of the philosophy*
- *that it reflected our understanding of our own heritage, charism*
- *that it was an educative approach*
- *that it was respectful of the dignity of all concerned*
- *that it provided a positive focus*
- *there was an extensive literature, a vibrant 'network'*



Augustinian Philosophy

Restorative Practices 'themes' and Augustine

- *separating the deed from the doer*
- *respect, care for individuals*
- *valuing, promoting strong relationships*
- *promoting the common good*

"Love the sinner, but hate the sin"

Augustine

What are 'Restorative Practices'

- a way of viewing conflict and wrongdoing that focuses on
 - the harm these cause to relationships, and
 - the obligation to repair that harm
- a way for students to face the real consequences of their behaviour

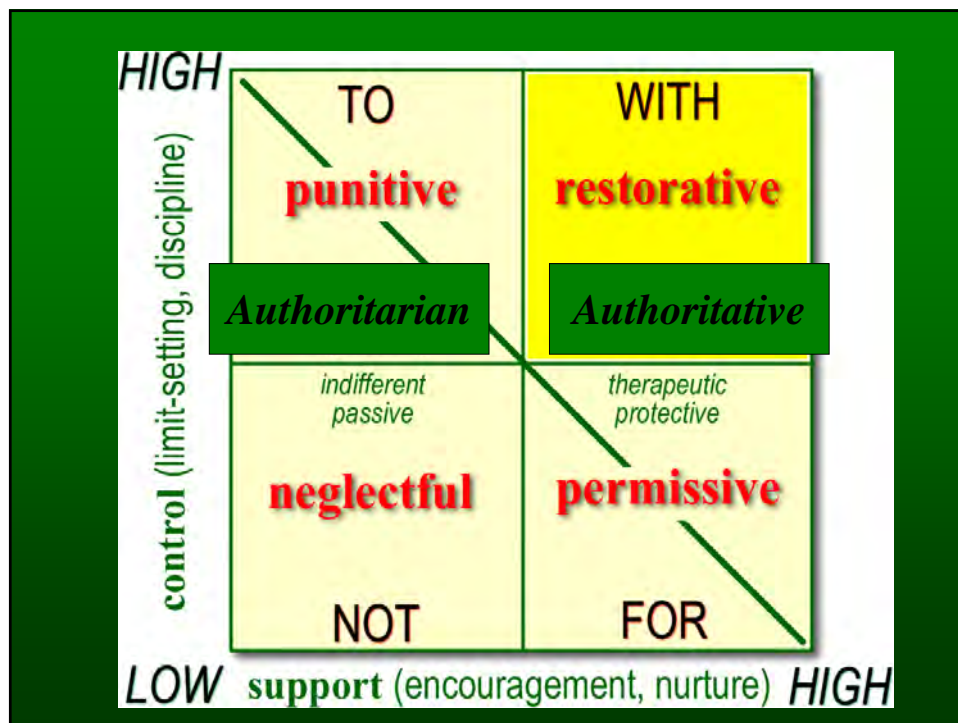
Fundamental Principles

- Misbehaviour is a violation of people and relationships
- Violations create obligations and liabilities
- A restorative approach seeks to put things right

(after Zehr and Mika, 1997)

Our Aims in Restorative Practices

- To better *educate* students towards self-directed right behaviour
- To better *promote, nurture* and *protect* healthy relationships among members of the community
- To better hold students accountable for the *real consequences* of wrongdoing



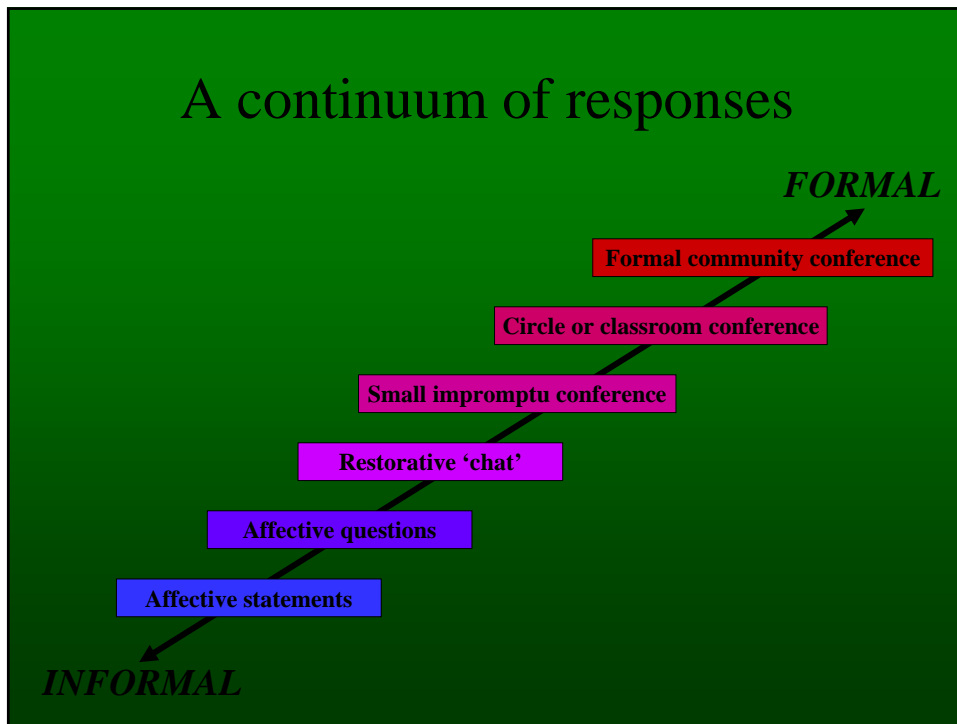
We operate restoratively by...

- Having high expectations and insisting on high standards of behaviour
- While providing high levels of support and care for individuals
...being firm, but fair...
- Focussing on restoring any harm done, and using an incident primarily as a 'teachable moment'

This involves...

- Clearly articulating and reinforcing *expectations*
- Adhering to *fair process* in all cases of conflict and wrongdoing
- Recognising that wrongdoing primarily
– and perhaps most importantly –
causes harm to relationships, and that this *harm must be repaired*
in order to move forward

A continuum of responses



Restorative questions

- *What happened?*
- *What were you thinking at the time?*
- *What have you thought about since?*
- *Who has been affected by what you did?*
- *In what way?*
- *What do you think you need to do to make things right?*

Terry O'Connell, *Restorative Practices in Schools: Connecting Values to Practice*, Conference, October 20, 2003, Brisbane

...for those affected

- *What did you think when you realised what had happened?*
- *What impact has this incident had on you and others?*
- *What has been the hardest thing for you?*
- *What do you think needs to happen to make things right?*

Terry O'Connell, *Restorative Practices in Schools: Connecting Values to Practice*, Conference, October 20, 2003, Brisbane



Contact

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Community Conferences

Community Conferencing is based on the *scripted model* of conferencing developed and implemented by Terry O'Connell & other police in Wagga Wagga, 1991.

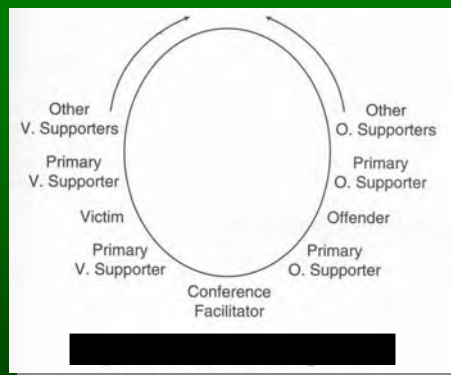
To be eligible for a conference, offenders must admit to the offense, and both offender(s) and victim(s) must agree to participate. The victim's choice is taken to be more important – in location, timing etc.

The conference includes the offender(s) and their supporters, the victim(s) and their supporters, and any other 'party to the offense.'

Preparation for the conference can be substantial and is done by the facilitator *speaking personally with each* of the potential participants.

O'Connell, T., Wachtel, T & Wachtel, B. (1999) *Conferencing Handbook: The New REAL JUSTICE Training Manual*
The Piper's Press, Pipersville, Pennsylvania.

Community Conferences



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Community Conferences

Sequence of the Conference:

- INTRODUCTION – *the facilitator never uses the terms 'offender,' 'victim'*
- PREAMBLE – *the facilitator sets the focus for the conference – the 'terms'*
- THE OFFENDER'S STORY – *what happened and how people have been affected*
- THE VICTIM'S STORY – *they explain how they have been affected*
- OTHERS – *talk about how they have been affected (supporters of both)*
- RETURN TO OFFENDERS – *another opportunity to speak*
- THE AGREEMENT PHASE – *facilitator limits his responses to clarification*
- CLOSING THE CONFERENCE – *brings to a close, open to other comments*
- REINTEGRATION – *facilitator prepares the contract, participants interact over refreshments*

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The Piper's Press, Pipersville, Pennsylvania.

Community Conferences

A Conference attempts to meet the emotional needs of victims by -

- *Providing an opportunity to express their feelings*
- *Having them hear acknowledgement from loved ones, supporters*
- *Providing assurance that what happened was unfair, undeserved*
- *Direct contact with offenders – hear shame or remorse, answer questions*

Participation in the conference must be the victim's choice.

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Community Conferences

The free expression of emotion also impacts offenders –

- *Offenders experience shame in two ways – externally through sanction, condemnation by family, friends, community, and internally via conscience*
- *Reintegrative shaming occurs in the context of care and support and separates the deed from the doer – the unacceptable behaviour is rejected, but the individual's worth is affirmed.*

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The Piper's Press, Pipersville, Pennsylvania.

Braithwaite's Hypothesis

'Where individual wrongdoers are confronted (SHAMED) within the continuum of respect and support, then a process of REINTEGRATION can begin'.

Braithwaite, J. (1989) *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Community Conferences

- Conferences can also be held to deal with 'victimless' offenses – such as truanting. The script is slightly modified in these cases.
- Conferences are not possible in all cases – e.g. where either party chooses not to participate, where the facilitator is not comfortable dealing with the particular case, where time and space maybe do not allow, etc.
- Conferences are not a panacea. They can be highly successful, but not every conference achieves its purposes.
- Conference agreements have accountability provisions built-in, to ensure that the agreement is met.

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