

# Transforming School Culture in an Asian Context through Restorative Practices



A Singapore Perspective  
(Ping Yi Secondary School)

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# Contact Details



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Lynn Koh has been an educator since 2008. As the HOD(CCE) in Ping Yi Secondary School in Singapore, Lynn works with the school leaders and staff to craft and review the values education curriculum and processes. To ensure a rich and more effective co-curricular experience for students, she collaborates with the Year Heads and external stakeholders to differentiate the CCE programmes for various grades. This includes areas such as Circle Time, Education and Career Guidance, Values In Action, Cyberwellness and Sexuality Education.

Ms Yanhui Tan, Year Head

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Tan Yan Hui has been a teacher in Ping Yi Secondary School in Singapore since 2009. As an Assistant Year Head (2012-2013) and Year Head (2014-2015), Yan Hui works closely with the Form Teachers in ensuring the holistic development and maintaining the discipline of the students. With the support of her colleagues, she has also planned and coordinated training activities for her Co-Curricular Activity (CCA), National Cadet Corps. CCA has been an important platform for character development of the students, inculcating values in them.

# Synopsis



“Asian values” emphasizing deference to authority, respect for hierarchy and order are often viewed as part of the cultural DNA of an Asian society. While some may argue that the Asian context lends itself well to the traditional punitive discipline model and not to the restorative practices approach, we believe that restorative practices has its place even in Asian schools.

This session offers a Singapore perspective of how restorative practices can be applied and synergised in an Asian context and is in fact a useful framework to facilitate the inculcation of important values. Specifically, we share the lessons learnt from our ten-year journey of transforming school culture in Ping Yi Secondary School in Singapore through restorative practices.

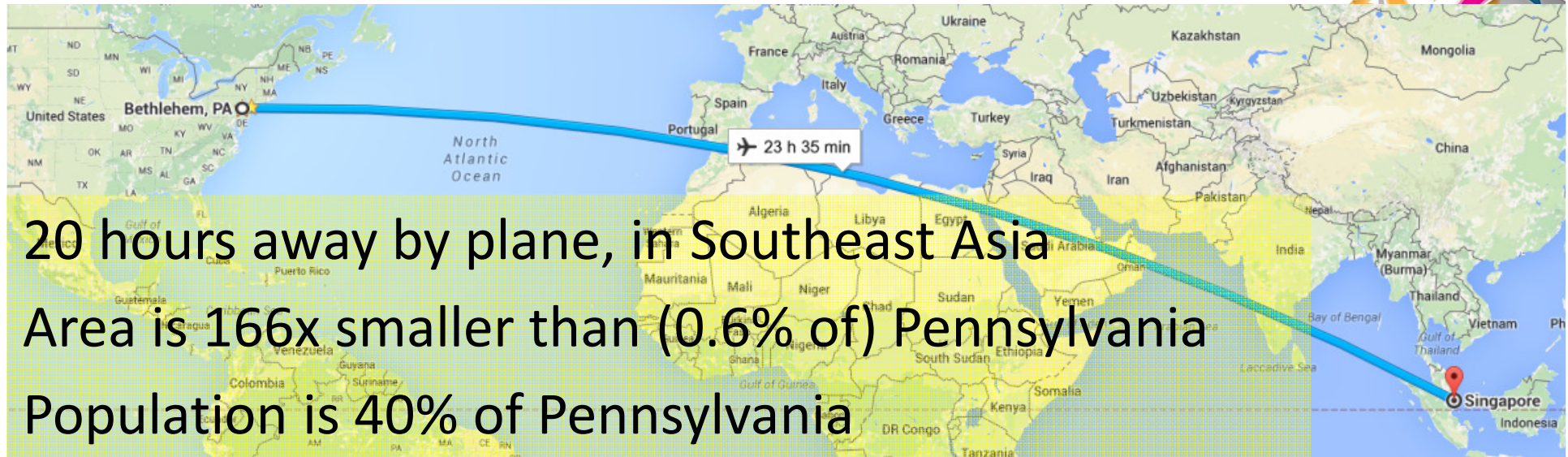


# Content

1. Setting the context... Singapore & Ping Yi Secondary School
2. Asian societies & typical discipline model
3. Applying RP in Asian context: Transforming school culture with RP



# Setting the context: Singapore





# Singapore



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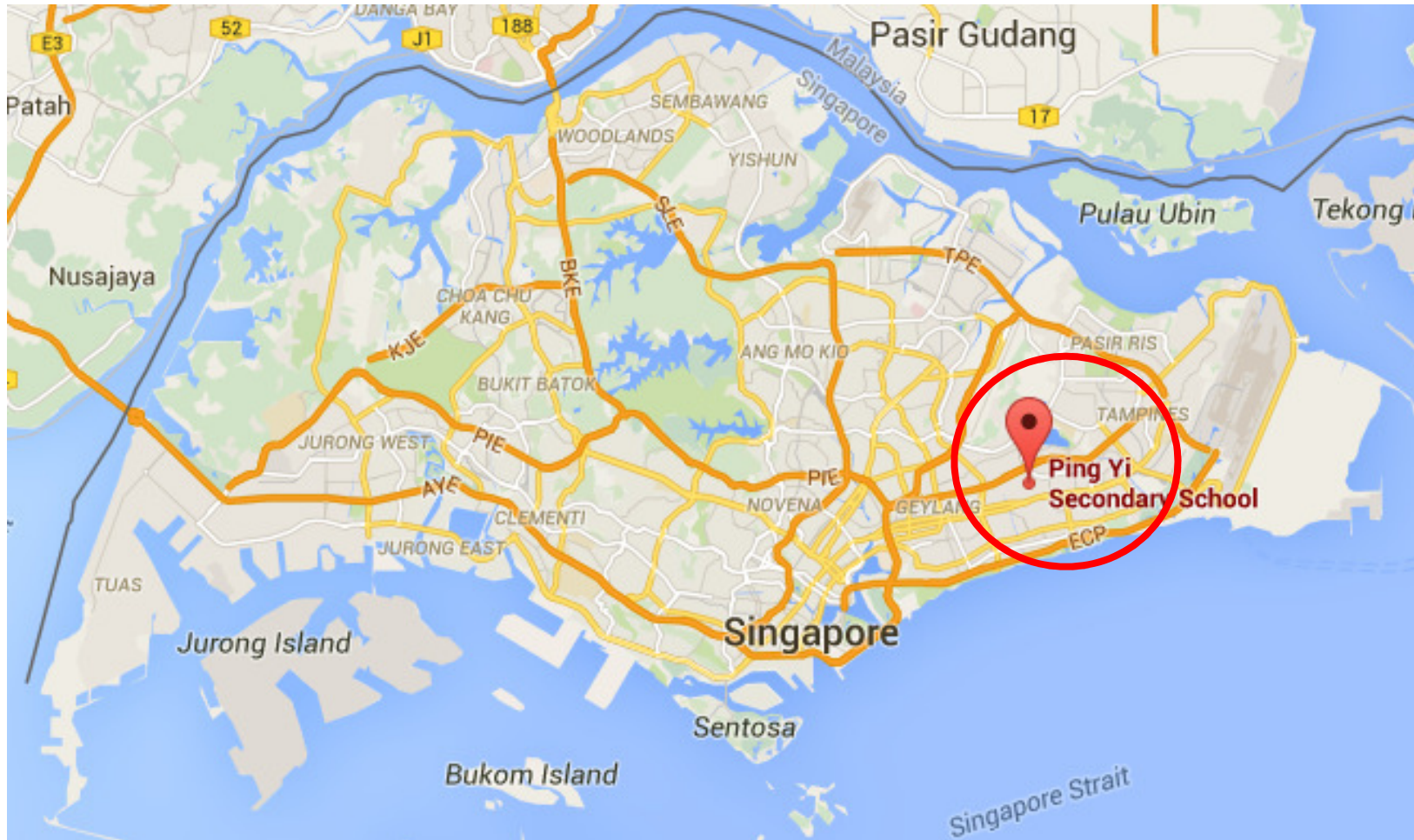


# Singapore





# Setting the context: Ping Yi Secondary





# Setting the context: Ping Yi Secondary



- Founded in 1984
- Mainstream multi-racial government secondary school (13 – 17 yrs old)
  - Significant % of students on Financial Assistance Scheme & stay in 1-3 room apartment flats
- Low family support + absent significant adult figure



# Ping Yi Secondary



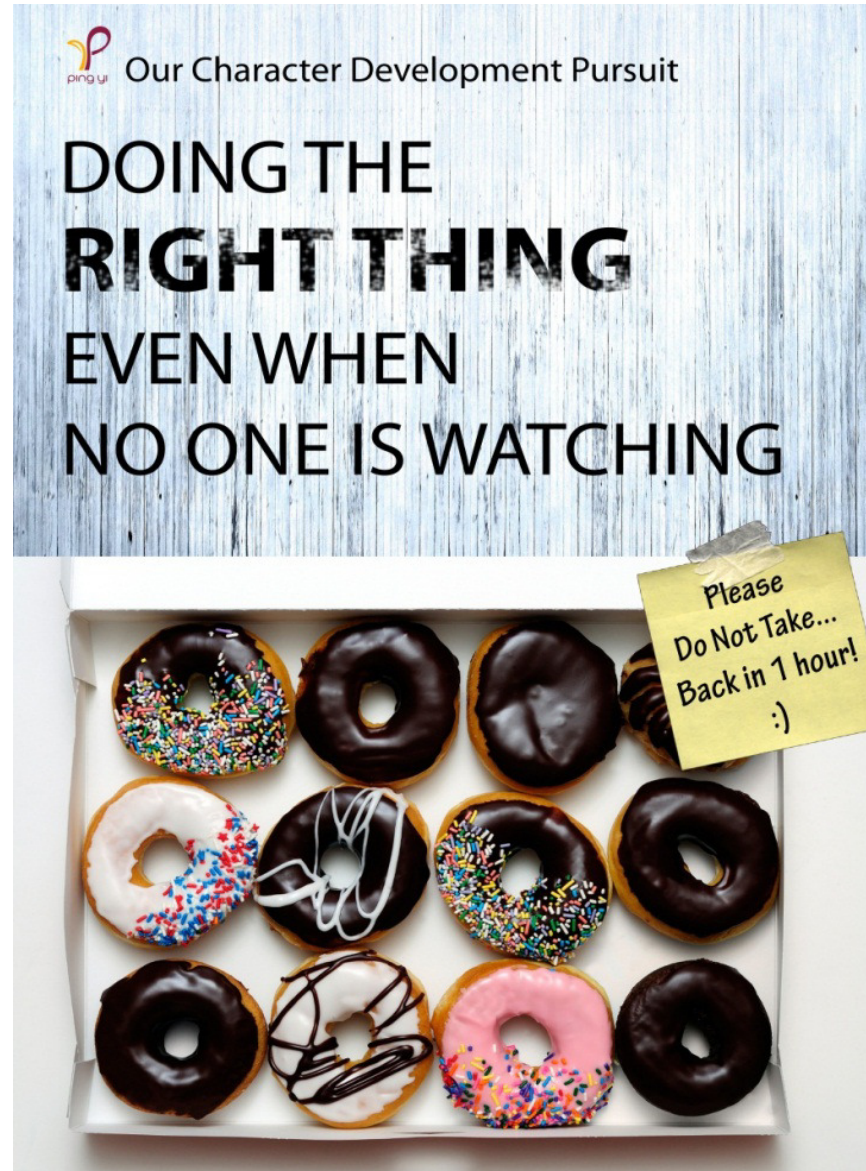
## Vision

A School of Distinction in  
Learning & Service



3 Strategic Thrusts

# Ping Yi Secondary







# Asian societies

- Asian societies typically emphasize:
  - Deference to authority
  - Respect for hierarchy
  - Order and harmony
- One may argue that Asian societies may lend themselves well to traditional punitive discipline model

# Asian societies – Tough love?



“To be beaten is a sign of affection, to be scolded is a sign of love (打是疼，骂是爱).”

- *Old Chinese saying*



“It hurts me more than it hurts you.”

“It’s all for your own good.”

# Punitive discipline model in some Asian societies



## East Asia and Pacific

Cambodia	24.1% girls beaten, 34.7% boys (Tearfund, 2005)
Philippines	18% pinched, 13-16% spanked with hands or object (Plan Philippines, 2009)
Taiwan	65.1% physically punished (Humanistic Education Foundation, 2005)
Thailand	38% physically punished (UNICEF, 2008)
Timor Leste	67% beaten with stick, 39% slapped on face (UNICEF, 2006)
Viet Nam	93% physically/emotionally punished (Save the Children Sweden/Plan in Vietnam/ UNICEF, 2005)

## South Asia

Bangladesh	91% physically punished (UNICEF, 2009)
India	59% caned in Andhra Pradesh (Child Rights Advocacy Foundation-Vijayawad, 2006)
Nepal	82% physically punished (The Rising Nepal, 2006)

## Middle East

Jordan	57% hit with object/bitten/burned, 50% slapped, pinched, hair pulled (UNICEF, 2007)
Lebanon	40% physically punished (Save the Children Sweden, 2008)
Occupied Palestinian Territories	50% beaten (Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture and Organized Violence, 2005)





# Punitive discipline model in some Asian societies

## Europe and Central Asia

Albania	38.5% ears pulled, 36.9% pinched, 51.8% hit with object, 34.3% smacked on body, 35.6% smacked on head (Human Development Centre, 2006)
Georgia	32% physically punished (Red Cross Committee of Georgia/UNICEF, 2000)
Serbia	32% subjected to violence (UNICEF, 2006)

## Latin America and the Caribbean

Guyana	56.1% whipped, 18% forced to kneel, 20.2% shaken, 26.3% slapped (University of Guyana, 2000)
Jamaica	74% subject to minor violence, 75.4% severe violence (University of West Indies, 2004)
Peru	59.3% punished with belts, sticks, cords, 40% punched, pinched, pushed (MIMDES, 2004)

## North America

US	More than 223,000 children "paddled" in 2006-7 (official figures cited by Human Rights Watch, 2008)
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# Some examples of punitive discipline model in Singapore

Types of Serious Offences	Consequences
Fighting / Assaulting / Threatening	Caning, Suspension, Referral to Police
Gangsterism / Secret society activities / Association with gangs	Caning, Suspension, Referral to Police
Gambling	Caning, Suspension
Bullying / Extortion / Intimidation	Caning, Suspension, Referral to Police
Possession of pornographic material / serving pornographic sites on the net	Confiscation / Referral to Police
Vandalism	CWO, Caning, Compensation
Stealing / Theft	Caning, Compensation, Referral to Police
Forgery of documentation, providing false information	Caning, Suspension, Referral to Police
Molestation and outraging of modesty	Counselling, Referral to Police
Wilful disruption of lessons	Caning, Suspension
Rudeness and defiance towards staff and pupils of the school	Caning, Suspension
Truancy	Caning, Suspension
Abusive / vulgar language or sign	Caning, Apology letter
Cheating in test & exams	Zero mark
Smoking & Possession of tobacco products	Caning, Referral to Health Science Authority
Possession and Drug / Substance abuse	Referral to Police
Tattooing of any parts of the body	Suspension, Removal of tattoo
Abuse of technology, cyber bullying, uploading of offensive materials tarnishing school and staff image	Counselling, caning, Referral to Police



## But...

- We believe that **RP has its place even in Asian schools**
- Typical emphasis on community over self in Asian societies is in line with RP's focus on relationships & impact of one's actions on others
- Punitive discipline and RP are not mutually exclusive



# Punitive discipline model may not always work, even in Asian schools



- <Video interview of student who has undergone punitive discipline model in his previous school>
- <Video interview of Senior Teacher who has seen our school evolve from pre-RP to post-RP days>

# Transforming school culture: Start of RP journey



- Low student engagement + classroom management issues
- Extensive punitive measures but little effect on school tone
  - Limit to punitive measures
  - Home suspension → no deterrent effect
- Ministry of Education explored RP as student management tool to enhance school discipline and engagement
  - We volunteered



# Transforming school culture: Start of RP journey



- 1 of first 4 RP Pilot Schools in Singapore





# Transforming school culture:

## Start of RP journey



- We visited Australian schools to learn about RP in 2004
  - Marist College (Boys), Domremy College (Girls)
  - Charnwood, Calwell, North Ainslie, Chisholm (Primary)
  - Calwell High, Caroline Chisholm, Belconnen (Secondary)
  - Telopea Park (Gifted), Woden (Learning Disabled)



- **Conclusion: RP worked well for various school profiles!**





# Transforming school culture: Start of RP journey



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*The secret to fixing school discipline problems? Change the behavior of adults*

MARCH 20, 2013

By Jane Ellen Stevens

in ACE STUDY, CHILD ABUSE, CHILD TRAUMA, CHRONIC DISEASE, COMMUNITY PREVENTION PROGRAMS, EDUCATION, NEUROBIOLOGY, SCHOOL DISCIPLINE, SOLUTIONS,



Godwin High principal, Cherokee Point Elementary School

<http://acestoonhigh.com/2013/03/20/secret-to-fixing-school-discipline/>

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# Transforming school culture: Start of RP journey



“When we started the journey in 2005, we were looking for a disciplinary tool that could really work for our socially disadvantaged and disengaged students...

However, as we progressed in our RP journey and gained deeper understanding of RP, the school began to see RP differently. It is not about discipline per se, but **a whole school philosophy** that would **trigger off curriculum reform, organizational change and re-culturation of the school.**”



- Mrs Julia Woo, Principal (2003 – 2008)

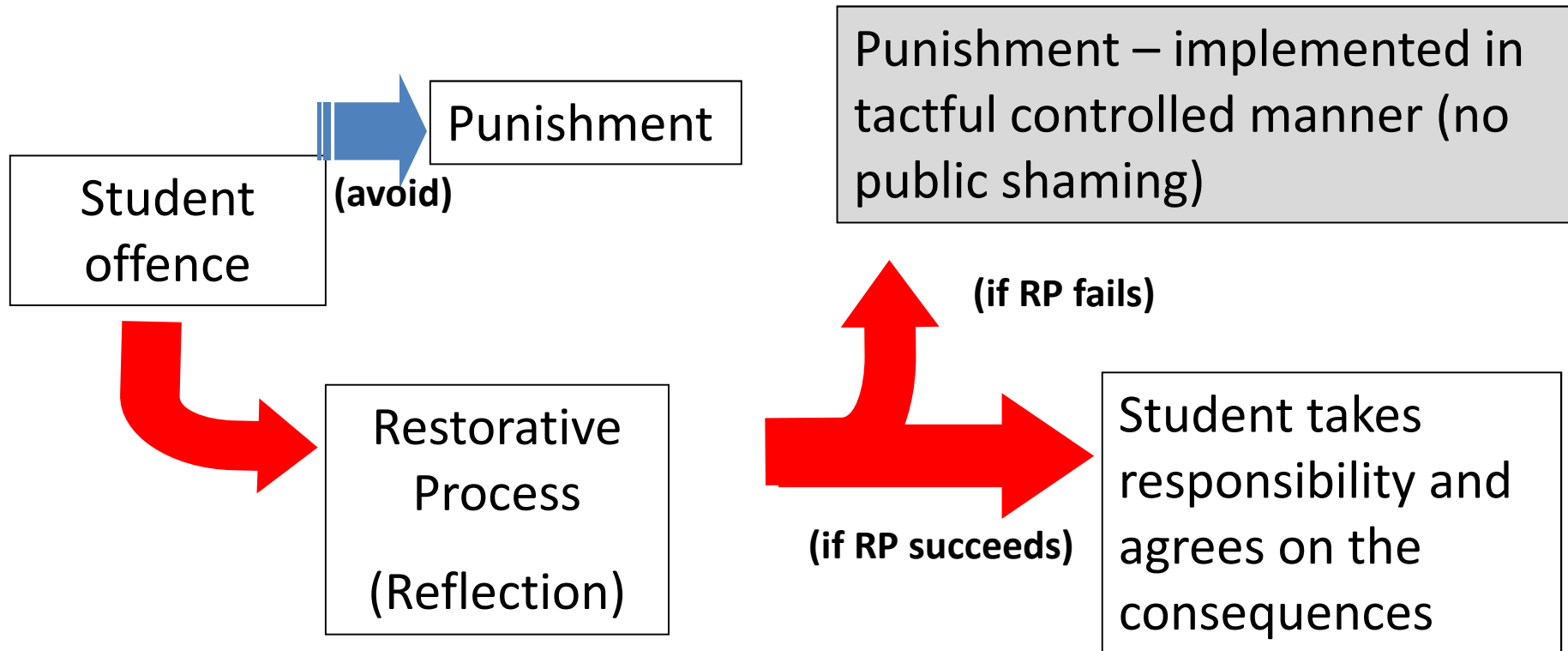


# HOW DOES RP LOOK LIKE IN PING YI?



# How does RP look like in Ping Yi?

- Doing RP does not preclude punishment, but precedes it:







# How does RP look like in Ping Yi?

## PUNISHMENTS STILL NEEDED

But restorative practices do not mean the end of measures such as caning.

The school feels such punishments are still necessary, especially for recalcitrant students who commit offences such as theft and fighting.

They will still be put through a thinking process to reflect on their wrongdoings.

Said discipline master Martin Chan: "We aren't taking away all punitive measures — we still have those in place."

"We view restorative practices more as an additional measure that will help us to manage misbehaviour."

Mrs Woo said that the focus of these practices is to repair the damage done to relationships as a result of students' offences.

For example, the victim of an offence such as theft is brought face-to-face with the offender.

Said Mrs Woo: "We want to help the child realise the damage he has done as a result of his actions, take responsibility for them and repair the damage."



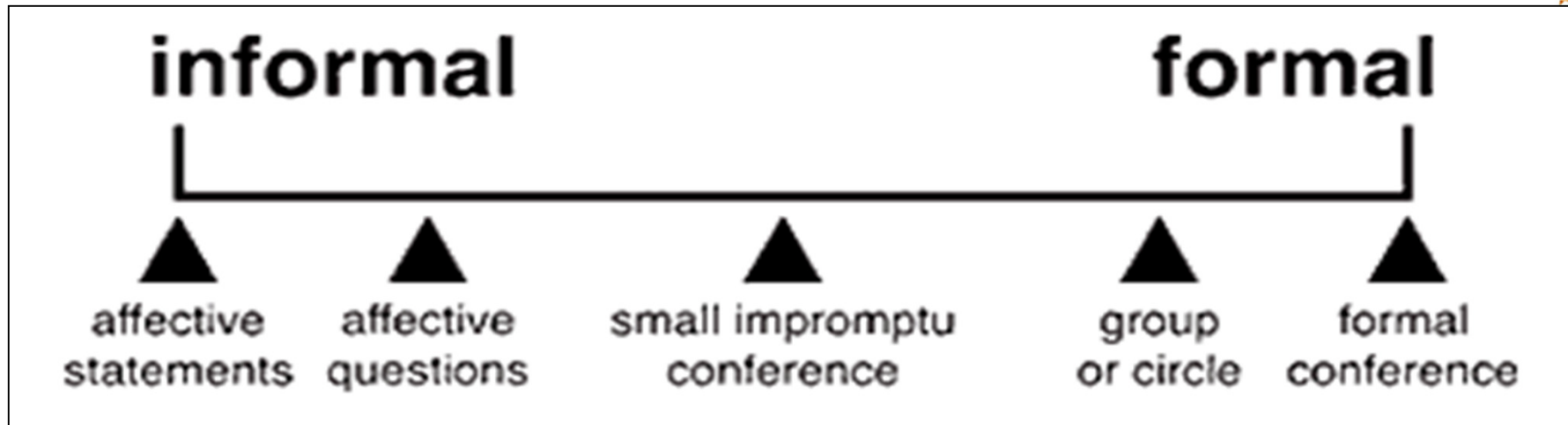
In the past, offenders were simply punished according to the rules.

Now, they are disciplined, then made to reflect in writing.

Teachers then go through the reflections with them.



# How does RP look like in Ping Yi?



**80% Universal:**  
“immunization” through building SEL skills to resolve conflicts in caring & respectful ways :  
RP as a part of everyday life

**10-15% Targeted:**  
protracted conflict

**1-5% Intensive**

# **How does RP look like in Ping Yi?**

## **Management of student misbehaviour**

Different strategies/stages, depending on issue/nature of incident

- 1) Affective questioning
- 2) Small group conferencing
- 3) Formal conferencing
- 4) Circle Time

# (1) Affective Questions



- For one-to-one RP process
- Guiding questions to help students go through the RP thought process
- “Blue Form”

**What did you do?**

**What were you thinking about when you did that?**

**Did you do the right/wrong thing?**

**Who has been harmed/affected?**

**How are they affected?**

**What can you do to make things right?**



## (2) Small Group Conferencing



- Group size of less than 5
- A platform for the offenders and victims to communicate
- Not a blame session

## (3) Formal Conferencing

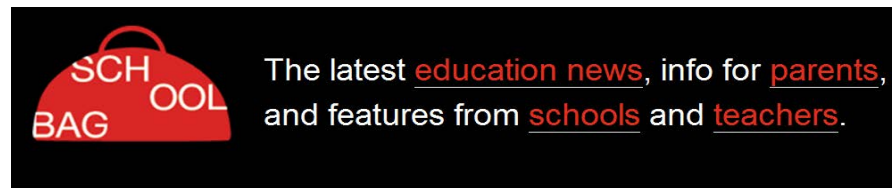
- Involves various stakeholders
- Pre- and post- conferences / discussion
- Monitoring and supporting the victims
- Ensuring that the offenders carry out the concluded outcomes





## (4) Circle Time

- To address issues at class level – close loop



### Restoring Relationships through Circles and Conversation

Tuesday, October 23, 2012



Every two weeks, students at Ping Yi Secondary School gather at a cosy corner of their school and sit in a circle facing each other and their form teacher. In the hour that follows, each student has a chance to voice what he or she feels about life in school, reveal what makes them tick - or ticks them off - and share how they cope with difficult situations or upsetting moments. The positive force of these personal revelations works both ways: besides expressing their inner thoughts and



Circle Time at Ping Yi Secondary School gives students the opportunity to think about life in school and share how they deal with challenges.



# Case Study

In Feb 2011, a teacher's photo was posted on a student's Facebook .

The post attracted viewing from 12 students and 7 left distasteful remarks.

The teacher was informed and was very affected by the incident. the remarks that were posted suggested that the class disliked her teaching methods.





# Case Study

Everyone took turns to speak.

The students gave feedback about the teacher's lesson and expressed their concerns.

The teacher explained the rationale of her actions and also accepted some of the feedback given. She assured the students that she would look into them.

# Case Study



“The students are more open now and are willing to share with me their thoughts...”

- Teacher

“It made me realise that I am in the wrong and should not do this kind of thing again as it will hurt people’s feelings...”

I think the issue has been resolved. My teacher is now trying to teach us the way we want and she is trying to make the class more interesting. The students are also trying to cooperate with her”

- Student A

“I enjoyed it (the circle session) as it was productive... students and teacher sat together and discussed our problem... conflict can be resolved peacefully without any misunderstanding and quarrel.”

- Student B