

Learning what to do *'when things go wrong'* at school

An important part of growing up is learning how to work and play with others. This includes learning how to negotiate the social environment, to understand how to disagree with others in a reasonable way and how to 'fix things up' when they go wrong. A large part of social and emotional learning deals with helping students to learn about emotions, language and skills that will help them to successfully do this. At Turner School we use a number of ways to help students in managing themselves and others when things go wrong. This can look different for different students and can include things like learning to negotiate, to look at different perspectives, practice scenarios, time apart from each other or closer supervision and can include the use of visuals and scripts and individual plans as required. Over time, children learn what works for them in managing behaviour and emotion.

A key strategy that is used across the school in helping to address issues 'when things go wrong', is use of 'Restorative Practices'. That is, adopting a positive rather than a punitive approach to managing behaviours. It is based on the development of a positive school culture, strong relationships and appropriate behaviours. It aligns the school's values (SCARFF-support, cooperation, acceptance, respect, friendliness and fun) with behaviour management and the building of respectful relationships. The approach actively promotes positive relationships, assists students to become aware of the impact of their behaviour on others, to learn to be accountable for their own actions and to learn how to restore relationships after harm has been done. A restorative approach puts our values into practice by emphasising rights and responsibilities, positive relationships and cooperation and at the same time meeting individual needs within the school.

Restorative Practices aim to:

- Encourage an ethos of respect
- Reduce conflict
- Restore relationships
- Encourage open and non-judgemental communication
- Develop personal responsibility and accountability
- Develop a problem solving approach
- Undo harm done and look to future behaviour
- Increase empowerment and emotional articulation.

Problem solving strategies and repairing harm done to relationships are integral parts of this approach. An essential part of Relational and Restorative Practices is the set of questions called the Restorative Questions that are often called

'the fix-it questions'. There are two sets of questions to use: 'when things go wrong' and 'when someone has been hurt'. These questions are up in classrooms and carried by staff in playground bags.

Restorative Questions 1

When things go wrong.

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

Restorative Questions 2

When someone has been hurt.

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

Teachers work with students to help them to understand the process and language. The questions can be used in a number of different contexts from on the spot conferences in classrooms or on the playground to more formal conferences where, if required, families may be involved. Generally they will involve the identified victim(s) and perpetrator(s), any appropriate bystanders or witnesses, and a facilitator – usually the teacher or executive staff member. One of the positive aspects of using a restorative approach is the way that it builds capacity in students as problem solvers. Once students are well trained, older students can conduct their own conferences with a peer as facilitator (or even without one) and we see our students using this language on the playground and in classrooms. Restorative questions provide a framework for resolution. The questions are structured so that the process works through a recount and timeframe for events, a chance to identify the harm done and to develop and express remorse and finally to decide on what actions are required to repair the relationship and to make 'good'. While this often involves an apology there may also be other actions as well.

As a part of 'Social and Emotional Learning' students learn about developing empathy and rapport as well as the emotional skills and intelligence required to take responsibility for the harm done and to make things right. Teachers as they explore the process with students help them to understand what harm is (including physical, emotional and verbal) and to practice in a safe environment how to work through the process. The practice is aimed towards students assuming responsibility for their own behaviour and developing the skills to negotiate successfully the 'fixing' of things when they go wrong.

Learning about the social world is a life-long journey and Turner School works hard to support children to learn the skills they need to work and play well and also to support them when things go wrong.

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