

LEAD TEACHERS IN RESTORATIVE PRACTICE - PD18653

Project Description

The objective of this project was to create a group of teachers who were very familiar with Restorative Practice and to provide time for them to work together to develop a framework for passing their knowledge on to other teachers in SWLSB.

Teachers worked for two meetings to consolidate their knowledge. They watched videos, read relevant texts and discussed their personal experiences to come to a better understanding of how Restorative Classrooms and schools work and feel. Teachers brought back video of themselves working in circles (both academic and problem solving) so that the team could discuss the strengths and weaknesses of one another's practice. It quickly became evident that each person felt most comfortable and had adopted different aspects of Restorative Practice. For some, classroom circles were an everyday occurrence, while others felt more comfortable tackling the use of Affective language. In one school, the teachers had established a Restorative Room where students can go at lunch to sort out conflicts.

Two Special education technicians who were using Restorative Practice to mediate in situations outside of the classroom joined us. Their contribution was very valuable because they usually have to intervene in the harder cases and they were able to reassure the team that, with practice, this is an effective way to solve schoolyard problems.

On our second full day of meetings, the group was ready to start planning a full-day workshop for Primary teachers in our board. However, it became evident that we would not have sufficient funding from this PDIG to accomplish all of our goals. Consequently, we applied for, and received, funding under the Inter-school PIC funding to add an extra 2 days to our release time, in order to prepare and deliver a workshop with the knowledge we had gained.

Project Goals

The goals of this project were:

- To provide time for a group of dedicated master teachers to consolidate their knowledge and create resource documents for their peers
- To provide opportunities for teachers to practice using circles in a wide variety of contexts in their classrooms and to share this experience with the group
- To make videos of classroom circles in action
- To work on strategies for using circles as a tool in ELA, FSL, Math and Science; and rubrics for evaluating circle talk in language classes will be shared on an open online platform
- To reflect on of how the use of restorative circles can be adapted to different age groups from Kindergarten to Secondary school

- To provide a resource as experts in Restorative Practice for the SWLSB community and potentially the larger Anglophone community in Quebec

Project Outcomes

Feedback from teachers at our final meeting in May was enthusiastically positive. Ashley Stone commented that, as Special Education Technician, she sees a difference in behaviour in the classes in her school that use Restorative Practices (RP). The group agreed that RP created safer classroom environments that, in turn, led to a safer school community.

Teachers appreciated the opportunity to read about RP and they felt that the pressure imposed by having a deadline to present the workshop helped them focus attention in a more constructive way. They also mentioned that the importance of seeing what is happening in other classrooms. They felt validated in their thinking and commented, "It's not just me!" It was also good to hear from teachers rather than consultants or administrators because it made it much more relevant to their own situation..."Not just in theory." Participants commented that it is difficult to implement RP in a vacuum and it takes a team who understands that the long-term effort will pay off in the end. They were inspired to see that a month of hard work in the class to familiarize themselves and the class with RP can pay off by building a sense of safety in the class. They felt that when there is willingness to try RP, and a solid plan for implementation, the results are appreciable.

Individually, the participants felt that they were inspired and much more confident after this experience. They have a broader understanding of the multiple facets of RP. Previously, most of the teachers had not concentrated on using and teaching Affective Language Strategies. They enjoyed the opportunity to bounce ideas off one another and feel they are better equipped to explain RP to their colleagues. Participating in planning and delivering a workshop on RP gave them a solid understanding of the relationship between using circles and talk strategies in the classroom as community building tools and the strategies needed to implement Restorative Discipline in the school. They have deeper understanding of how Academic Circles can meet the requirements of the curriculum while simultaneously building community and teaching social skills.

Participants in this workshop created several videos of themselves in action using RP. Unfortunately, the quality of the videos was not very good but the videos were very helpful to the group and they used them to coach one another in how to get to the "best practices" in RP. Some of the footage is included in the PowerPoint presentation the group created for the workshop on March 28, 2019.

Reinvestment

PDG Participants enjoyed the collaboration between teachers and Special Education Technicians. After participating in this project, a teacher and Special Education Technician at Pierre Elliott Elementary school are collaborating to write a plan to revitalize the implementation of RP at their school. They have come to understand that before Restorative Discipline can work in the school, they have to build on the use of Affective Language and Circle Talk to promote classroom community. This plan will outline strategies for re-aligning the current situation at the school.

This project also had an effect on the 25 teachers who attended the workshop presented by these teachers on March 28, 2019. Feedback at the closing circle was very positive and workshop participants

said that they are inspired and better prepared to use RP in their classrooms. A summary of the exit cards from this workshop can be found at: https://swlsb-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/anicholson_swlauriersb_qc_ca/EVw-pFiCOiJJmIHLHzFcL_YBDp3LgL5v9s0dFO80W3SciQ

PDIG members created a [Facebook group](#) for teachers at SWLSB who are interested in learning more about RP and sharing experiences practicing RP.

The [PowerPoint Presentation](#) developed for the workshop will be available on the Pedagogical Services page of www.swlsb.ca under Restorative Practices.

Teachers involved in this PDIG are keen to continue working together next year to deliver workshops and assist colleagues in developing their skills in Restorative Practice. They hope to meet with the group of principals who are working in Restorative Practice to brainstorm how best to join forces and create more capacity in our school board.