



Building on our Term 1 focus on creating a strong community from day one, we welcomed Michelle McKersey, Deputy Head of Secondary at Moreton Bay College, to explore a whole-school approach to restorative practice. In this session, Michelle contrasted restorative, relational approaches to behaviour with traditional punitive models and highlighted Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) as a proactive, preventative strategy within a restorative framework.

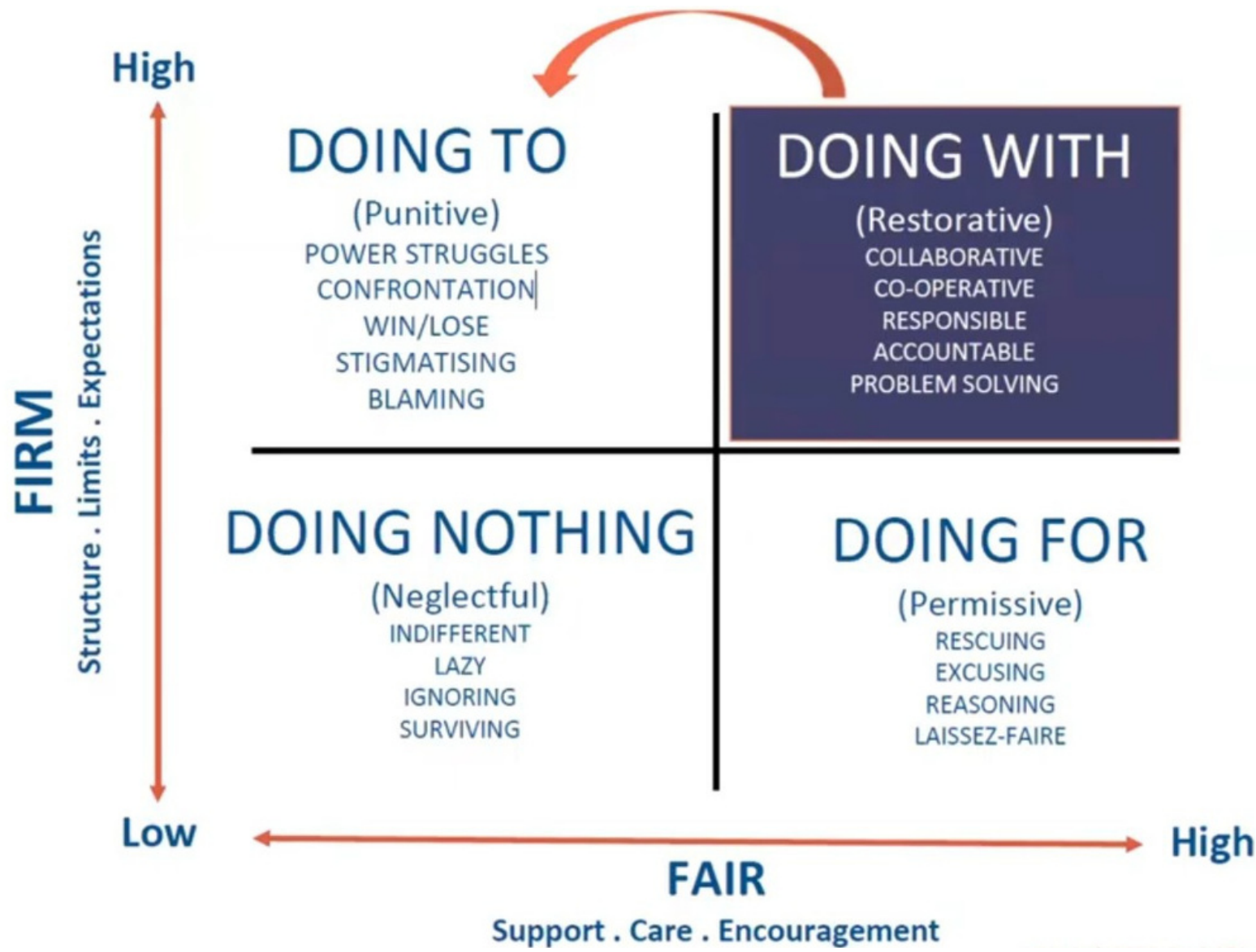
Below, we have synthesised the key takeaways and curated resources to support your school's approach to restorative practice.

What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative practice in education is an evidence-informed approach: **a way of thinking, being, and interacting that fosters a safe and supportive learning environment**. It combines proactive strategies to build meaningful relationships with responsive processes to repair them when harm or conflict occurs.

These practices are grounded in the Social Relational Window, combining McCold and Wachtel's 'Social Discipline Window' and Dorothy Vaandering's 'Relationship Window' (Pointer & McGoey, 2026). Students are more cooperative and productive when those in authority do things WITH them - high expectations balanced with high support - rather than TO them (punitive), FOR them (permissive), or NOT at all (neglectful).

In a restorative classroom, rules are often co-created by teachers and students rather than imposed. And whereas traditional models view students as objects to be managed, restorative models treat them as worthy human beings, prioritising high expectations balanced with high support.



Social Discipline Window. Wachtel (2013)

Why It Matters: Benefits in Education

Restorative practice provides a transformative alternative to zero-tolerance policies and punitive discipline, one that views conflict as an opportunity for growth and humanisation within the school community. (Lodi et al., 2021). Traditional exclusionary practices such as suspensions and expulsions are often ineffective and linked to poorer long-term outcomes.

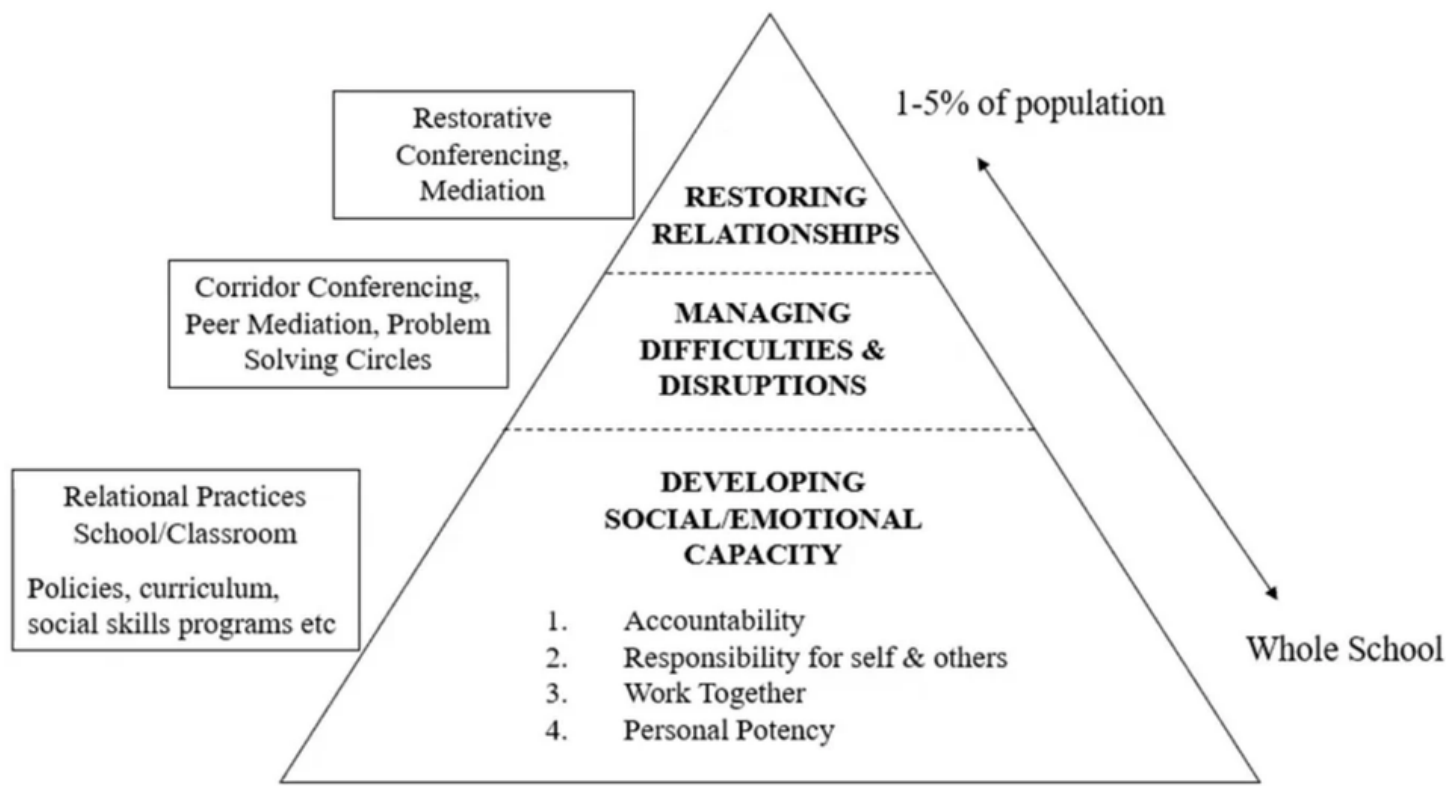
Research and systematic reviews show that restorative practices lead to:

- 1. **Fewer behavioural issues and greater equity:** reduced suspensions, referrals and disciplinary disparities.
- 2. **Enhanced school climate:** stronger connectedness and student-teacher relationships.
- 3. **Social-emotional growth:** empathy, active listening, accountability and problem-solving.
- 4. **Educator wellbeing:** improved staffroom relationships and greater teacher confidence.

A Restorative Culture Framework: The Restorative Pyramid

The Restorative Pyramid organises school practices into levels of intervention, from universal proactive strategies to intensive formal processes, supporting a shift from punitive discipline toward a relational culture of trust, belonging and accountability (Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

The "pyramid" structure has three levels of practice as shown in the table below:



The Hierarchy of Restorative Responses or the Restorative Pyramid (Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005)

Level	Purpose	Practices
Proactive/ Universal	Skill building: build a restorative culture and relationships school-wide	- Daily use of explicit teaching/ modelling of behaviours e.g. social-emotional curriculum and language to express feelings (Moran et al., 2025) - Community-building circles: structured discussions that give every voice a safe, equitable space (CDC, 2024). - Collaborative Proactive Solutions (CPS): a model to address ‘unsolved problems’ and skill deficits (Lives in the Balance, n.d.).
Targeted/ Responsive	Maintaining community: address minor conflicts before they escalate	- Impromptu conversations - Targeted circles
Intensive/ Formal	Repair/ restore: repair serious harm and restore relationships	- Restorative conferences: structured meetings bringing together the person who caused harm, the person harmed, families, and staff. Rather than punishment, they emphasise accountability and a shared plan to “make things right” (Lodi et al., 2021). - Re-entry circles: facilitated conversations that reintegrate students returning after a suspension or expulsion (CDC, 2025).

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (also known as Collaborative Problem Solving)

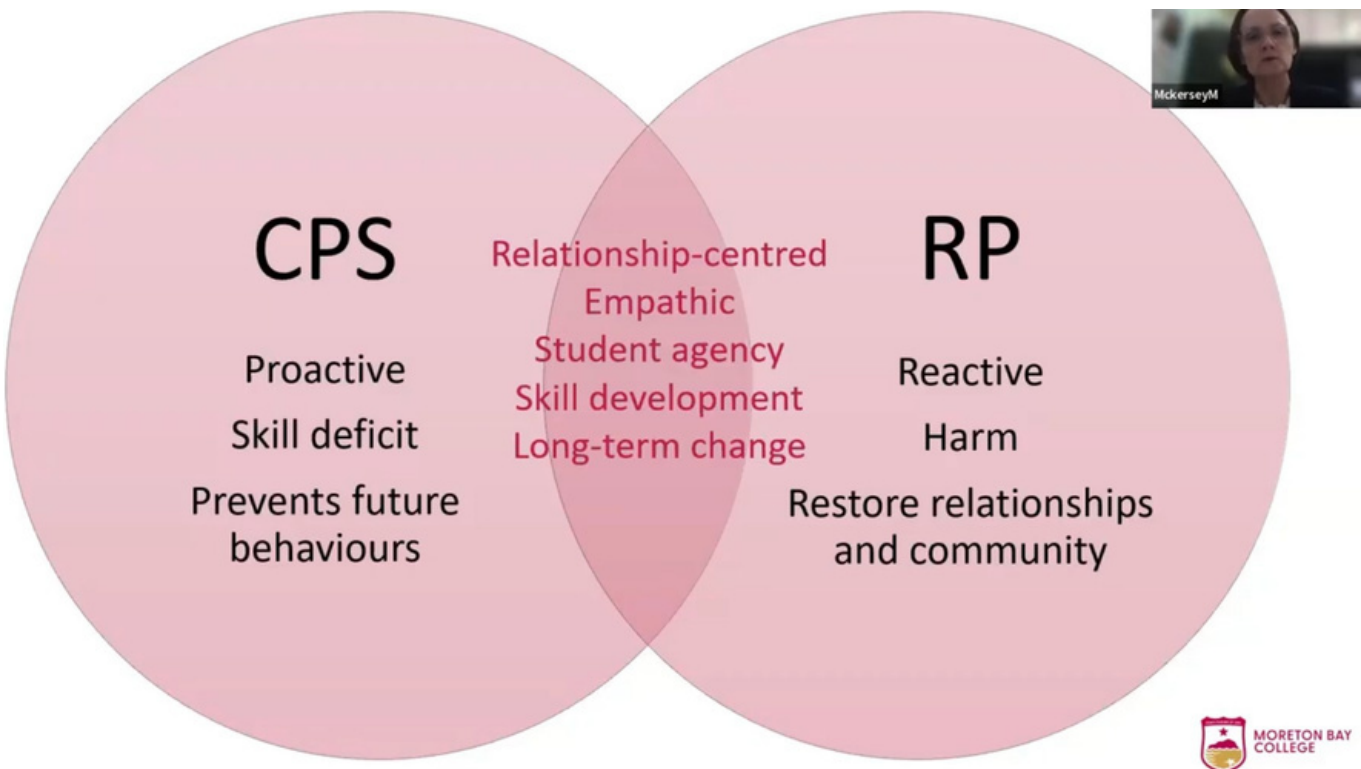
Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS), developed by clinical psychologist Dr Ross Greene, addresses challenging behaviour by solving its underlying causes rather than controlling the behaviour itself (Lives in the Balance, n.d.). It rests on the belief that “kids do well if they can”, challenging behaviour arises when expectations exceed a student’s skills in emotional regulation, frustration tolerance, flexibility, or problem-solving.

CPS is not a behaviour program but a relational, systems-aligned framework requiring leadership commitment and alignment across policy, practice, and mindset. Implemented with fidelity, it drives sustainable cultural change rather than short-term compliance. Instead of rewards, punishments, or exclusionary discipline.

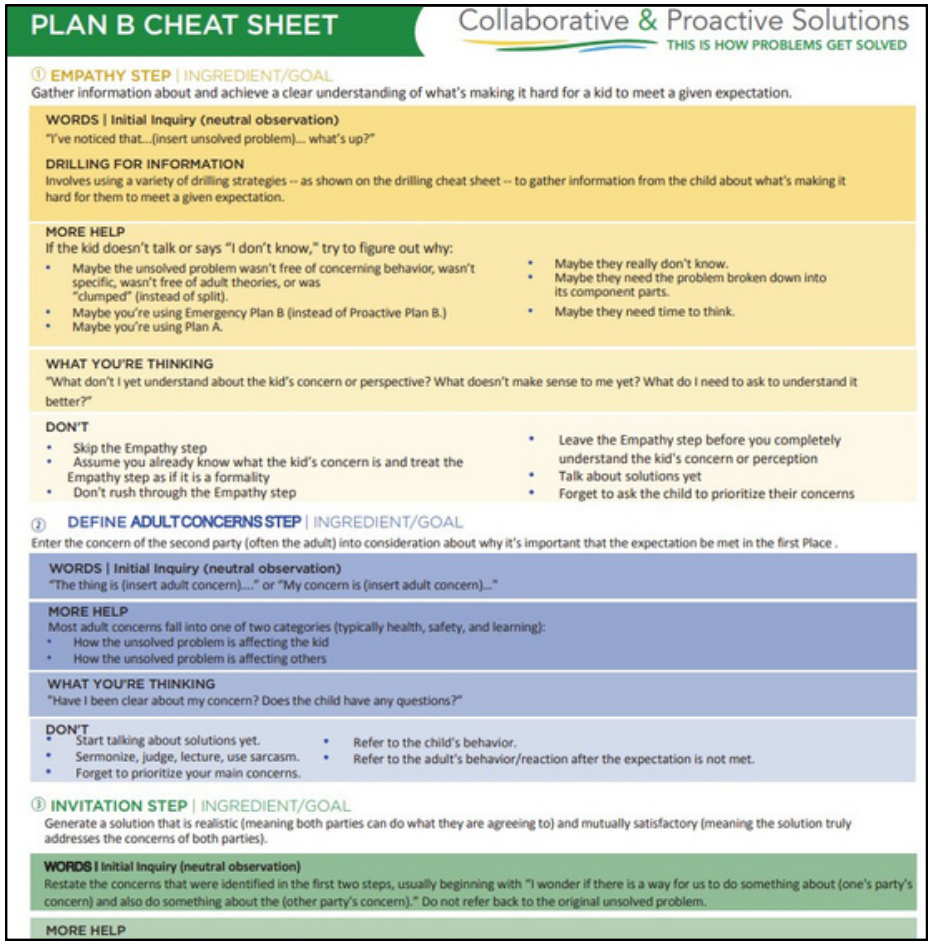
Michelle outlines three practices:

- 1. **Empathy Step:** understand the student’s perspective and identify the unsolved problems behind the behaviour.
- 2. **Adult Concern Step:** the adult states their own concerns (e.g. impact on learning).
- 3. **Invitation Step:** adult and student collaborate on solutions addressing both concerns.

Because CPS is collaborative and proactive, it builds skills, trust, and shared responsibility over time, making it preventative, unlike restorative practice, which is reactive. Michelle’s Venn diagram shows this difference alongside shared ground: both are relationship-centred, empathic, support student agency, and focus on long-term change through skill development.



Practical Resources



Lives in the Balance (Ross Greene)

This website provides a comprehensive range of practical resources for educators and parents including:

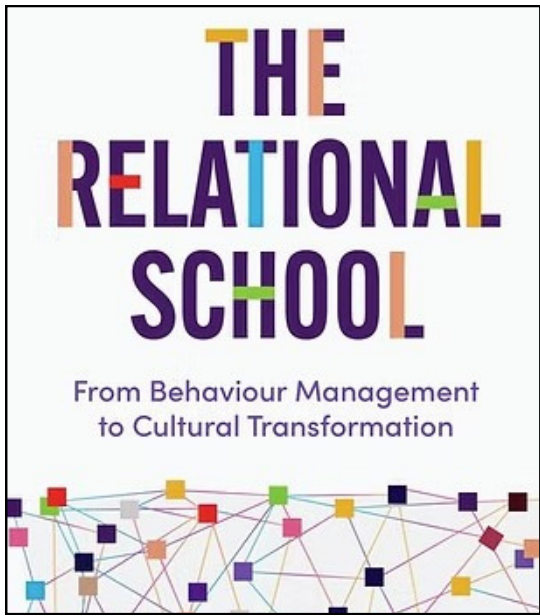
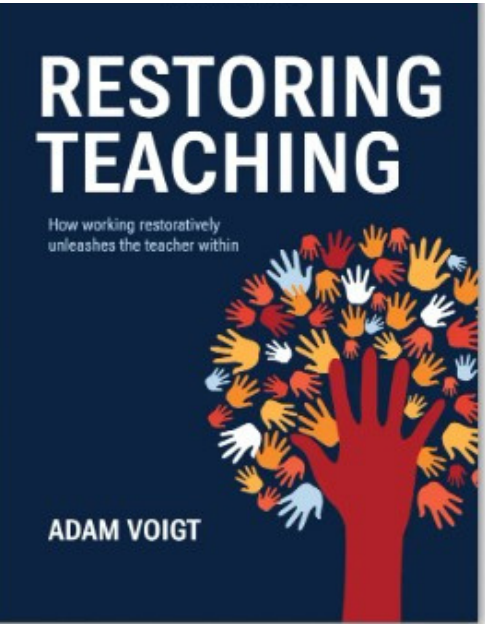
- Key research articles
- Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems worksheet
- Video demonstrations of Collaborative Problem Solving in practice

A School Discipline Survey for school leaders to reflect on their current behaviour management approaches.

Further Resources

Restoring Teaching (2nd edition) by Adam Voigt

This book is available FREE to teachers as an ebook, audiobook or hardcopy. Building on his Restorative Practice 'RP2.0' methodology, this edition includes practical resources and templates developed by Adam, alongside his no-nonsense advice to help you implement restorative practice in your classroom.



The Relational School by Sue Chandler

The Relational School examines why schools' relational values often fail to translate into daily practice, and how systems can unintentionally undermine connection. It offers a practical, systems-level framework and tools to help leaders intentionally design school cultures grounded in trust, clarity and shared responsibility.

Building a stronger school community through Restorative Practice: a case study (Reimer, K. 2024)

Watch a short video by Monash University of the impact of restorative practice at Balaklava High School in South Australia. Through intentional and thoughtful implmentation, the school saw a reduction in expulsions and incidents of violence, including a change in staff attitudes and a positive impact on the community.



Additional Reading & References

- An overview of Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Rosen, B., 2020): A research-informed reference situating CPS within the wider field of therapeutic and behavioural interventions—useful for researchers, clinicians, and practitioners.
- The Australian Context: Restorative Practices as a Platform for Cultural Change in Schools (Blood, P., 2005): Argues that Restorative Practices work best as a whole-school cultural shift rather than a behaviour management tool, with sustainable change requiring relational thinking, proactive skill-building, and aligned beliefs, practices, and structures. Includes the Restorative Pyramid.
- Exploring restorative practices: Teachers' experiences with early adolescents (Moran, E., Sloan, S., Walsh, E. & Taylor, L., 2024): A qualitative study of nine Irish primary school leaders, finding that building a restorative culture is a long-term, transformative shift in values that enhances student autonomy and school harmony.
- Understanding the social relational window (Pointer, L. & McGoey, K., 2026): Presents the Social Relational Window as a model for understanding how a restorative approach differs from others.
- In Pursuit of Paradigm: A Theory of Restorative Justice (McCold, P. & Wachtel, T., 2003): Introduces the Social Discipline Window and the case for restorative justice in repairing harm.
- Promoting healthy school communities through restorative practices (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024): An infographic overview of restorative practices, their benefits, and further resources.