

Strengthening Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

*Learning from the
journeys of seven schools*

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Foreword



One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

Carl Jung



At the start of each year, a teacher sees new faces and sometimes, new attitudes. Whether this becomes an opportunity or a challenge lies in the hands of skilful teachers to engage the hearts, minds and souls of these students.

For teachers like Mrs Agnes Lim, Head of Student Well-being at St Anthony's Canossian Primary¹, it is a rejuvenating experience and an opportunity to make a difference to another group of students. She recalled a student who did not do well in school but excelled in art. She told the student not to see herself as a failure but encouraged her to pursue her passion. The student is now a professional photographer.

I, too, can vouch for how a teacher's influence had impacted my life course. After completing my PSLE, my parents decided to leave the choice of selecting a secondary school entirely to me. If not for my P6 Form Teacher who cajoled me to apply for a secondary school that I thought was out of my league, I would have chosen something else due to my lack of confidence. My teacher believed in my potential and that gave me a confidence booster, which was carried through to secondary school.

When I became the Principal of a secondary school, what made the journey immensely gratifying were the many teachers who went out of their way to advocate for the well-being of their students and made home visits steadfastly to persuade disengaged students to return to school.

I recall a young teacher who insisted that the school had to adopt strong punitive measures as deterrence to misbehaviour when he first joined the school. One day, a boy in his class was caught hurting another classmate. While I was contemplating what action to take, the teacher came to my office to explain the circumstances leading to the misbehaviour and offered mitigating measures. I was pleased to see how being a Form Teacher had helped him develop strong bonds with his class and aided his professional growth. Because of this strong relationship, he was willing to work with the student to modify his behaviour and guide him along.

Indeed, many of you will also have inspirational stories to tell of how positive Teacher-Student Relationships have helped students, at-risk or otherwise, to turn around their adversities and change them to opportunities. Research has shown this to be one of the strong protective factors for building resilience in students. It helps them enjoy school more, get along better with their peers and feel more connected to their school. These relationships buffer students at risk of school failure (Ladd & Burgess, 2001), and also contribute to their academic and social-emotional development. (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

In our visits to schools to understand their processes for building resilience, developing social and emotional competencies in students and promoting positive relationships, we came across many good stories and practices. We felt the need to collate and document the good work done by these schools so that their approaches can be shared with a wider audience.

For a start, we have focused on three school-wide approaches: Transactional Analysis, Positive Education and Restorative Practices which some schools have adopted to strengthen positive TSR and the culture of care. These approaches provide a systematic and coherent guide for schools to direct their efforts and resources, determine whether something works or not and where to go next. They also help teachers to develop positive regard for students, understand students better, and be equipped with TSR competencies.

The seven schools featured here have kindly shared some of their key considerations, learning points and challenges faced during the implementation of the approaches undertaken. We hope that you will find this resource useful and we would welcome more schools to offer their stories on how they have strengthened positive TSR and their school's culture of care.

Mdm Choy Wai Yin

Director

Guidance Branch

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¹Mrs Agnes Lim was featured in *Contact: The Teachers' Digest*, Issue 21, Jan 2016 in the article, "A new school year: what keeps teachers going?"

Introduction

Often during our workshops, when we ask teachers, “What do you do as a teacher?” they reply that they teach English, Mathematics or Mother Tongue, depending on their subject areas. Occasionally, we will hear “I teach students”, and that reply immediately puts the students centre stage. Indeed, teaching students, as opposed to subjects, is at the heart of what teachers do.

In order to teach students well, teachers need to know them as individuals, understand their needs and act in their best interest to help them learn and develop well. Students feel cared for when teachers show interest in knowing them and provide them with both academic and emotional support. They are also more motivated to learn from and look up to these teachers as role models. **By making time to know and understand students, teachers can strengthen positive TSR, which is a fundamental role.**

How then can we know and understand our students? In a school, teachers may come with different assumptions about understanding students’ needs and behaviours. This may result in different practices in the way teachers relate with and manage students. As students interact with different teachers in the school, they may experience inconsistent practices, which can be confusing for them. If the practices are negative ones, it will certainly have an adverse impact on TSR and efforts to build a culture of care.

It would therefore be helpful if teachers share a common frame of thinking about students’ needs and behaviours, and acquire common practices and strategies to relate with and manage them. The adoption of a school-wide theory-based approach can serve this function. It provides schools with a common frame of reference to understand students’ needs and behaviours, and equip teachers with strategies to connect with and engage students more effectively.

“ Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves.

Parker J. Palmer,
*The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner
Landscape of a Teacher's Life*



This resource, *Strengthening Positive Teacher-Student Relationships (TSR)*, highlights how seven schools have implemented three school-wide approaches: **Transactional Analysis (TA), Positive Education (Pos Ed) and Restorative Practices (RP) to strengthen positive TSR and a culture of care.** There are four key sections:

Section 1 provides a brief introduction on what building a culture of care means; the importance of positive relationships and in particular positive TSR.

Section 2 features the journeys of seven schools and highlights key considerations the schools took into account in selecting an approach; the factors that helped to facilitate the implementation of the approach; the steps taken by the schools to overcome implementation challenges; and the impact the approach had on their key stakeholders.

Section 3 concludes with a summary of key learning points.

Section 4 provides a brief overview of the key concepts of each approach.

Section 1

Strengthening Positive Teacher-Student Relationships (TSR) in a Culture of Care

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Schools with high relational trust, such as good social relationships among members of the school community, are more likely to make changes that improve student achievement.

Bryk & Schneider (2002)

”

This section looks briefly at **what culture of care means and the importance of building positive relationships** among all members of a school community. It also covers the importance of positive TSR and how it contributes to better student outcomes. It further highlights the key factors that teachers can take note of to make it effective.

What is a Culture of Care?

When we step into a school, we can usually have a sense of what the school is like, (e.g. whether it is warm and inviting or cold and distant), especially through our interactions with the staff and students. What we experience gives us an idea of what the culture of the school may be like, as culture reflects the values and attitudes of its members as well as the nature of relationships within the environment (Schmidt, Alberta & Alberta, 2005).

In a school with a strong culture of care, a premium is placed on valuing relationships, fostering a sense of community, and seeking to heal and restore relationships when they are broken by conflict and wrongdoing. It is a place where there are respectful and supportive relationships among staff and students and they feel safe, belonged and accepted (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

It is important to be intentional about building positive relationships at all levels in school between school leaders, staff and students because forming connections is a basic human need. We all need to feel safe (physically and psychologically), to love and be loved; and to have a sense of belonging. Failure to meet these needs can have a negative impact on our wellness, motivation, engagement and achievement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Glasser, 1998).

Because students' everyday experiences are much influenced by their teachers, one key area that schools should focus on to build a culture of care is the strengthening of positive TSR.

What is Positive Teacher-Student Relationships (TSR)?

TSR is a reciprocal relationship with a recurring pattern of social and emotional interactions between teacher and student (Brekelmans, Wubbels & den Brok, 2002). In positive TSR, students perceive that they are respected, supported and valued by their teachers (Doll, Zucker & Brehm, 2004). Teachers gaining students' trust enables open communication with students. In turn, students are more likely to actively seek and accept help from their teachers.

While TSR can be shaped by many factors, a few essential ones have been found to be the key ingredients for effective positive TSR:

- **Teachers have qualities like being warm, engaged, responsive, open and willing to provide both academic and emotional support** (Doll et al., 2004; Phelan, Davidson & Cao, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins, 1995)
- **Teachers have good social and emotional skills like having self-awareness and social awareness, and being able to manage their emotions and relationships with others** (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)
- **Teachers practise good classroom management.** They show concern both for the individual student and the entire class. **They provide structure, set clear limits, and implement preventive strategies** (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)
- **Teachers are supported by structures that promote regular interactions with students over longer periods of time** (McClure, Yonezawa & Jones, 2010). The teachers' regular and intentional interactions with students demonstrate care for both students' learning and well-being (Brekelmans et al., 2002)

Why is Positive TSR Important?

The relationship between teacher and students is a significant contributor to the learning process. **The quality of TSR has been shown to be an important predictor of three areas of student outcomes: social-emotional, behavioural and academic** (Phelan et al., 1992; Pianta et al., 1995; Wentzel, 2003).

Our students have social and emotional needs. With positive TSR, teachers can support this area of growth by creating a safe environment for students to open up and share their needs with their teachers. This is especially important for students who may lack parental supervision at home to support and guide them.

When students have supportive relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to live up to the expectations of the teachers (Wentzel, 1994). They are also more ready to accept the rules, procedures and consequences for misbehaviours. Teachers who have positive TSR tend to have students with fewer behavioural problems compared to those who do not (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, 2003).

With positive TSR, students are more engaged in learning as teachers establish a supportive classroom climate by providing constructive feedback to the students, rather than harsh and critical feedback. This helps students develop a greater sense of self-worth that is necessary for motivating them to achieve well in school (Covington & Dray, 2002).

Section 2

Journeys of Schools

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To change ourselves effectively, we first had to change our perceptions.

Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*

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This section looks briefly at **three different approaches** used by seven schools to strengthen TSR. It presents the key observations gleaned from the journeys of these schools. The schools share their convictions and key considerations in the selection of a particular approach, the lessons learnt, the challenges they faced and the impact on their key stakeholders.

How Schools Used **Transactional Analysis (TA)** *To Strengthen Positive TSR*



Clementi
Primary School



Paya Lebar Methodist
Girls' School
(Secondary)



Northland
Secondary School

The three schools embarked on a TA journey to improve interactions between teachers and students, build positive relationships and address student misbehaviour. **The TA philosophy – people are OK, people can think and people can change – resonated with the schools.**

Among the three schools, leadership, advocacy and role-modelling are strong critical factors that helped to garner buy-in from the staff.

In Clementi Primary School, the promising results from a small-scale study by a group of Primary Six teachers prompted a whole-school implementation with the blessing and support of school leaders.

In Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary), the core team judiciously implemented key concepts and strategies in bite-sized portions to help boost teachers' confidence in applying the TA approach.

In Northland Secondary School, school leaders actively helped their staff connect the dots between TA concepts and strategies in day-to-day school operations.

The training in TA resulted in a powerful change in the mindsets of teachers. When teachers had greater awareness of their own ego states and life positions and those of their students, they began to communicate better with their students. Also, when teachers had a better understanding of their students' life scripts, they had more empathy for them.

As a result, the schools witnessed a noticeable improvement in teacher-student interactions. For example, when a teacher noticed that a student was in a 'rebellious child' ego state, the teacher consciously 'stayed blue' by choosing to use the 'nurturing parent', 'firm parent' or 'adult' ego state, instead of the 'critical parent' ego state, to engage the student.

Teachers started asking deeper questions about a student's life script whenever a student misbehaved, instead of

jumping to conclusions and getting upset over the misbehaviour. Students felt cared for when their teachers showed concern and interest in them. Interestingly, in Clementi Primary and Northland Secondary, the working relationships among the teachers also improved.

The school-wide use of the TA approach saw the emergence of a common language among staff for everyday interaction, communication and culture-building. For example, teachers encouraged one another to 'stay blue' when emotions ran high in a given situation and they would immediately be reminded of what that meant.

Northland Secondary School set up a Blue Room for meetings with parents. The name was adopted as a reminder to 'stay blue', that is to remain calm, when engaging angry parents.

"TA resulted in a powerful change in the mindsets of teachers."



Something was Brewing

It was 2011. A group of Primary Six teachers at Clementi Primary School were deeply concerned about their students' disruptive and uncooperative behaviour in class. The constant reprimanding no longer yielded sustainable positive outcomes. Instead, it negatively affected the TSR and classroom climate. Some teachers became discouraged and were emotionally affected. This was the impetus for the group of teachers to come together as a learning team to examine what they could do to support the students and improve their relationships with them.

Ask the In-House Guru

The learning team consulted the School Counsellor and tapped on his knowledge of psychological theories. The team found congruence between the basic principles of TA and their aim to improve interactions and relationships with their students. They were motivated to learn and deepen their understanding of TA with the help of the School Counsellor who was trained in the approach.

As they delved into the philosophy and concepts of TA, the learning team was convinced that TA could support their efforts in the following ways:

- Understanding self and others. The key leverage point would be the personhood of the teacher. Key concepts of TA such as the three ego states could help increase one's self-awareness. This would help the team to develop longer lasting relationships with their colleagues and students.
- Sharing a common language. They were also taken by the fact that they could use a common language to facilitate shared understanding and build a culture around TA.

Dive Deep and Practise!

In the first year of implementation, the learning team took a deep dive to understand the key concepts of TA. They read widely from various sources of literature during the weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC) sessions with the help of the School Counsellor. They participated in self-awareness exercises such as drawing one's life story and completing an ego state survey. These exercises increased their awareness of who they were.

Equipped with new knowledge and skills, each member of the team selected one or two students to work with. They chose students who had behavioural issues and whom they had difficulty relating to. They applied their knowledge of TA to their interactions with these students. The teachers administered pre- and post-tests to ascertain the impact of this approach. They also kept a weekly journal to document key learning points and shared them with one another.

The team subsequently shared their findings and experience with the rest of the staff. The findings from their project, 'Using the Personhood of the Educator to Better Manage Interactions with our Pupils', were heartening and the school decided to explore the possibility of adopting TA as an approach to strengthen relationships in school and build a school culture of care.



Facilitating Factors: Think Big, Start Small, Grow Deep

School Culture of Care

- The school had an existing culture of caring and sharing among colleagues that could be readily built upon.

School Leaders

- School leaders set the direction of strengthening TSR as a priority in the school.
- They recognised that a strong grounding in the key concepts and philosophy was important for all teachers but that not all teachers were ready for it. To assess teachers' readiness, the school engaged an accredited TA Practitioner to conduct an introductory TA workshop for all teachers in December 2011. The workshop was well-received by the teachers with some expressing interest to learn more about the approach.

Core Team

- A core team was set up to focus on TSR and to look for simple ways of embedding TA into the

school's Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) programmes.

Capacity-Building of Leaders and Teachers

- The efforts to implement TA in school were sustained with differentiated training between 2012 and 2014 for both staff and leaders to enable them to deepen their craft.
- A customised session was conducted for school leaders and middle managers so that they could role-model the way interactions could be carried out using TA concepts, especially in the context of coaching, mentoring and supervising.

Supportive Staff

- The professionalism among the teachers motivated them to excel in their role as educators and they were open to the new approach.
- When teachers found that they could apply the knowledge of TA to their professional and personal lives, there was greater buy-in.



Overcoming Challenges: There Will be Sceptics

Initially, there was a small group of teachers who were sceptical of the usefulness of TA. However, with the help of colleagues who worked with them through role-modelling and actively using TA language to create shared understanding, the barriers were overcome. New staff joining the school each year were given an introductory session on TA, designed and conducted to ensure that they had a baseline understanding of the approach.

Impact on Stakeholders: Deeper Understanding of Self and Others

School Leaders

- The initial positive results from using TA motivated the school leaders and learning team. They went on to equip themselves with a greater understanding of TA by attending an international conference. The conference deepened their conviction that TA is indeed an effective approach for educators.

Teachers

- Teachers gained confidence in managing students' misbehaviours and became more student-centric and caring.
- Teachers constantly encouraged and reminded one another to 'stay blue' and be nurturing. TA provided the common language that facilitated shared understanding among the teachers.
- Teachers became aware of why some colleagues behaved in certain ways and were more understanding and tolerant. TA helped to improve the communication skills among teachers and this improved the working relationship among colleagues.
- Some teachers applied TA concepts with their family

members, improving their communication at home and thus reinforcing their use of TA.

Students

- Students felt more cared for and respected when teachers showed concern for them as individuals, beyond academic outcomes.
- The tone of the school improved and a positive learning culture was nurtured. There were fewer disruptions in class and students became more cooperative. They responded well when teachers corrected their misbehaviours.
- Students consistently reported having a better quality school experience over the years with positive TSR in the school.

Parents

- Parents felt that the teachers were more understanding and could empathise with them in supporting their children.
- Parents formed stronger relationships with the teachers as they experienced more positive interactions with them.

What We Have To Say

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After we reflected on our own lives, we began to be aware of how our life's experiences had affected, and perhaps, even shaped our beliefs, feelings and thinking. We were aware of our dominant ego states and that allowed us to understand our reactions to certain situations.

As we embarked on the application phase of the project, we were all aware of the benefits of TA. Many of us wanted to make a conscious effort to shift our ego states to achieve more effective communication. In order to do so, we adopted the 'Pause-Think-React' approach. By pausing, we kept from being rash in our reactions during unpleasant situations. This enabled us to be more rational and calm. We felt that we could make more informed decisions and take appropriate actions.

Through this approach, we could deal with a student's wrongdoing with more dignity and respect towards the student. We were able to demonstrate more care and understanding towards our students. This improved our acceptance of our students. In time, we realised that we were changing our perspectives towards students' wrongdoings and began dealing with them in better ways. We also recognised that certain wrongdoings still required a greater degree of firmness as some were more serious than others. By using TA, we felt that we were better able to deal with wrongdoings more fairly.

This led us to have more meaningful discussions with the student in question. More importantly, our TSR also improved.

As we reflected on the improved relationship with that one student, we noted that if TA was used class-wide, there would be a positive impact on the teaching and learning environment in the classroom. As we were better able to manage our emotions, we have become more understanding towards our students and developed stronger relationships with them.

Reflections from the Learning Team:

Mrs Gay Tan (Head of Department), Mrs Ann Ong (Teacher),
Mrs Grace Koh (Teacher), Mdm Nora Ibrahim (Teacher),
Mr Tan Boon Kao (Teacher), Mr Sean Ng (Lead School Counsellor)

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I once had a student who was the class clown. He loved to talk, shout and burst into laughter. His classmates called him the livewire of the class. However, this student also cried frequently, mainly over petty issues. He would crush up a piece of work and begin to cry for unknown reasons. Often he would hide his work from his parents and even from teachers. It was difficult to get him to reveal where he hid his work.

As his Form Teacher, I had a firm "He can do it! He can change!" belief in him. With this confidence, I adopted the 'firm parent' and 'adult' ego states in my communication with him. I used teachable moments to remind him about being a responsible student and met up with him regularly for one-to-one chats. During our conversations, I would use questioning techniques to ask him to reflect on his behaviour. Over time, he became more aware of his actions and their consequences and was more motivated to change. He also agreed to a verbal contract to "think, then act!"

Things gradually became better. I remembered to interact with him using a 'nurturing parent' ego state, being encouraging and yet a fair disciplinarian when necessary. The one-to-one conversations proved useful. My student grew in confidence and he was more open to admitting his mistakes. On Teacher's Day, he wrote me a card: "Thank you for giving me the confidence to do my PSLE." In the preliminary examinations, he made vast improvements and was very proud of his results.

Mrs Ann Ong (Teacher)

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Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)



Weren't Things Going Well?

Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) had an established history of a strong culture of care. Despite this, the TSR findings of the school revealed that the students did not perceive that their teachers cared enough for them. In 2012, the school searched for ways to improve the relationship between teachers and students and introduced TA as a possible approach.

Would TA Really Work?

In exploring TA as a possible approach to strengthen TSR, the school reflected using the following questions:

- Did the philosophy and key concepts of TA align with the school's beliefs that each child is valued, even though certain behaviours some of them demonstrated were not aligned with the school's expectations?
- Could the TA approach be easily integrated into the school's existing processes and programmes? Could the school maximise resources and minimise time without adding extra workload to the staff?
- Could TA help to increase the self-awareness of teachers? Could the approach enhance the positive communication and relationships among the staff and the students?

After much research into the key concepts, principles and strategies of TA, the school decided to adopt the approach to help the school in the following areas:

- Having a theoretical framework and a shared language for interactions that would bring about shared understanding
- Establishing clear communication channels with its repertoire of tools and strategies
- Improving the interpersonal relationships between staff and students

What Came First?

The school leaders were clear that buy-in from the staff was critical as the school embarked on this new journey.

They first appointed a middle manager to oversee and drive the implementation of TA in the school together with a team of staff appointed as TA champions. The main task of the TA champions was to help teachers see the relevance and usefulness of the approach. Time was also set aside in school for training and discussions on TA. The core team comprising the middle manager and TA champions were equipped through additional training in order to lead the staff in the implementation of TA.

The school also partnered MOE, which helped to sharpen the thinking processes and created opportunities for sharing the TA approach to strengthen TSR with other schools.



Facilitating Factors: What Helped?

School Culture of Care

- The school leveraged its strong culture of care, school values of having an excellence mindset and respect to build positive relationships.
- The school also leveraged existing processes to support the building of positive relationships among teachers and between teachers and students.

School Leaders

- School leaders provided full support for the school-wide implementation of TA through the appointment of a core implementation team.
- School leaders led by example and role-modelled the use of TA strategies when interacting with staff and students.

Supportive Staff

- Teachers provided support by trying out the TA strategies after picking up the knowledge and skills from the workshop.
- Teachers encouraged one another by sharing stories on how TA had positively impacted the students.



Overcoming Challenges: Beating the Odds!

With limited resources and competing agendas, the school chose to infuse and integrate TA into existing processes and programmes.

One example was to leverage an existing support structure where teachers could write encouraging notes to students. These notes of encouragement were publicly displayed on the level's 'encouragement boards'. Students were also encouraged to write notes of appreciation to their teachers. This was the application of giving 'positive strokes' to the students. In addition, this practice was extended to a canteen wall that was converted for teachers and students to pen down their appreciation using chalk.

To raise teachers' understanding and practice of TA, there was intentional use of TA language, tools and techniques during staff meetings. Time and space were also set aside for teachers to share good stories. This exercise of "together we praise and celebrate" is, in TA language, 'strokes and motivation'. These were conscious efforts to make TA visible in school.

To garner greater buy-in from teachers, TA was implemented in bite-sized phases to match their readiness. This proved to be effective in boosting teachers' confidence in this new journey.

Impact on Stakeholders: The Difference TA Made

School Leaders

- A strong advocate of TA, the Principal firmly believed that the approach would strengthen TSR. The school leaders intentionally led by example, using TA strategies like 'positive strokes' with staff and students. That set the stage for role-modelling and support for the staff, influencing the ways the staff interacted with one another and with the students.

Teachers

- When the core team of TA champions introduced TA in bite sizes, it made it easier for staff to accept and embrace TA. TA also helped the teachers to grow in competence as they developed a repertoire of skills to build good relationships with their students.
- Through the process of implementation, the mindsets of the staff were changed. They came to know themselves and their students better through understanding their own life scripts, ego states and those of the students'. Teachers' self-awareness was the key that led to better self-control. This was especially evident in the management of misbehaviours in class, which was often done in a calm and collected way.

Students

- With greater understanding and practice of TA by the teachers, students felt more cared for, appreciated and valued in school.
- Students were better behaved and less disruptive in class and a positive change in the classrooms and school was experienced.

What We Have To Say



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In one of the sessions when I was talking to a student about her discipline issues, I observed that she was in the 'red zone', exhibiting the 'rebellious child' ego state. At that point, I reminded myself to stay in the 'blue zone', and to hook her out of the 'red zone' into the 'blue zone' so that both of us could communicate in the 'adult' ego state.

This conscious effort on my part prevented my student's 'rebellious child' ego state from hooking me into the 'critical parent' ego state. At the end of the session, the student acknowledged and accepted the consequences of her actions.

Before TA training, I would have viewed this case as a challenging

one. With TA, I learnt to see her as 'OK' and that helped me to build better TSR with her as I learnt to interact with her in the 'blue zone'. The approach has helped me to tune my mindset to the TA philosophy of 'people are OK', 'people can think' and 'people can change'. Using the 'nurturing parent' ego state had prevented the typical outcome of a power struggle and it also improved teacher-student interaction, which led to better student outcomes.

Mrs Low Hwee Hwee (Discipline Mistress)

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The 'nurturing parent' ego state need not always be seen as positive. It can become negative if teachers do not balance it with control, where necessary.

Mrs Molly Ee (Adjunct Teacher)

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I believe TA is not something that is totally new to us. We have probably been subconsciously aware of how our family background and childhood have shaped our personality and attitudes towards different situations. In TA terms, we call them 'life scripts'.

What TA has really done for me is to help me further articulate and consolidate my understanding about myself and understand how my students' life scripts give rise to their different forms of 'drivers'. Having knowledge of my students' 'drivers' has encouraged me to learn more effective ways to engage them

through 'open doors', 'target doors' and avoiding the 'trap doors', rather than sticking to what I thought were the best ways or what I had been used to. Ultimately, as teachers, we aim to engage students in a way that is in their best interest.

Remember, our 'life position' affects the way in which we solve problems. As educators, we have the power to influence. We hold the key to building positive relationships.

I am OK and You are OK.

Mrs Koh Si Ping (Year Coordinator)

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Northland Secondary School



The Story Unfolds

Northland Secondary School was troubled by many cases of student misconduct and serious offences. A number of students came from challenging home backgrounds and had little motivation for academic achievement. To bring down the numbers, the Discipline Committee diligently stepped up tough but punitive measures. Although the number of cases fell significantly over time, the measures adopted were not ideal in the long run and more had to be done. The school tone had to be changed.

The relationships between teachers and students which had been strained for a long period of time thwarted teachers' efforts to connect with their students. In the face of this challenge, the school leaders intuitively discerned that they had to help teachers rekindle their belief in the students and find new ways to engage the students once again. It was with this strong desire and hope that the search began for an approach that would improve the relationships and turn the tone of the school around.

A Timely Match

In its search for a solution, the school was introduced to TA as a school-wide approach to build TSR. After careful analysis, the school leaders deemed that TA was worth a try. The school was convinced that TA could bring about these desired changes:

- Equip teachers with the basic knowledge and skills to build positive TSR
- Convince the teachers that it is worthwhile spending time getting to know and understand their students through informal interactions
- Develop empathy in teachers for their students as they come to understand the life scripts of their students
- Establish a common language for all staff for interaction and communication with their students and among themselves
- Create a mindset change in teachers and garner greater buy-in for positive TSR

Beginning the Journey

As with any new initiative, strong leadership is critical. Right from the start, the Principal gave careful thought to the mental preparation of teachers, getting them to understand the rationale for TA as an approach to student engagement and management. Subsequent to the initial training, school leaders actively guided teachers through a sense-making phase, making explicit connections between the tweaks in school programmes and supporting structures to incorporate TA strategies in school practices.

With the school leaders' constant help in connecting the dots, teachers began to see relevance and value in what they were doing as opposed to perceiving these efforts in isolation and as added workload. Success stories were shared, creating much buy-in, excitement and hope. The celebration of little successes along the way was vital in strengthening the teachers' beliefs.



Facilitating Factors: Connecting the Dots

A good start is half the battle won. While it was exciting to see the first fruits of their labour, the school did not sit back but pushed on to sustain efforts in the newly-adopted TA approach to build positive TSR and school tone. This was made possible with these facilitating factors:

Committed Leadership and Core Team

- School leaders championed the TA approach and personally led by example in the practice of TA. They constantly helped teachers to connect the dots so that they could understand the changes introduced as one integrated approach to drive TA.
- A strong core team of key drivers was formed. The team stayed on course despite some initial hiccups.
- Selected teachers were engaged as informal leaders to help drive the initiative and manage the change on the ground.

Whole-School Approach

- All teachers were equipped with the knowledge and skills to practise TA. Over time, a common language emerged among the teachers, allowing them to mutually support one another with greater ease.

Supporting Structures

- Existing platforms were leveraged for teachers to share success stories and celebrate successes.
- Staff retreats were planned and designed for teachers to reflect on their personal journey and practice as educators, and strengthen their sense of mission.

- Time was created for teachers to engage students at different levels.
 - Individual Level: Teacher-Student Conferences were held during reading periods for teachers to learn more about their students' life scripts.
 - Class Level: Form Teacher Guidance Period was used by teachers to engage students in discussions as a class, hence building positive relationships.
 - School Level: Many school functions and celebrative events were redesigned to create additional platforms for teachers to build positive relationships with students.
- A special Parents Engagement Room, known as the 'Blue Room', was created in the General Office for teachers or school leaders to engage parents who were angry. The room was painted blue to remind them to 'stay blue' when engaging with parents.

Communication Plans

- The Principal articulated clear rationale and objectives for embarking on the TA approach to achieve staff buy-in.
- Form Teachers captured and documented critical information that surfaced during Teacher-Student Conferences to ensure timely follow-up by appropriate staff members.
- To sustain TA efforts, regular reminders were communicated through different platforms, including staff contact time and staff retreats.



Overcoming Challenges: Creating Shared Understanding

A major challenge faced by the school was the annual staff movement, which resulted in an increasing number of teachers who had not attended the TA training. The school also realised that the Executive Admin Staff (EAS) who interacted regularly with students were not trained in TA. This resulted in occasional conflicts known as 'red-red' situations between the students and the EAS. To address this gap, the school's Staff Professional Development Team led by the Lead Teacher introduced TA to the EAS and all newly posted-in teachers as part of the induction programme over the next few years.

Another challenge faced was teachers' lack of time to get to know and understand their students adequately given the very short interaction time during the Teacher-Student Conference. To help teachers better understand their students' life scripts, the school engaged an external vendor to administer specially-designed questionnaires to gather information that would complement teachers' efforts.

Impact on Stakeholders: Being Transformed!

School Leaders

- As the school leaders led by setting the direction for and driving the school-wide TA approach, they were more conscious of the need to align their personal styles in student management to what they were advocating. They were aware that teachers looked up to them as role models and they made a conscious effort to lead by example. They were also very mindful and deliberate in helping teachers see the connections and alignment of the various school programmes to the school's advocated TA approach.

Teachers

- Teachers responded positively to the TA training and supported the TA approach in student management. Many began to ask deeper questions about their students' life scripts, instead of jumping to conclusions and getting upset whenever students misbehaved.
- Incidents of direct confrontation between teachers and students were significantly reduced compared to previous years. Although this was anecdotal evidence, the change was significant enough to be observed by most staff members, especially those who had taught for at least four years in the school.
- Another noteworthy impact was in the school's Staff Climate Survey results, which showed improvement after the adoption of the TA approach in school. It was apparent

that TA not only improved TSR, it also improved Teacher-Teacher Relationships (TTR).

Students

- Findings from an action research project revealed that most students felt that the Teacher-Student Conference sessions were useful for the teachers to get to know them individually. The students felt cared for when their Form Teachers asked about their personal lives.
- Bearing in mind that the TA approach was strongly supported by structures and processes to manage students, other positive outcomes were observed such as an improvement in school attendance, punctuality and discipline (i.e. drop in offence rate). These outcomes contributed to an overall improvement in the school tone.

Parents

- There was no direct measurement or study conducted to understand parents' response to the TA approach taken by the school. However, using proxy indicators such as parents' compliments for the teachers, it seemed to imply their endorsement of the school's approach.
- It was also observed that parents were generally more calm and composed during Teacher-Parent Conferences. This could be attributed to the teachers' ability to 'stay blue' during their conversations with parents.

What We Have To Say

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I once taught a student who was not interested in his studies. When the class was doing an assignment, he would just stare at it and refuse to do it. I made it a point to speak to him to see how I could support him.

Learning about his life script gave me insight about him as a person. He shared that he was disinterested in studying but had made a pact with his mum that he would complete his secondary school education and thereafter be given the freedom to pursue what he desired. I found out later that he had very low confidence and did not believe that he could ever excel in his studies.

I decided to help him build his confidence. I gave him the assurance that if he put in effort, he could do well. During my lessons, I would intentionally direct the easier questions to him in an attempt to boost his confidence. This strategy of 'positive strokes' with recognition worked and he began to ask questions in class. He even asked for extra lessons to help him catch up on his studies.

The process was not all smooth-sailing. On a few occasions when we had mild confrontations, I had to 'stay blue'. I was firm but never critical and hurtful towards him. At the same time, I ensured that I brought across the message of 'I am OK, you are OK' to him. Over time, our TSR improved and he learnt how to 'stay blue'.

Mr Eric Xie (Teacher)

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I had a difficult student in my form class. He could hardly sit still and was often not on task during lessons. His disruptive behaviour in class often triggered 'red' responses from teachers as their repeated efforts to settle him down came to no avail. Often, teachers ended up adopting the 'critical parent' ego state when dealing with him.

Once, he was involved in a case of bullying and extortion of money from classmates and was suspended for a period of time. During the investigation, a Co-Form Teacher and I met up with his parents and gained a better understanding of the student's life script. He came from a family where parental support was seriously lacking. Basically he was a boy who lacked love from the adults in his life. This caused him to be attention-seeking and disruptive in class. In addition, he had been diagnosed with learning difficulties.

With a better understanding of the student's emotional baggage, both the Co-Form Teacher and I made conscious efforts to adopt the 'nurturing parent', 'firm parent' and 'adult' ego states at the appropriate times. We constantly reminded ourselves to 'stay blue' when communicating with him. While closely monitoring his behaviour, we tirelessly gave him advice when his behaviour was inappropriate. We also rewarded him with positive strokes when he had done something right. The efforts paid off as we saw a positive change in him over time. He grew in confidence and did better in his studies with our support.

Ms Nge Hui Peng (Teacher)

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How Schools Used Positive Education (Pos Ed) To Strengthen Positive TSR



Da Qiao Primary School



Westwood Primary School

“Pos Ed opened up mindsets and provided a vocabulary of positivity and positive interactions.”



The two primary schools adopted the Positive Psychology (PP) philosophy that well-being is central to one’s optimal functioning, and that everyone can flourish.

The Pos Ed emphasis on balancing the skills for achievement with the skills for well-being struck a chord with the school leaders.

Martin Seligman’s model on well-being focuses on cultivating Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment, or PERMA.

The research and practices that had been scientifically grounded in these areas guided the school leaders in their whole-school approach to utilising Pos Ed. It set the school leaders on the path to first sharing about Positive Psychology for the staff’s well-being, before going on to enhance their students’ well-being and relationships through a variety of practices.

Three of the practices adopted by both schools, which helped to open up mindsets and provide a vocabulary of positivity and positive interactions, included:

1

Using character strengths and virtues to build upon a vocabulary of positivity

Students were taught what each of the 24 character strengths mean. Teachers also made time for students to identify their strengths and utilise them in different ways to enhance their self-esteem and to increase their engagement in activities. In so doing, the students had greater awareness of the diversity among them, and mutual respect was heightened.

2

Encouraging ‘growth mindsets’ through ‘process praise’

Teachers were encouraged to foster ‘growth mindsets’ by focusing on the processes that students used, and providing constructive pointers to improve their outcomes – rather than focusing on end results. This motivated students to learn more effectively; it promoted resilience and created positive emotions between both parties.

3

Carrying out gratitude activities to enhance positive emotions and relationships

The teachers and students regularly wrote notes of gratitude and put them up on boards in their classrooms and even staffrooms. They also made time for students to reflect on things that had gone well in a day or week, and encouraged them to share their reflections with their peers or teachers.

Da Qiao Primary School



A Search for Boosters

While there was already a positive staff climate at Da Qiao, an internal review of the well-being of students in 2011 indicated that the students lacked the social and emotional competencies to self-manage and relate well to others. Some of the contributing factors were that many of them were latchkey children who did not have role models for their day-to-day interactions.

The school identified the need to build stronger peer relationships to heighten the students' sense of belonging to the school. There was a need for a common language to be shared among staff as they planned programmes, communicated and worked with the different segments of students to guide them in their character development.

Tipping Efforts Toward Well-being

The school explored Pos Ed as a possible approach to meet the identified needs. Pos Ed could strengthen the school culture of care through the conscious integration of PERMA. This would help heighten the sense of self, improve motivation and engagement, and thus develop students into confident learners. Moreover, the proactive approach towards the teaching of well-being could enhance teaching and learning, and further develop the nurturing culture of the school.

Taking into consideration the profile of their young students and with an understanding of Pos Ed, Da Qiao adopted Pos Ed as a suitable approach. Da Qiao's philosophy, 'Everyone Can Flourish', that each child has talent, and each child can thrive and achieve success given a positive culture of care and learning, is grounded in PP.

The focus was to teach students well-being skills to enhance their confidence and achievement skills. Such a focus echoed Da Qiao's vision for 'Happy and Confident Learners'. Hence, the school was confident that Pos Ed would help to shift the mindsets of the entire school community towards:

- Enhancing well-being through a whole-school approach
- Learning practical skills for well-being such as the use of mindfulness
- Understanding and leveraging the character strengths of every individual
- Developing a heightened sense of self-awareness and self-management

Gradually Growing Well-being

The school primed its staff for the Pos Ed journey in 2012, by focusing on the use of positive psychology for the teachers' own mental well-being and growth. Twenty hours of training covering key theories and practices in Pos Ed was conducted over the course of the year. In 2013, the core team known as Pos Ed Champs was activated, and Pos Ed practices were embedded in the curricula for the Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP) and CCE. Staff training continued in small-group sessions facilitated by Pos Ed Champs.

In 2014, the third year, Pos Ed was utilised as the key approach in the school's Student Holistic Development Framework, which represents its core Strategic Plan. Various school programmes provided opportunities for students to explicitly learn, experience and live out their character strengths in activities that would enhance PERMA in every child.

There was also a review of proxy indicators that were indicative of how the structure put in place helped to enhance the well-being of the students especially in developing self-awareness and self-management.



Facilitating Factors: All Together Now

School Leadership

- The management believed in walking the talk to ensure that the well-being of the staff was given priority. At the start of the year, members of the staff would receive a Welcome Kit. The Principal sent out a personalised letter to each staff member before the start of the year, and weekly Happy Monday emails set the tone of the school for the week. Open communication was encouraged to enable staff to clarify issues and work towards sustainable practices. The school leaders also saw the need for the dedicated core team to incorporate Pos Ed initiatives into various aspects of the school's culture and practices, and to ensure close monitoring.

Supportive Staff

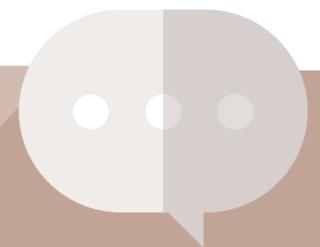
- The positive and strong Teacher-Teacher Relationships (TTR) enabled a lot of sharing among the staff. The sense of camaraderie among teachers had a positive spillover effect on students. The Staff Well-being Committee also created opportunities for staff to bond with their colleagues and spend time with their families.

Whole-School Approach

- As a school community, the staff and students embraced a common language through the use of character strengths, gratitude, mindfulness, sharing good stories, and the 'three good things' practice. The staff consciously applied the Positivity Ratio when addressing the school or fellow colleagues. Strategies like 'active constructive responding' were adopted and consciously applied, and the ideas of 'flow' and 'growth mindset' were shared by all. Such creation of shared experiences and shared values based on the tenets of PERMA for overall students' growth led to a mindset shift in the school.

Capacity-Building of Leaders and Teachers

- Da Qiao planned for a two-year 'growth mindset' series for staff. Through these bonding and sharing sessions, they learnt more Pos Ed ideas and practices to enhance well-being.
- The school leaders also put in place regular sessions for constant conversations and sharing of good practices among staff in order to help create the can-do attitude and to use the common language of Pos Ed.



Overcoming Challenges: Clarifying And Adapting

Pos Ed goes rather deep and wide. It was a relatively new approach in schools, and many staff and stakeholders were unfamiliar with it. There were misconceptions that Pos Ed was simply a programme or a strategy. The core team thus paid attention to ensuring that their practices were informed by research; they also took time to debunk the myths around Pos Ed.

Additionally, there was a need to change the mindsets of teachers who felt that the time and resources spent on Pos Ed could have compromised time spent on building academic skills. The school also faced some challenges in helping teachers who did not have the nurturing disposition needed to implement Pos Ed, for example, teachers who were authoritarian and problem-focused in their approach.

Apart from supporting teachers through capacity-building, teachers were given the liberty to select strategies that matched their dispositions. For example, a few teachers were more comfortable using 'effort praise' to affirm students whereas others found it easier to praise students' use of their character strengths.

Impact on Stakeholders: Building Upon and Strengthening

Teachers

- Teachers started to initiate activities that built character strengths when they saw the value of Pos Ed for the students. They became better equipped in dealing with discipline issues after having been trained to pause and reflect before responding to the students.

Students

- On the whole, students were observed to be more polite, helpful and conscious of their behaviour. They were seen to greet one another more frequently and take greater pride in being good ambassadors of the school and keeping the school canteen and environment clean.
- After the full implementation of Pos Ed in 2014, the school saw a drop in the number of serious discipline cases from the previous years. This corresponded with improvements in the Quality of School Experience scores for the factors of 'Discipline' and 'TSR' respectively. The Mean Rating Index for the factor of 'School Pride' hit a record high in 2014.

What We Have To Say



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I was fortunate to be in an environment conducive to learning at Da Qiao. Before the school embarked on Positive Education, I often gave up easily on tasks that I deemed I could not complete. However, after going through mindfulness practices and learning to be grateful, I perceive difficult tasks as challenges and opportunities to grow. I also encourage friends to persevere and strive to do their best.

Shawn Koh (Student)

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My child used to be late for school but now looks forward to going to school after the school implemented Mindful Reading. He does not want to miss the Mindful Reading time in the morning and would urge me to bring him to school on time.

Mrs Koh (Parent)

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“

Positive Education increased my awareness of my key character strength, which is kindness. I was able to change the way I did things and also sought to positively influence others. I was also encouraged to do more, not because of the rewards, but because I found meaning in seeking opportunities and applying my strength in my everyday life.

Hema Ramesh (Student)

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Westwood Primary School



Starting Things Well and Right

In 2012, the pioneer staff of Westwood Primary sought to establish an underlying philosophy that could serve as a foundation for the new school's ethos and aspirations.

In their envisioning of the school's mission and vision, they decided that they wanted to offer a unique education experience for their students. Much had been discussed in the 20th century about excellence in education, and the staff felt that since the turn of the century, the system was at an inflexion point.

While the core of academic performance continued to be built on, there was an emphasis on the holistic development of the child and character development. There was a need to see to the development of a values-driven, student-centric education. While *excellence* (doing things well) was important, *well-being* (doing things right) in a nurturing environment became a key philosophy the staff agreed to embrace. They believed that individuals can thrive and flourish when they focus on their well-being.

Aspiring for Holistic Education

Pos Ed essentially encapsulates teaching the skills of achievement alongside the skills of well-being. It sets 'flourishing' as a goal. In the process, it seeks to increase positive emotions, self-efficacy, meaning and purpose, and strong relationships. It is also a preventative approach against depression, anxiety and unhealthy responses to stress and challenges.

Studies from scientific research on PP showed that "positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promise to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless" (Seligman, 2000).

The infusion of Pos Ed into Westwood was congruent with the school's belief in holistic education. The undergirding philosophy of Pos Ed is that if academic excellence and student well-being are equally emphasised, students are able to do better. This philosophy resonated with the school.

Embarking on a Journey of Discovery

Westwood Primary embarked on a journey of discovery with their staff using the Appreciative Inquiry approach. The strategic conversation and envisioning journey followed the iterative stages of 'Discovery', 'Dream', 'Design' and 'Destiny'. The stakeholders in the conversation included all the teaching staff, the after-school care staff, selected parents, and the Superintendent.

The character strengths, traits and attributes, which the school espoused for all students, were underpinned by PP. The four character strengths – A Heart of Gratitude, A Resilient Mindset, A Passion for Community and A Future-Ready Confidence – were adopted so that students could be flourishing individuals who would grow to be 'Self-Directed Learners', 'Concerned Citizens', 'Confident Persons' and 'Compassionate Leaders'.

Facilitating Factors: A Drive To Thrive

Core Team

- A core team of four, comprising a Vice-Principal, the School Staff Developer, Subject Head for English Language and Coordinator for Holistic Health, attended a conference on Pos Ed in Perth where the key learning gleaned included the need for school-wide practices to enhance well-being, and the need to establish well-being as an essential component of a thriving education system.
- The Principal also attended a four-day residential course at Geelong Grammar School to hear first-hand from them about their model, practices and experiences of Pos Ed.
- In its efforts to expand the core team, another team, comprising the Head for CCE, Head for Science, Coordinator for Chinese Language and Administrative Manager attended the same conference on Pos Ed two years on in Melbourne.
- The rich learning was distilled and shared by the Principal and the core team. They led the staff in brainstorming sessions on various key concepts, such as inculcating a growth mindset and positive outlook in their students.
- The core team was instrumental in guiding the school to adopt PERMA to promote well-being, as well as the THRIVE framework for Pos Ed. In Westwood Primary, THRIVE stands for Think Mindfully, Healthy Coping, Relating Well, In the Moment, Values-Driven Action and Emotions of Positivity.

Whole-School Approach

- The pioneer staff made it a point to set time aside for conversations with different groups of staff as well as parents. They believed that getting buy-in was important so that the school's aspirations would be understood, and collaborations would be made easier.

- Communication with members of the School Advisory Committee at the onset of their Pos Ed journey also enabled greater understanding. They focused on getting their staff on board through the first two years and continued to train new staff who joined the school in subsequent years.
- At the end of the third year in Nov 2015, the school organised a Learning Symposium for parents to introduce Pos Ed to them and show how they could apply its principles at home to enhance the home-school collaboration.

Capacity-Building of Leaders and Teachers

- Since 2013, the school has engaged a qualified trainer from Positive Education, Singapore, to meet with the staff and to delve deeper into aspects of Pos Ed. The early conversations aimed at checking in with teachers on their understanding of PP and Pos Ed. With dedicated time for capacity-building, teachers could engage in conversations so that their perspectives and concerns could be heard, discussed and addressed, and that learning could grow.
- Staff capacity was augmented with training in the principles of mindfulness by an expert trainer. To hone teachers' practice of the principles in their daily lives and in the classroom, experienced teachers who had successfully used mindful practices in their classrooms were invited to share their experiences at the regular professional development platform, aptly named as THRIVE PD.
- The school further engaged the faculty of the Institute of Positive Education, Geelong Grammar School in Melbourne, to work with staff to design and put in place practices to help sustain school-wide efforts.



Overcoming Challenges: Articulating Understandings

There was some uncertainty as to whether the Pos Ed approach would be understood and accepted by the staff as they had all come from different schools with different experiences and varying beliefs of education. Hence, gaining their buy-in was central to the implementation of Pos Ed. The first two years were focused on capacity-building, starting from conversations among the Core Team members to deepen understanding and clarify direction, to whole-school training by a consultant. These efforts were sustained by the School Staff Developer who also took on the role of the school's Head of Pos Ed.

The principles of Pos Ed were constantly articulated to all, including new members of staff, students and parents who joined the school. As a new school, especially in the first two years, the principles of Pos Ed and the implementation of the approach in the school formed a key feature of the induction programme.

Impact on Stakeholders: Inroads that Showed Impact

Students

- A research project on the strategy of 'Process Praise' was conducted through four case studies of students aged between eight and nine years old. The students had exhibited traits of a fixed mindset. The two teachers involved in this project focused on giving these students very specific praise for classroom tasks, and offering them constructive feedback for self-improvement rather than praising them for the outcomes they achieved. Subsequently, through the observations by teachers and interviews with the students before and after the strategy was applied, there was an observable shift in the students' mindsets: they exhibited more positive behaviours, and showed improvements in attitudes towards learning.
- The 'Catch Me Do Good' programme was initiated school-wide to highlight the positive acts of the students through various platforms: during assembly, in the classroom and via social media.
- An inaugural THRIVE Fiesta was organised as an end-of-term initiative to bring Pos Ed alive to the whole Westwood community, including parents. Specifically,

mindfulness practices were introduced to students and staff through a series of experiential learning activities on the meaning and application of mindfulness during Pre-Assembly Programmes (PRAM), recess activities and the THRIVE Experience Day. These learning activities provided students with an understanding of how mindfulness practices could be applied in their daily lives. Parent Support Group (PSG) members also joined in to organise related activities to promote Pos Ed practices among students during recess.

Parents

- Though having been in operation for only four years, Westwood Primary gained very strong and enthusiastic support from the PSG. They welcomed the school's approach to holistic education based on Pos Ed. The Parents' Symposium on Positive Education 2015 was well-attended and well-received with a lively exchange of questions and answers on positive parenting at the conclusion of the symposium.

What We Have To Say

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When I first heard of Pos Ed, I had no idea what it meant. I was wondering if it meant that teachers must educate with a positive mindset, and use as much positive reinforcement as possible. However, after spending nine weeks in Westwood Primary, I realised it was more than that. Pos Ed can influence many aspects of our daily lives. Pos Ed creates a positive environment where our students learn with positive mindsets and acquire a positive attitude to learning. It is about our vision for the next generation.

Mr Jonathan Chng (Teacher)

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Once saw my son picking up rubbish with his bare hands after alighting from the car. When my wife asked him why, he responded that he remembered that in one of the PRAM sessions on 'Keeping Singapore Clean', a family had gone to pick rubbish in a bid to do their part to make their environment clean.

In another incident, my son stayed behind with one of his classmates in the music room. His friend flew into a rage when he did not get what he wanted. When I asked my son if he was worried about being hurt, he said that safety aside, he simply wanted to calm his friend down.

In these two incidents, he displayed and applied the *R* and *V* of the THRIVE model - Relating Well and Values-Driven Actions.

Mr Loh Chee Wei (Teacher and Parent)

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We don't just greet our teachers, we talk to them. We can always ask our teachers almost anything. If they can't speak to us in class, they will tell us to meet them after class, during recess, or after school. We feel we can approach them for anything.

Alicia Ng (Student)

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How Schools Used **Restorative Practices (RP)** *To Strengthen Positive TSR*



Ping Yi
Secondary School



MacPherson
Primary School

A common observation that both schools shared was that difficult students had deep issues in their lives. Many had strained relationships with their parents, teachers or peers. The schools' initial intention was to adopt RP as an approach for behaviour management.

The key function of RP is to restore and build relationships.

In time, both schools recognised that RP could be used to strengthen positive TSR and contribute to a caring school culture.

Through the use of **restorative questioning**, students learnt to **reflect on the impact of their actions** and **consider the perspectives and feelings of others**. Students were encouraged to have a voice, and have their voices heard. They needed to feel safe to speak up and the foundation of trust had to be carefully laid right from the start. This would require the collective effort of every staff.

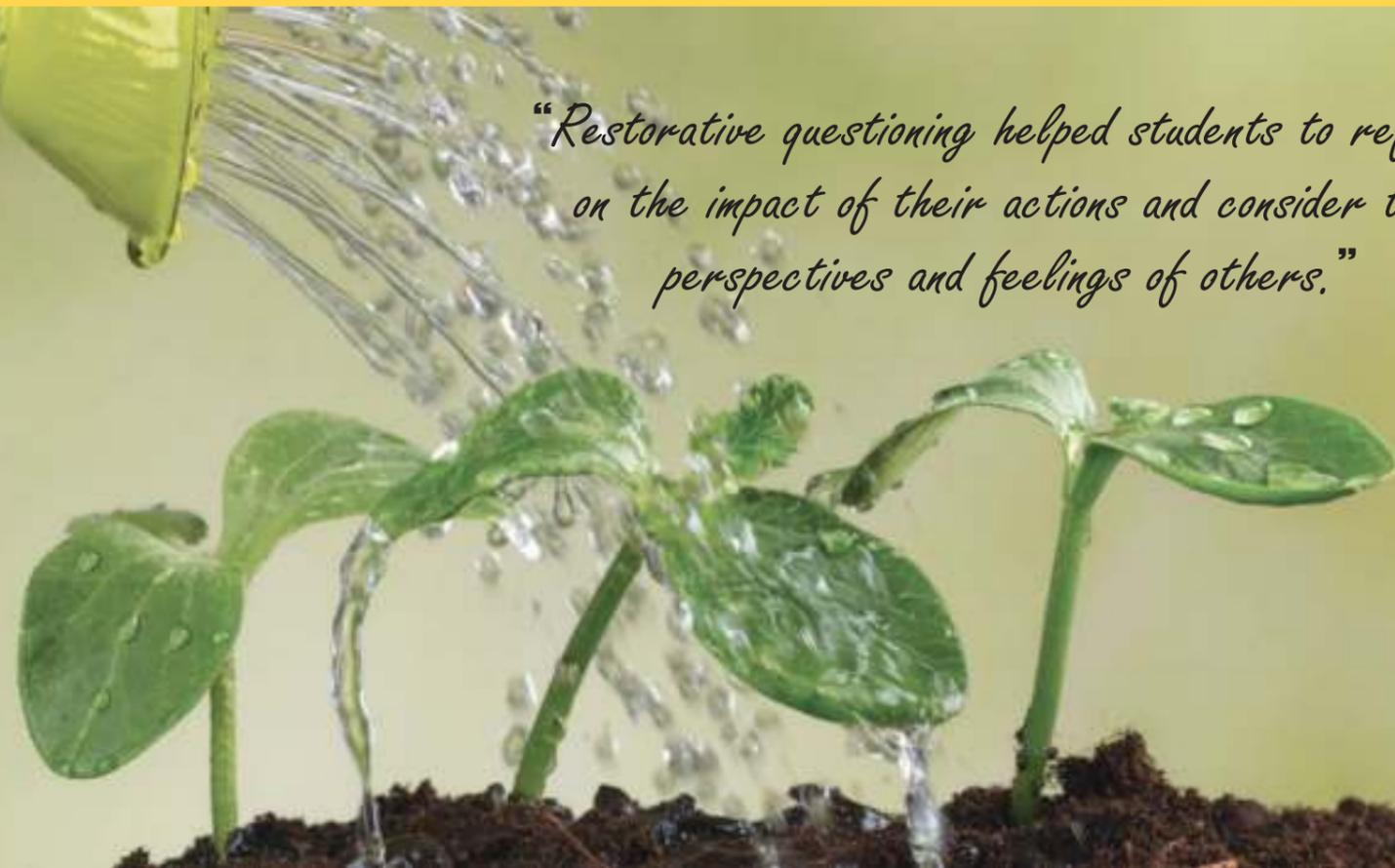
It takes perseverance to reap the fruit of one's labour, and sometimes, even several years. It was, therefore, not surprising that a major challenge faced by the schools was one of getting buy-in from staff. Many tended to perceive RP as a 'soft' approach to student management that was time-consuming.

To change the mindset of the entire staff, small but achievable steps were taken. For instance, teachers who had tasted success were given opportunities to share

at various platforms. Constant dialogue and timely clarification allayed the fears and concerns raised by the staff.

Having a common language kept the RP conversations going, and over time, both schools saw how relationships were built and strengthened between teachers and students. Among the students, the strained relationships with their peers were also restored.

"Restorative questioning helped students to reflect on the impact of their actions and consider the perspectives and feelings of others."



Ping Yi Secondary School



The Genesis

The idea to implement RP in Singapore came after the implementation of Restorative Justice (RJ) in the juvenile court system around 2004. In 2005, MOE decided to pilot RP with four schools – Ping Yi Secondary School was one of them. RP was initially seen as an additional tool for behaviour management, but this perspective changed in 2006 after a learning journey to Australia to learn more about the approach. It became an ethos of RP, focusing mainly on building positive relationships.

Underlying Needs

Prior to RP, the school adopted a more punitive stance in student management but there was little improvement in student behaviour and school tone. Students who had been suspended did not get the necessary supervision from their parents at home.

Over time, the school recognised there were deeper issues in these students' lives, especially those who were socially disadvantaged and disengaged. In many cases, there had been a pronounced absence of a significant adult and the lack of support in these students' formative years. These students did not value the relationships with their peers, teachers or even parents.

With an understanding of the philosophy behind RP and having learnt the approach of restorative questioning, the school saw how questions such as "who was affected?" and "how do you and others feel about the incident?" could lead students to think about the impact of their actions. This could potentially help correct behaviour and build positive relationships.

RP was not only seen as an alternative form of discipline, but as a way of instilling a sense of responsibility in the students. More importantly, it was also a means to build better relationships between students and teachers.

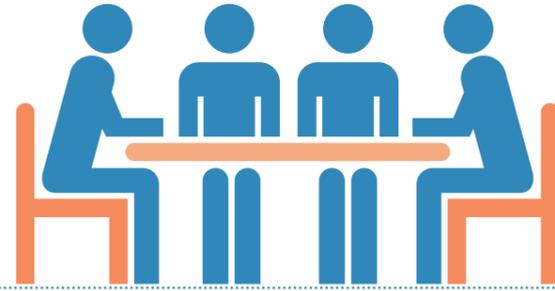
Laying the Foundation

The school's stretch goal was to be recognised as an RP school by 2010. The core team comprising the Principal, Vice-Principal, three Heads of Department and the Operations Manager refined the existing student management framework by infusing elements of RP into three areas that supported student-related processes, namely 'Teach' (instructional programmes), 'Support' (non-instructional programmes) and 'Re-direct' (student development and management).

- In the area of 'Teach', all students set expectations at the beginning of the year during Circle Time, where they could share their thoughts and explore ideas in a trusting and non-blaming environment. Through this process, the students' self-confidence was also raised.
- Under 'Support', CCA teachers taught social and emotional skills during Circle Time.
- For 'Re-direct', the school addressed issues of about 1-5% of the student population, a segment which the school paid a lot of attention to on repairing and rebuilding strained relationships.

In the subsequent years, efforts were spent on strengthening the school's belief and deepening the practice. The framework was again reviewed and improved to better align with the school's direction for RP to be pervasive as well as to emphasise the importance of values.

Facilitating Factors: Working As One



Leadership and Core Team

- The core team placed great emphasis on listening to staff for feedback and improvement.
- The staff felt that one of the pillars of support in sustaining a restorative culture was the strong belief by the school leaders.
- There was a change in school leadership at the end of 2008. The new leader continued to walk the talk and role-modelled the importance of building quality relationships.

Conviction from Staff

- Many sessions of clarification and reiteration of the RP philosophy were carried out during staff meetings.
- The core team's perseverance and commitment to role-model the process over the years was instrumental in achieving greater buy-in from staff.

Whole-School Approach

- Constant dialogue and sharing sessions were conducted to ensure that all staff members were clear about the rationale of the whole-school approach and that everyone spoke the same language.
- Every June, the school devoted its mid-year staff seminars to RP and character development. Time was spent on revisiting the theoretical underpinnings of RP and the rationale for the use of affective statements, and understanding the

school's restorative ethos. Time was also invested on deepening the staff's competence by practising the related tools (i.e. using the script, facilitating 'circles' effectively and infusing games in Circle Time).

- Beginning teachers and new teachers posted to the school were taught RP.

Supporting Structures

- There were systems and structures to support and sustain the efforts of the school. The Year Head System was set up in the early years to complement the school's efforts to build positive relationships. It ensured a balanced development for students so that positive relationships could be nurtured.
- The House System provided greater opportunities for interaction among students of different levels which promoted a greater sense of loyalty and belonging to their respective houses. This deepened the bonding between students and teachers which created another layer of positive relationships within the school setting.
- Circle Time was incorporated in the formal curriculum for Form Teachers to build, repair and strengthen their relationships with their students. Circle Time was pervasively used in both instructional and non-instructional programmes. One-on-one sessions with individual students were also implemented to strengthen TSR.

Overcoming Challenges: Against All Odds

One challenge faced was managing the staff's expectations on the outcomes of RP. At the onset, many had the impression that RP was a "soft" approach and they were worried that students might perceive the school as being lenient with them.

Several sessions of clarification and reiteration of the RP philosophy conducted during staff meetings helped to correct this misconception of RP. Teachers were constantly reassured that RP did not preclude consequences meted out to students, but preceded them. They were reminded that RP was not a quick fix but a process to help students internalise the impact of their actions, accept responsibility and agree to the consequences.

To encourage on-going conversations, teachers were encouraged to pen down what worked or did not work on the 'expression board' in the staff room. Those who experienced success with RP were invited to share, and concerns were also addressed during staff meetings.

Initially, the teachers were not confident in facilitating RP. In 2006, RP was identified as a key focus for training. Besides including role-plays during trainings to familiarise teachers with various scenarios that might take place during RP, they were updated on the developments of RP.

Having an RP conversation could be time-consuming; the school introduced the use of a 'blue form', which adopted questions from the RP script. Students would use this form during 'time-out' sessions to reflect on their behaviours. They were followed up with their teachers at appropriate times.

Over time, teachers realised that RP was not the panacea to all issues because every student was different. In this business of touching lives and shaping young minds, the school believed that with everyone's collective efforts in staying true to the mission of building quality relationships, their students would be positively impacted.

Impact on Stakeholders: A Decade On

Teachers

- Staff perception of student discipline and student motivation improved consistently in the School Climate Survey. In 2010, the school received the Outstanding Character Development Award and Outstanding National Education Award. In 2013, the school was conferred Best Practice Awards in Teaching & Learning and Staff Well-Being & Development.

Students

- With better communication and engagement, the Quality School Experience yielded encouraging results above the national mean over ten years. Students felt that their voices were heard. The rate of major offences and the offence recidivism rate declined steadily.
- One significant indicator was the improved student attendance over the years. The school firmly believed that RP would only work if students were engaged and this could only happen if students were present in school for teachers to build, repair and strengthen relationships with them. As a result, Ping Yi has also achieved academic value-added results since 2006.

Parents & Others

- Ping Yi received positive feedback from members of the public, parents, interns posted to the school and educators who had visited the school to learn about RP. By 2013, Ping Yi had shared with more than 200 schools on their RP journey. The school was heartened to receive words of affirmation from various stakeholders.

What We Have To Say



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In 2011, a teacher's photograph was posted on a student's Facebook page with distasteful comments. The teacher, who was new to the school, was saddened to learn about the remarks which suggested that the class disliked her teaching methods.

I encouraged the teacher to have a restorative conference with the students involved to resolve the matter. During the conference, the students expressed that they would like more encouragement rather than constant reminders that they were not performing.

The teacher explained the rationale of her pedagogy and assured them that she would make improvements to her teaching. The students began to understand the teacher's intention and cooperated with her. This helped the teacher to build good rapport with the class, and it motivated them to do well. In the GCE 'O' level examinations, the students produced commendable results.

Mr Ryan Neo (Head of Department)

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When I joined the school in 2012, I was a rebellious boy who refused to adhere to the school rules. I would constantly skip lessons and challenge others to fights. My only purpose in school was to create trouble. My relationship with my parents deteriorated. I was rude and even ignored them.

However, my Form Teachers, Ms Aisyah and Mdm Wanis, made me feel belonged and understood through their love, care and efforts. They had many conversations with me.

Gradually, I learned to trust and respect others. There was a positive change in my attitude and outlook. I became diligent and responsible, and respectful to my teachers, parents and all those around me. At a school presentation in 2015, I urged all teachers to take time to understand their students and never give up on them.

Sim Wenwei Gerwyn (Student)

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The Backdrop

MacPherson Primary School's approach to discipline was one that had been punitive, characterised by scolding, punishment and demerit points to deter misbehaviour. It resulted in defiant students who felt that they were unjustly picked on by uncaring and often angry teachers. It was clear that the tensions between teachers and students had to be repaired and their relationships built. Against this backdrop, the school started on the RP approach in September 2012.

Addressing Root Causes

The school saw an increased number of students from families with strained, broken, and even conflictual relationships, which left the students in a state of emotional distress with no sense of safety and belonging.

The RP approach provided an underpinning ethos and philosophy for making, maintaining and repairing relationships and fostering a sense of accountability and community. It was found to be aligned with the school's values of excellence, honour, nobility and love, with a focus to strengthen relationships with all stakeholders. Teachers would have tools to work with the students to understand their needs and concerns and restore relationships. Students would have a model to relate with one another to build relationships.

The school believed that if RP was implemented pervasively, TSR and Student-Student Relationships (SSR) would be strengthened. There would be fewer petty quarrels and fights among students, and discipline matters that regularly bogged teachers down would be reduced. Teachers could spend quality time in lesson preparation and delivery, and with their students.

expectations and guide students in reflecting on their actions and being accountable for them. Students would pen down what had happened and through the restorative process identify the root cause of the issue. Teachers would also document what had happened, keeping all related staff informed via email and providing relevant updates.

RP had a positive impact on the tone of discipline in school. While the SDT and DM were tasked to facilitate the tone of discipline for the school, a whole-school approach required all staff to be involved in discipline. The school believed in "discipline with the heart" – judging the behaviour but never the child. The school used the 5Rs – Respect, Responsibility, doing the Right thing, at the Right time and at the Right place – to heighten students' awareness and empower them to make responsible decisions. When a student did wrong, making responsible decisions meant acknowledging his or her wrongdoing, making an apology for it and accepting and facing up to the consequences with a strong commitment to change.

Making RP Pervasive

The Key Personnel set off to harness a shared vision and consensus among the staff. To cultivate a culture in which everyone felt like they belonged, Circle Time was introduced to all classes in 2013. Students had the opportunity to voice their views and concerns and feel that they were seen, heard and respected. All students from Primary 3 to Primary 6 also underwent a one-hour training in RP, and selected student leaders were given additional training as part of their growth in leadership.

In the same year, RP was introduced to the parents in an inaugural Parents-in-Education Conference. It continued to be introduced to new parents in the following years.

To strengthen RP among the staff, further training and refresher courses were organised. They were encouraged to share good stories of how RP had impacted them. Every teacher was also given a wallet-sized card with restorative questions printed on it for ease of reference. Posters of the RP Framework were also put up in every class for the same purpose.

In 2015, the Student Development Team (SDT) and Discipline Master (DM) developed a standard practice for handling student well-being matters. Teachers would set clear



Facilitating Factors: **One Heart, One Voice**

School Leaders

- The school leaders set the vision and direction for the RP approach. They saw the importance of staff buy-in and building staff capacity, thus the need to engage experts to impart RP knowledge and skills on a regular basis. They also had regular conversations with the staff. They allowed the process to pervade different segments of the school population.

Systems and Processes

- The school adopted a three-level referral process in handling student matters. At the first level, the Form Teachers would handle all the cases. At the second level, the cases would be handled by the respective members of the SDT and/or the DM. The more complex cases would be handled by the school leaders at the third level. With a clear structure in place, RP was practised at the different levels, making it more pervasive in the school.

Staff Response

- Teachers who were early adopters of the RP approach spoke positively of its impact on their relationships with students and how RP helped them build a culture of care. Their testimonies inspired others to make more attempts to build TSR with RP.



Overcoming Challenges: **When the Going Gets Tough!**

At the beginning of the RP journey, there were misconceptions and prejudices which had to be promptly addressed and dispelled. For example, it was assumed that the use of RP would mean that there was no need to enforce discipline. Staff perceived that discipline had to be punitive due to their student profile. Moreover, carrying out RP was a time-consuming process. Over time, with capacity-building and support, and encouragement from the school leaders, the staff became more receptive to this whole-school approach and realised that it was everyone's responsibility to establish a culture of care in the school.

When teachers experienced success in the process, the effectiveness of RP became evident. RP became increasingly entrenched among the staff. More teachers had the opportunity to share their positive experiences in RP at various platforms. The Allied Educators were also brought on board for the RP journey and they shared their good practices at cluster meetings.

The school believed that if the RP approach was well-implemented, the results would be strong, and there would be robust relationships in the school community. This would be key to better collective conversations, better collective decisions and finally better results. Moving forward, the school planned to equip parents with RP tools so they could use them to restore strained ties and build stronger relationships in the family.

Impact on Stakeholders: **A Marked Difference**

School Leaders

- School leaders were involved in handling only the complex and difficult disciplinary matters. The majority of discipline matters and strained peer-to-peer interactions were resolved amicably on a win-win basis.

Teachers

- Most teachers found the RP approach useful in building relationships with their students. As the approach was not confrontational, students were more receptive when asked to reflect on their actions and be accountable for them. A teacher who used to think the RP approach was ineffective and

time-consuming changed her mind after trying it out with her class. She became a practitioner.

Students

- In cases of alleged bullying, the perpetrators became more aware of their wrongdoing. They took responsibility, apologised and asked for forgiveness from the victims and people who were directly or indirectly involved. Through RP, dignity and confidence were restored in the victims. It was a win-win situation for all parties.
- In 2014, the Student Satisfaction Survey revealed that a high percentage of the students reflected that they had good relationships with their peers and teachers.

What We Have To Say



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I began the school year by establishing ground rules and building relationships with students in my class. I understood that in RP, all students have a voice and everyone is equal, and that time and space need to be given for students to reflect and think about their actions and feelings of others. Based on my use of RP to lay a foundation of trust from the beginning of the year, my students knew that they were in a safe environment and they understood that what their teachers were doing was for their own good.

I used Circle Time as one of the ways to bond with my students and to allow for question-and-answer sessions. I also used RP to resolve conflicts – when there was a conflict, I would call in all parties involved and allow them time to speak. They knew the ground rules so everyone would speak only when it was their turn. It was really effective and it helped students resolve their conflicts. My students were able to see what the root problem was after listening to one another.

Mrs Yap Pei Ni (Teacher)

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RP is a good reflective tool. I use the restorative questions to guide my students' thinking. When my students take on the perspective of the other party, it makes them realise that they could be wrong in their decisions or choices. The questioning technique helps my students to think about what they have done wrong and what can be done better.

Often, my students will not be able to handle disputes or conflicts on their own. When I intervene, I guide them in resolving their conflicts as well as help them build their character. The wallet-sized question cards are very useful and should be displayed as posters in the classroom. I also set up a CCE corner in class where the RP posters are displayed so that students can read and internalise while reflecting quietly in that corner.

Mdm Zuraidah Ismail (Teacher)

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Section 3

Concluding Remarks

Strengthening positive TSR in a culture of care is about fostering community, making social connections and demonstrating care. Often, an overarching approach steeped in sound theory and research facilitates and inspires the growth of a more compassionate and caring culture in schools. For this transformation to take root, and sustain, it is critical that school leaders, teachers and students understand and practise the chosen **whole-school approach** with commitment and conviction.

It is clear from the schools' journeys that the **needs of the school were first determined** even before an approach was selected. It is crucial that the selected **approach resonates** with teachers and the school leadership, and that it **reflects the beliefs and values** of the school.

Often, the selection of an approach is **undertaken by a core team** that will drive the process of change management and implementation. In order for implementation to be effective, the core team needs the **support of the school leadership**.

It is also evident that schools that aspire to build an enduring culture of care will require time and patience to nurture the ensuing characteristics of the approach.

We hope more schools will embrace school-wide approaches that will systematically help in strengthening positive TSR and a culture of care. Schools keen on pursuing any of these three approaches may refer to the appendices for key concepts in each of the approaches. All seven schools mentioned are also open to sharing their journeys with interested schools. Schools may also contact Guidance Branch (moe_guidance_branch@moe.gov.sg) for further assistance in engendering positive TSR, or to share their good stories or practices.

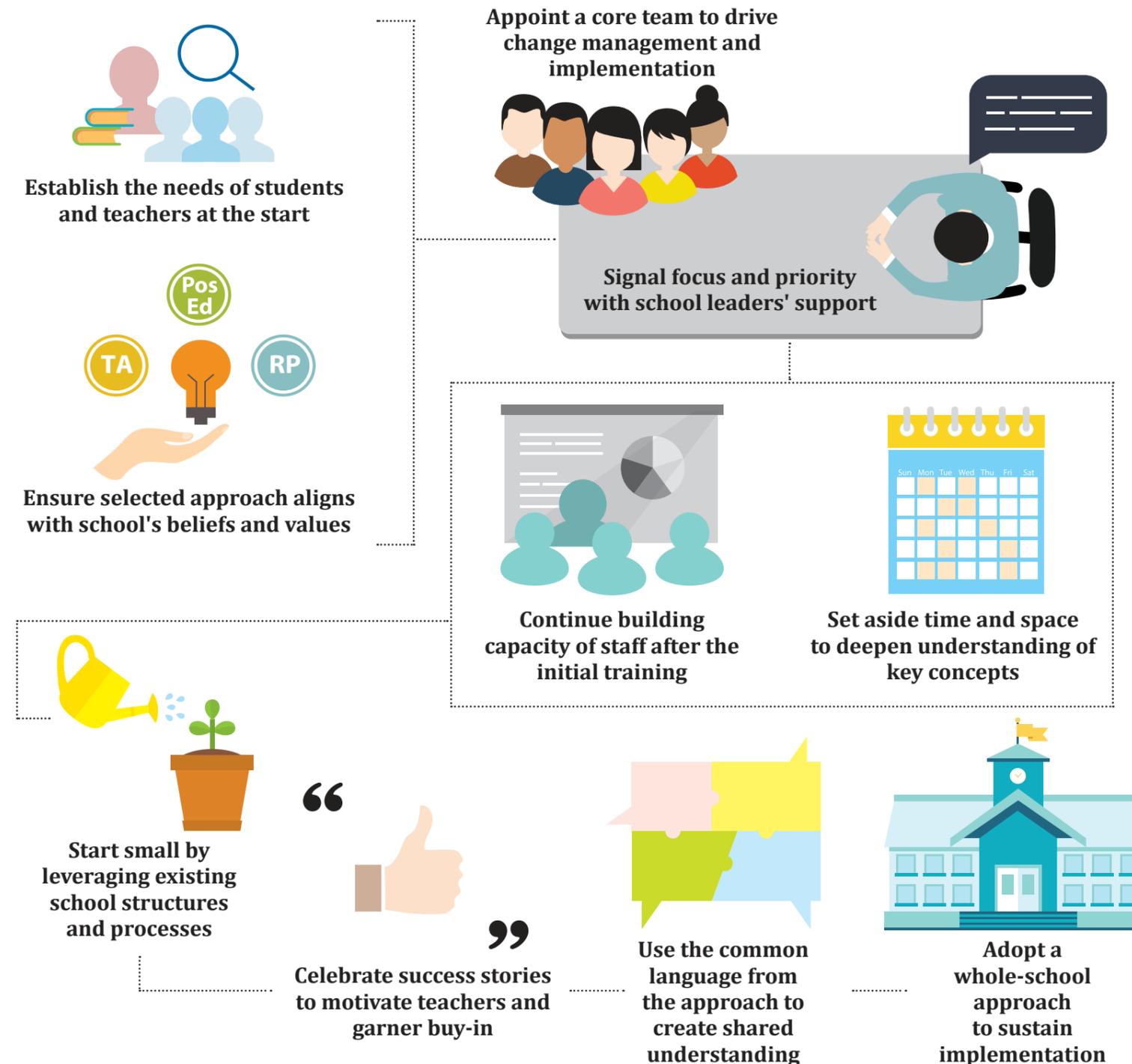
Teachers will need to be trained with new knowledge and skills to understand and support students. Teachers' **misapprehensions about the selected approach will need to be addressed**. Since making sense of this new knowledge and skills cannot be rushed, teachers should be accorded the **time and space to make mental shifts** in their understanding.

One way in which most of these schools eased teachers into their respective new approach was to encourage them to **make small, meaningful tweaks** to the existing ways of doing things. These bite-sized changes could be made at a personal level or as a school community.

The schools provided platforms for teachers to **share and celebrate their success stories** as a way to recognise them as well as to motivate other teachers to come on board.

The **use of a common language also helped to create shared understanding** among members of the school community. As teachers experienced more positive relationships with their students and colleagues, it encouraged them to pursue the approach with greater confidence and deeper conviction.

10 Key Factors for Effective School Implementation



Section 4

Appendices

This section outlines some of the *key concepts* of

Transactional Analysis (TA)

Positive Education (Pos Ed)

Restorative Practices (RP)

Appendix A:

Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis was first developed as a psychoanalytic theory by Eric Berne. It is an intellectual tool for understanding the basis of behaviour and feelings. Berne's theory consists of certain key concepts that practitioners use to help clients, students and organisations analyse and change patterns of interaction that interfere with the achievement of life aspirations.

Key Concepts

The key concepts of TA include ego states, transactions, life scripts, life positions and strokes. (Harris, 1969; Harris & Harris, 1995; James & Jongeward, 1978; Solomon, 2003).

Three Ego States - Parent, Child, Adult

Parent Ego State: A Taught Concept

The Parent ego state represents a **massive collection of taught concepts of life including the values, beliefs, morals and attitudes** handed down from parents or significant adults. These external events are recorded in the memory in approximately the first five years of life. As such, while recording these events, it is without much question and analysis. One can consider that these events are imposed on the child. Since the majority of the external events experienced or perceived by a child are actions of the parent, the ego state was appropriately called 'Parent'.

Child Ego State: A Felt Concept

In contrast to the Parent ego state, the Child ego state contains the emotions or feelings which accompanied external events. The **thoughts, feelings and behaviours are typical of children and spontaneous adults**. It is the source of creativity, intuition, spontaneity and enjoyment. It can also be a problematic aspect of our personality if it is fearful, intimidated or selfish. Like the Parent ego state, recordings in the Child ego state occur from childbirth all the way up to the age of approximately five years old.

Adult Ego State: A Learnt Concept

The Adult ego state functions as a data-processing centre. It **reasons, thinks, predicts and figures out how to do things**. It **analyses information and regulates** the activities of the Parent and the Child ego states. Data in the Adult ego state grow out of the child's ability to see what is different from what he or she observed (Parent) or felt (Child). In other words, the Adult ego state allows the young person to evaluate and validate Parental and Child data.

Transactions

A transaction is a fundamental unit of social interaction. Transactions refer to the communication exchanges between people. In each interaction, there is a transactional stimulus and a transactional response. People use different ego states to transact with others.

A **complementary transaction** takes place when one ego state sends a message and receives a response from the expected ego state.

For example, when the Adult ego state in one individual sends a transaction stimulus, "Have you seen my phone?" and the other individual responds in the expected Adult ego state, "It is on the table".

According to Berne, transactions will continue if the transactions remain complementary.

A **crossed transaction** takes place when the message sent from one ego state gets an unexpected response from another ego state.

For example, when the Adult ego state in one individual sends a transaction stimulus to the Adult ego state of another individual, asking, "Have you seen my phone?" But the Parent ego state in the second individual may instead send the transactional response to the Child ego state of the first individual by replying, "You are always asking me about your things!".

This usually results in resentment and communication breakdown.

A **covert transaction** occurs when people say one thing and mean another. One ego state operates at the social level (overt) while another operates at the psychological level with a hidden message (covert).

For instance, the first individual asks, "Have you seen my phone?" and the second individual replies, "How should I know? Why are you asking me for it?"

This could imply sarcasm or suspicion.

Thus, when analysing transactions, one must look not only at what is being said but also how the words are being delivered in order to identify which ego states are involved.

Life Scripts

We all receive numerous messages from our parents and other significant caregivers including grandparents, older siblings, and teachers in our growing up years.

These messages can be **positive or negative**

When repeated consistently, children begin to make early life decisions about themselves (e.g. "I'm competent" or "I'm not good enough") which can affect the way they interpret life events and make choices as they grow up. These messages, choices and decisions are woven into one's **life script**, which affects how one relates with others.

You are so smart!

Why are you so stupid!

Four Life Positions

Based on the messages received and the decisions made, a basic **life position** is developed which influences the way we view the existence of ourselves and others. The type of transaction a person uses depends on the kind of life position that has been adopted. According to TA, there are four life positions:

I'm OK – You're OK

Transactional analysts regard people as basically OK and thus capable of change, growth, and healthy interactions. This life position recognises the value and worth of every person. There is a conscious decision to accept the worth of self and others.

I'm OK – You're not OK

People with this life position tend to get angry and hostile, and belittle others whom they view as incompetent and untrustworthy. They tend to be competitive and power-hungry. They may have experienced a traumatic childhood and therefore resort to self-praise in order to survive emotionally. They find it less painful not to look inward and would rather put all the blame on others so that they can remain OK while others are Not OK.

I'm not OK – You're OK

People with this life position usually lack self-confidence and have poor self-esteem. They tend to feel sad, inadequate or even stupid in comparison to others. They undervalue their skills and contributions and withdraw from problems. There are two ways to live out from this position. One is to withdraw from others or provoke others and become socially isolated. The other way is to please others and seek their approval.

I'm not OK – You're not OK

People with this life position tend to feel confused or aimless. They do not see the point of doing anything, and thus they usually do not bother. The person has simply given up on life.

Strokes

Strokes are the units of attention that people need to survive and thrive. A stroke is given when one does something to recognise another – a look, a nod, a smile, a spoken word, a touch.

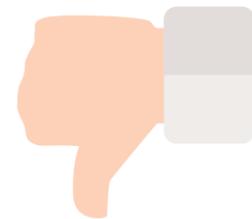
Berned coined the term 'recognition-hunger' to describe people's need to receive strokes, be it positive or negative. He reasoned that negative strokes are better than no strokes at all. Understanding how people give and receive positive and negative strokes and changing unhealthy patterns of stroking are powerful aspects of work in transactional analysis.

Positive strokes include



praise or expressions of appreciation

Negative strokes include



negative judgements or put-downs

Transactional Analysis in Relation to TSR

In schools, an understanding of TA has resulted in improved self-awareness, self-concept and better communication between teachers and students, and hence better relationships.

TA provides the framework for teachers and students to relate with each other. It offers a practical approach for conceptualising communication and behaviour. An understanding of the life scripts, life positions and an awareness of ego states of themselves and that of the students enable teachers to send appropriate messages and to respond appropriately to the messages sent, resulting in better communication.

Effective communication between the teacher and

student has direct effects on the self-perception and self-esteem of students and their perception of the teacher and therefore affects the relationship between them. Thus it is important that teachers communicate with students in ways that do not cause their self-esteem to suffer.

In the context of TA, 'Critical Parent' messages, which have such an effect, are to be used carefully. 'Nurturing Parent' and 'Adult' messages are shown to promote better communication as compared to 'Critical Parent' messages.

Applications of Transactional Analysis

How students perceive their teachers has major implications on communication between them and vice-versa. When students view the teacher positively, students are more likely to approach and communicate with the teacher.

The perception of the teacher also affects how teacher-messages are interpreted and thus how motivated the student is in learning. The teacher's perception influences whether students live up to the standards of learning and behaviour goals set by the teacher. If students perceive the lack of supportive communication from the teacher, they are more likely to misbehave than those with better relationships with this teacher.

An understanding of the ego states provides teachers with an effective way of cueing into and conceptualising

behaviours of their students (Kravas & Kravas, 1974), and helping them respond with an ego state that will be 'complementary' rather than 'crossed' during the transaction.

This prevents communication breakdowns and conflicts and helps to promote better interactions with their students. Positive relationships are strengthened as students perceive that they are respected and supported by the teachers.

Appendix B:

Positive Education

Traditionally, much of mainstream psychology had been focused on the negative aspects of people's lives. Doctors and researchers were concerned with the need to understand and cure mental illnesses. In the second half of the 20th century, while numerous advances were made in the diagnoses and treatment of mental illness, there were few advances in learning how one's life could be improved, or how high talent could be nurtured.

In 1998, Martin Seligman advocated for a shift from studying deficiencies and remedies to studying and promoting the best in individuals. Seligman describes the Positive Psychology (PP) movement as the "scientific study of optimal human functioning [that] aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individual and communities to thrive" (Seligman, 2002).

Pos Ed is the application of PP in education. It is an approach that fosters in students both academic skills and skills for well-being, and that neither needs to be compromised in the process (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009). Pos Ed's focus on the positive does not mean that it blindly encourages students to merely have "feel good" experiences. Rather, it seeks to reduce mental health problems, and build students' resilience, self-esteem and emotional literacy. With enhanced mental well-being, students can thrive through positive classroom and school cultures.

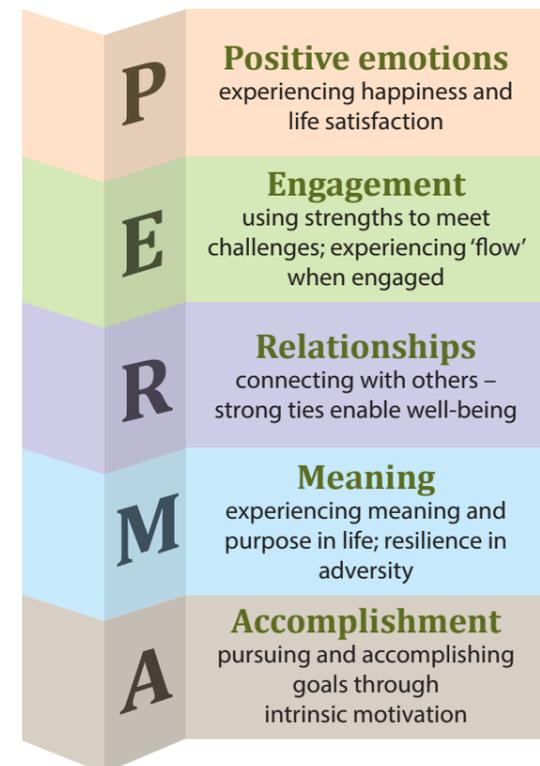
Key Concepts

The principles and practices of Pos Ed are underpinned by research and findings of psychological science (Kibe & Boniwell, 2015).

Flourishing

'Flourishing' is the optimal state of one's functioning and indicates a healthy mental state.

Seligman (2002) proposed five tenets of well-being for flourishing to happen: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. They are known as PERMA in short.



Character Strengths

Peterson and Seligman (2004) define 'character strengths' as personality traits that are valued for moral and intrinsic reasons. They are not the same as 'talents' which are valued for their tangible outcomes.

The psychologists researched positive qualities in human beings and then distilled them into the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of strengths and virtues. This manual is now widely regarded as the 'backbone' of positive psychology. It identifies 24 strengths grouped under six broad virtues.



Wisdom

creativity
curiosity
judgement
love of learning
perspective



Courage

bravery
perseverance
honesty
zest



Humanity

love
kindness
social intelligence



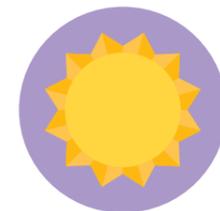
Justice

teamwork
fairness
leadership



Temperance

forgiveness
humility
prudence
self-regulation



Transcendence

appreciation of beauty and excellence
gratitude
hope
humour
spirituality

Strengths such as love and gratitude engender strong relationships and encourage connectedness (Gillham, Adams-Deutsch, Werner, Reivich, Coulter-Heindl, Linkins & Seligman, 2011).

Strengths enable high functioning and performance through ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that occur naturally and easily to individuals (Linley & Harrington, 2006). Seligman believes that when individuals recognise their strengths and use them in their tasks and work, their well-being is enhanced. They are also better placed to overcome challenges and nurture relationships.

Strengths can help students thrive through the various aspects of PERMA. Utilising the shared language of strengths also helps shift the natural negative bias that adults often experience (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001), to a focus that is more positive.

It helps build students' confidence, and strengthen rapport with others. Additionally, it helps one to consciously explore ways to develop their abilities and to contribute to thriving in both the present and future (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan & Minhas, 2011).

Positive Emotions

Positive Emotions feature strongly in this movement as it sends a strong indication that life is good.

It is elaborated with Barbara Frederickson's 'broaden-and-build' theory (Frederickson, 2001) which states that positive emotions contribute and have a desirable long-lasting effect on our personal growth, development and well-being. Fredrickson explains that positive emotions help by:

Broadening our thought-action repertoires, enabling greater open-mindedness, creativity and flexibility

Undoing negative emotions which would relieve stress

Enhancing resilience, by increasing problem-focused coping and reappraisal

Building psychological repertoire because key physical, intellectual and social resources are tapped and made more enduring than fleeting emotions

Triggering an upward developmental spiral, improving overall well-being and transforming people to be better versions of themselves

Positive Relationships

Strong and nourishing relationships have a powerful impact on adaptive and healthy growth. Social support has been found to be integral to well-being and mental health, and resilience and accomplishment for students (Norrish, Williams, O'Connor & Robinson, 2013). Positive relationships can be built by applying the findings on 'Positivity Ratio' and 'Active Constructive Responding'.

The Positivity Ratio

Building on what had been learnt about emotions, Fredrickson and Losada (2005) found that there seemed to be a 'critical positivity ratio' for emotions and behaviours that people experience, which would indicate if they would likely have higher mental and social well-being. In a few studies of relationships between couples and between business colleagues, the ratio was of 12 significant positive events to four negative events, or 3:1, in a week.

On the other hand, researchers have found that there exists upper limits to this ratio, which means that conflicts and distress are still needed for healthy relationships (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009). The negativity contributes to thriving by helping to build resilience and psychological growth, while the positivity would enhance well-being and flourishing.

In the school environment, it is helpful to cultivate positive emotions that would enhance interactions, while at the same time recognising and managing frustrations and stresses that occur.

Active Constructive Responding (ACR)

Gable and Reis (2010) studied the way communication impacted relationships. There were some that were uncommunicative, critical or even worse, destructive. They suggested that the sort that was most conducive to healthy relationships were those where partners responded in a way that was both active and constructive. Such responses signal that one is enthusiastic, supportive and communicative. Students should thus be encouraged to make an effort to be sincerely supportive in their interactions with others (Norrish et al., 2013).

Positive Education in Relation to TSR

Positive Education advocates that the skills of well-being can be taught to students in the same way as the skills of achievement, that is, through deliberate teaching of concepts and skills, and without compromising achievement.

It supports the development of positive TSR as the fundamental basis in seeing to both students' as well as teachers' well-being through a school culture of care. Positive Education is also well-supported in research methodology and provides a sound foundation upon which positive TSR can be cultivated (Noble & McGrath, 2015).

Applications of Positive Education

The following practices are some of the interventions that have been successfully carried out in classrooms and schools that have embarked on Positive Education:

Cultivate Gratitude

Gratitude is often defined simply as feeling thankfulness and joy. In PP, it is one of the 24 character strengths. Leontopoulou (2015) went further to regard gratitude as a 'life orientation' where one has a greater tendency to notice and appreciate life's positive offerings. Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that it has been an adaptive coping strategy for people during times of distress or grief.

Teachers can encourage students to list five blessings in their journals weekly. They can also have students write notes and letters of gratitude and read them out to significant others who have helped them or positively impacted them. In so doing, it increases positive emotions and also enhances the social bonds they feel for those around them.

Conducting Strengths Activities

The Brief Strengths Test² helps students identify their top strengths from a list of 24. Teachers can facilitate students' learning by spotting their strengths in everyday activities and interactions, and challenging them to use their strengths in new ways with different people. This helps increase mutual respect and expand the vocabulary of positive words used in the classroom.

Coaching for ACR

Teachers can draw the students' attention to how they can react to positive events that someone has shared with them, particularly those who are close like a parent, best friend or class buddy. They would ideally be the role models for their students during many opportunities in the year such as reacting to a trophy won by a student, or acknowledging a good collaboration that went on in a class project.

² The Brief Strengths Test measures character strengths and is accessible on the Authentic Happiness website <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter>, a University of Pennsylvania website developed by the Positive Psychology Center where Dr Martin Seligman is the Director.

Appendix C:

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices has its roots in Restorative Justice (RJ). RJ was an approach used in criminal justice systems with the aim of reconciling victims and offenders (Hopkins 2004). In the 1970s, offenders in Canada and USA took responsibility for their actions by understanding and repairing the harm done to victims and their families.

According to Zehr (2002), New Zealand made RJ the hub of its entire juvenile justice system in 1989, which reflected the Maori cultural approach of problem-solving. The Maori believe that when a youth commits an offence, it is a sign of failure for the family and community, thus greater involvement in Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is needed.

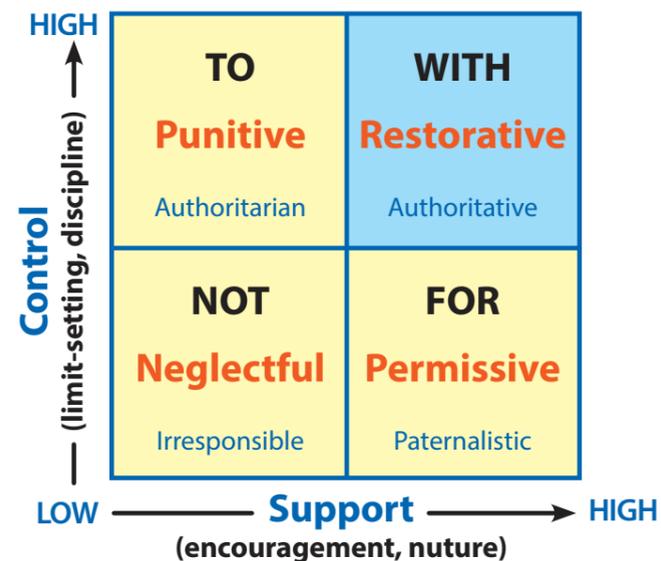
Inspired by FGC in New Zealand, restorative conferencing was introduced by the Australian police in 1993 which later became common in England and Wales.

Since the mid-1990s, schools around the world have been practising RP. Marg Thorsborne, an Australian educator, was the first to hold a restorative conference in a school.

Key Concepts

Social Discipline Window

The Social Discipline Window is an RP concept with broad applications in many settings, for parents in families, teachers in classrooms and social workers in communities. It shows the importance of involving students in decision-making and the need to do things with them, rather than to them or for them.



Source: International Institute For Restorative Practices

The vertical axis represents the level of control exercised by teachers in managing the situation while the horizontal axis represents the level of support provided by the teachers to students who are affected by the situation.

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) believe that a practice which maintains high standards and supportive boundaries at the same time is experienced as firm and fair, as illustrated in the box on the top right. This relational approach is effective only when a fair process is observed (Wachtel, O'Connell & Wachtel, 2010).

RP is a way of working with students to help them see the importance of repairing and building effective relationships in schools. The key concepts that are helpful in explaining and understanding RP include:

Nine Affects

The most critical function of RP is to restore and build relationships.

The informal and formal processes in RP foster the expression of affect or emotion.

In other words, they foster emotional bonds. Better relationships are formed when students are encouraged to express their feelings.

Psychologist Silvan Tomkins (International Institute For Restorative Practices [IIRP], n.d.) identified nine distinct affects to explain the expression of emotion in all humans. Out of the nine affects, six are negative (disgust, anger-rage, fear-terror, surprise-startle, interest-excitement, and enjoyment-joy), one is neutral (surprise-startle) which acts like a reset mode and two are positive (interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy).

Tomkins' writings about 'psychology of affect' hypothesise that human relationships are best and healthiest when there is free expression of affect or emotions — we feel best when we are minimising the negative and maximising the positive.

By encouraging students to express their emotions in safe environments, RP builds relationships and demonstrates Tomkins' hypothesis.

Compass of Shame

Silvan Tomkins defines shame as occurring at any time when the experience of positive affects is interrupted. This means an individual does not have to do something wrong to feel shame; the individual just needs to experience something that interrupts interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy.

This understanding of shame provides an understanding of why victims of crime feel a strong sense of shame even though they did not commit the shameful act. Dr. Donald Nathanson explains that shame is a critical regulator of human social behaviour.

The Compass of Shame was developed to illustrate the various ways that people react when experiencing shame.

RP allows students to express shame and other emotions.

For instance, during restorative conferences, students move from negative affects through the neutral affect to positive affects, thus reducing the intensity of emotions. Braithwaite (as cited in Wachtel, O'Connell & Wachtel, 2010) explains that shame is necessary so that students learn to take responsibility for their offending behaviours. It also helps them to reflect and make necessary changes to these behaviours in the future.

RP Continuum

RP involves processes that range from informal to formal. The more formal processes require more planning and time, and are more structured. Although a formal process might have dramatic impact, it is the informal processes that have a cumulative impact as they are part of everyday life and reduces the need for the more time-consuming formal processes. The ensuing paragraphs detail several processes that are commonly used:

Informal Restorative Practices

Informal practices include using affective statements that communicate one's feelings. For instance, a teacher could say to a student who has misbehaved, "I am disappointed when you disrupt the class." This would help the student know how his or her behaviour has affected others.

Another informal practice would be the use of affective questions such as, "How do you think your classmates have been affected by your behaviour?" This student is given a chance to reflect on his or her behaviour, make amends and change the behaviour in the future instead of being punished (Morrison, 2003).

Informal RP is less time-consuming and when used consistently, it fosters awareness, empathy and responsibility in our students, thus promoting better relationships in a school culture of care.

Formal Restorative Practices

Circles

According to Pranis (2005), circles have a wide variety of purposes: information-exchange, decision-making, healing, support, conflict resolution, celebration and relationship development. They are used in schools proactively to develop relationships and create a positive classroom climate. They are also used reactively to respond to conflicts and issues that have surfaced.

People who are involved in a circle process get to speak and listen to one another as each takes turns to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives. During a circle process, participants sit on chairs in a circle with no tables; this physical setting demonstrates equality and promotes participation from all. Sometimes, the one who shares is asked to hold a

'talking piece' as a reminder that the others are to give him their undivided attention. It is then passed on to the next person until the circle completes so that everyone has a chance to speak. The teacher facilitates the process in a way that does not control or steer the group towards an outcome. There are also guidelines and expectations to help participants share in a trusting environment.

Restorative Conference

A restorative conference is a structured meeting between offenders, victims and whoever might be affected by the conflict such as parents of both the offender and victim. All participants involved come together to decide how best to repair the harm. It is a victim-sensitive, straightforward problem-solving method for resolving a conflict using a script.

Restorative Questions

When things go wrong

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you thought about since the incident?
- Who do you think has been affected by your actions?
- How have they been affected?

When someone has been hurt

- What was your reaction at the time of the incident?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- How did your family and friends react when they heard about the incident?

The victim is also asked what outcome he or she would like to see at the end of the conference. Everyone in the group will then discuss the response together. A simple contract is written and signed when there is an agreement.

Restorative Practices in Relation to TSR

Hendry (2009) states that RP in schools is about building, maintaining and repairing relationships. They could be relationships between teachers and students, among students themselves, among colleagues, and even between staff and parents. With the knowledge that relationships play an important part in students' learning and well-being, RP has a strong influence over the school culture when it is implemented systematically as a whole-school approach.

Over time, schools that embarked on the RP journey saw a decline in discipline issues. More importantly, they saw significant improvement in TSR as well as Student-Student Relationships (SSR), which contributed to a more caring school culture.

Applications of Restorative Practices

For schools that have chosen to implement RP as a whole-school approach, the application of RP begins in the classroom.

Affective statements and affective questions are two simple but powerful strategies that teachers can use with any student who displays inappropriate behaviours. Teachers may also express their feelings towards their class for not keeping up with the classroom expectations such as not submitting assignments punctually. Consequently, students can develop greater empathy for the people around them and a stronger sense of responsibility in them.

In some schools, stipulated time is set aside for teachers to conduct circles with the whole class; it may be conducted at the beginning of the day before lessons are carried

out. For example, Form Teachers may use circles to find out what the students' favourites are. This process not only allows students to share willingly in an open yet safe environment, it also allows their teachers to bond and build stronger relationships with them. Some teachers also carry out circles during academic lessons as it allows students to learn in a fun and unconventional way instead of teacher-talk.

When conflicts take place in a classroom context, teachers can facilitate restorative conferences to resolve the conflict with the parties involved. The questions found in the script for the offenders and victims can be used for formal restorative conferences or modified for informal settings.

For RP to be effective in any school, staff readiness, effective planning processes, the availability of resources as well as training and support for the staff are important factors. It would be helpful for schools to think big and start small.

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