Restorative Practices with Truancy and Tardiness

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Building community in a disconnected world.

In an ideal world.

- I would create a fully restorative school by going through the Whole School Change Program via IIRP's SaferSanerSchools. All interactions with students and families will be restorative and there would be no need for this presentation.   The End!

Restorative Practices

- The most critical function of restorative practices is restoring and building relationships.

- The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is disarmingly simple: that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.

T. Wachtel & P. McCold 2004

Keep in mind

Looking at truancy and tardiness through the restorative lens of building and restoring relationships,

if a child is not attending school:

What relationships need to be built?

What relationships need to be restored?

My personal beliefs

1. Children are precious members of the community and we have an obligation to support them in reaching their potential.

2. Every child, family and environment is unique and must be treated as such.

3. Families are doing the best that they can.

4. Families possess the answers to their problems and may need support in uncovering those answers.

5. Building and restoring relationships are key in helping to get and keep children attending school.

Start by being aware

Know yourself

Know your environment

Know your clients

Know yourself

- Skills -strengths and weaknesses
- Belief system – open or bias?
- Role
- Responsibilities - do's and don'ts
- Goals
- Available supports

Know your environment

- Policies and procedures
- Level of physical and emotional safety
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Goals – actual and reported
- Available supports

Know your clients

- Level of safety

- Skills – strengths and weaknesses

- Needs

- Goals

- Available supports

Truancy and Tardiness

- Truancy – staying out of school without permission
- Tardiness – arriving late

  - Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2014

- Truancy and tardiness are simply symptoms of a larger problem. Our role is to help families/schools uncover and dissolve the problem.

Five Tiered Approach to Action

- Prevention
- Education
- Identification
- Intervention
- Post-intervention reflection

Prevention :

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Benjamin Franklin

- Create an environment that welcomes children and their families. Build relationships!
  - Train **all** staff in restorative approaches which encourage engagement and partnership with families.
  - Train **all** staff in restorative practices which encourage children to connect to their school and therefore encourage attendance.

Prevention

- Create clear expectations of attendance and timeliness.
  - Be sure that these expectations are clear, fair, just and flexible.
  - Be sure to share these expectations with everyone involved with the child: family, staff, community.
  - Share the expectations with all concerned in an accessible manner: language and terminology.

Education

- Educate families on how they can help support their child's attendance in school.
  - Brochures
  - Tips and strategies information
  - Meetings with helping professionals
  - Referrals to resources

Education continued

- Educate families as to how the school can help them support their child if they encounter problems.
  - What kind of help is available?
  - How do they engage help?
  - Who do they contact?
  - What can they expect as a response?
  - What level control do they retain? (have they set a process in motion that they will regret)

Identification

- Have a clearly defined process for identifying students who are experiencing challenges in attending school or arriving on time.
  - Consistent expectations of recording attendance.
  - Consistent recording of attendance and tardiness.
  - Consistent thresholds for triggering a referral/ response.
  - Educating school personnel on how to identify children who may be at risk for non-attendance.
  - Educating school personnel on how to refer children for further assessment and/or supports.

Intervention priority

- All interventions should have engagement of the child and the family as the priority. Without engagement, we are not working *with* the child and family. Build relationships!

- When we work *with* the child and family:
  - We increase the likeliness of a positive outcome.
  - We will increase cooperation and collaboration.
  - We will increase the probability of change.

Intervention

- Provide consistent and fair responses to absenteeism and tardiness on an individual/family level (high support) and an institutional level (high control).

  - Individual/family level – Affective statements, affective questions, circles, conferencing.

  - Institutional level – the responses should consistently follow just policies and procedures.

Intervention

- Provide information and resources to the family to help them understand and cope with their child's behaviors.
  - Help families help themselves and their children by:
    - providing them with information about possible causes for truancy and school refusal.
    - providing them with strategies to help their child become more connected with the school community.
    - providing them with resources they can access if they are interested in additional supports. (in and out of school)

Intervention – action plan

- Provide opportunities for reflective assessment of child and family needs.

- Provide opportunities for professional assessment of the child's needs (if deemed necessary)

- Provide opportunities for participatory decision making with family and the child.

- Create a collaborative plan of action.

Plan of Action

- Plan of action should contain:

- Clear and specific goals -What needs to get done and how do we know it is done?

- Clearly defined shared responsibilities– Who does what?

- Timelines – When do actions get done or completed?

- Explanations of positive and negative consequences – What next?

- Follow up – How did it work out? Are we done or do we need to adjust the plan of action?

Legal interventions

- Legal involvement can be a real consequence of truancy
- Should be implemented as needed
- Ideally, should be collaborative
  - School with family
  - School with court
  - Court with family
- Should be fair and just
- Should be relevant to the desired outcome of the child going to school.

Post – intervention reflection

- What was the outcome of the interventions?

- All participants in the action plan should have an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan and the outcome.

- All participants should have an opportunity to provide suggestions on improvements for the future.

So…

What relationships need to be built?

What relationships need to be restored?

Who is being harmed? In what way?

Who is causing the harm?

What needs to happen to make it right?

Final Reminders

We connect through our relationships.

We must build a safe and connected community in which, our children can thrive and…

If we build it, they will come.

Electronic copies of documents

Send a request to Kim Vindler via

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Remember the term restorative not
only defines what we do,
but also how we do it!

Etiology of Truancy and Tardiness

- Information needs to be gathered to assess the cause of the problematic behaviors and to create an action plan

Functional Model of School Refusal Behavior

- According to Kearney (2001) there are 4 functions of school refusal behaviors

1. Avoidance of stimuli that provoke a sense of general negative affect
2. Escape from aversive social or evaluative situations
3. Attention seeking behaviors
4. Tangible reinforcers outside of school

Avoidance of stimuli that provoke a general negative affect

- Specific stimuli or situations produce negative or uncomfortable feelings about school. Child feels that they must avoid school to avoid the uncomfortable feelings

- Child may present with many somatic complaints, fears and/or anxiety.

Escape from aversive social or evaluative situations

- Social or evaluative situations may cause anxiety, and/or fear of embarrassment, ridicule or rejection.

- These situation may include peer interactions, speaking in class, making presentation, tests.

- Child may present with social phobia, social anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder

Attention seeking behaviors

- The child gains positive rewards for non-attendance: attention and sympathy
- Acting out in the morning causing tardiness
- Child may cling to parent or sibling – separation anxiety
- In school, child may be non-compliant and oppositional
- Child may report somatic complaints

Tangible reinforcements outside of school

- School refusal allows the student to pursue positive experiences

- Child experiences distress over not getting to experience those positive experiences:

  - Sleeping, video games, TV, friends, parties

- Child may struggle with impulsivity and/or the ability to postpone gratification