New Developments and Lessons Learned From the *Enhancing Relationships in School Communities* Project

Eleanor H. Wertheim[1]
Elizabeth Freeman[2]
Margot Trinder[1, 2]
Glenda MacNaughton[2]
[1] *La Trobe University*
[2] *University of Melbourne*

The Enhancing Relationships in School Communities (ERIS) project is an applied research project that began in 2005, to develop better processes for cooperative conflict resolution in primary school communities and to create more culturally respectful school communities. In this paper we first describe the background of the project and the approach taken with two cohorts of schools, comprising 12 primary schools in ERIS Phase 1 and then a further 10 primary schools in Phase 2. Also included are descriptions of how the way we presented the conflict resolution model was adapted to respond to school needs. Several developments are described, including (1) simplifying the conflict resolution model to encourage broader application, (2) systematically integrating elements of respect for cultural diversity into the conflict model to assist teachers to consider the broader cultural context, and (3) integrating the conflict resolution model into the broader external framework for building and restoring relationships in schools communities. Further lessons learned from the process of engaging in Phase 2 of the project are discussed, such as the importance of joining in a partnership with schools to better learn from and address their needs, and providing extended professional development with school support to increase implementation and program maintenance.

The Enhancing Relationships in School Communities (ERIS) project is an applied research project that began in 2005, to develop better processes for cooperative conflict resolution in primary school communities and create more culturally respectful school communities. Its current form is a partnership among the Australian Psychological Society, specifically Psychologists for Peace interest group; University of Melbourne; La Trobe University; the Catholic Education Office Melbourne; and two primary schools (Haig St Primary School, Heidelberg West and St Anthony's Primary School, Alphington). Our overall aim for this paper is to describe developments across time for this project, including how the way we have worked with schools to understand and implement a conflict resolution practice model has evolved based on feedback from those schools.

In this paper we begin by describing the background of the ERIS project, the end of program findings of the project's first phase (ERIS Phase 1) in 12 primary schools and recent refinements arising from findings of that phase. We then illustrate several developments in the model arising from our collaboration with and feedback from the Phase 1 schools that influenced how we subsequently presented the concepts to schools in Phase 2. These developments include (1) a simplified conflict resolution model to encourage broader application, (2) integrating elements of respect for cultural diversity into the model to assist teachers to consider the broader cultural context when applying the model, and, later in the ERIS program, (3) integrating the model into a broader external framework for building and restoring relationships in schools (restorative practices). Finally, we describe other lessons we learned out of the process of engaging in Phase 2 of the project. We hope, in providing this information, to encourage closer collaboration between researchers and schools, to inform future programs in conflict resolution and encourage reflection on practice in schools.

Background of the ERIS Project - Phase 1

The ERIS project was originally an initiative of Psychologists for Peace (PFP), an interest group of the Australian Psychological Society, which was designed initially to promote PFP ideas and resources in schools. These ideas are based on a core collaborative conflict resolution model (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Wertheim, Love, Peck & Littlefield, 2006) in which individuals are encouraged to first consider the parties and issues involved in a dispute and to explicitly set the scene for cooperation (as opposed to competition, which is a common orientation to conflict). Next, the interests (needs, wants, concerns, fears) of each party are identified and discussed, a *range* of possible options for addressing each party's interests is generated, and parties arrive at a 'win-win' or 'integrative' solution to the conflict combining the options that best meet each party's interests. Other elements of the model include building positive relationships, handling emotions, looking at objective criteria that can frame solutions, and considering alternatives to a negotiated solution in case negotiations break down and developing the best one (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement or BATNA, Fisher & Ury). This theoretical model, based on Fisher and Ury's (1981) prescriptive advice, was recast by Littlefield, Love, Peck and Wertheim (1993) as a social problem solving approach.

Phase 1 of the ERIS project involved our working with 12 schools over a 16-month period. Core teams of 3-5 teachers (including leadership such as principal or assistant principal) attended full day workshops covering the conflict resolution model (Australian Psychological Society, 1997; Wertheim, Love et al., 2006). The core teams were taught the model and were responsible for taking what they had learned back to their schools. That process included disseminating the information, providing professional learning for their colleagues, integrating the model into school policy and practice, introducing related curriculum and encouraging new processes for teacher conflict resolution and problem-solving practice throughout the school, that is, in the classroom, on 'yard duty' (in the playground), in staff meetings and with parents and carers. We evaluated the ERIS Phase 1 program in a quasi-experimental design using questionnaires at pre, mid and post program, and through field notes taken during four school visits by the ERIS team.

A primary research question in this initial trial of the program was whether two days of workshops would be sufficient in supporting schools to make important changes in their schools. While one or two days of workshops attended by individuals or small groups of staff is a model commonly used in school initiatives, many researchers argue that often there is too little adequate professional learning offered to staff to prepare them to implement changes effectively and for these changes to be maintained (Elias, Zins, Craczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Girard & Koch, 1996; Jones & Compton, 2003; Stevahn, Kealey, & Munger, 2005; Walker, 2004). Therefore in the first phase of the ERIS project, this more standard two-day format (six schools) was compared with a longer-term format (six schools), in which seven days of professional development took place. Schools, comprising both Catholic and state schools, were randomly assigned to condition. At post-program four groups of school staff ($n = 66$) were compared: full intervention core team members ($n = 16$), partial intervention core team members ($n = 17$), other staff from full intervention schools ($n = 14$), and other staff from partial intervention schools ($n = 19$).

Outcomes of Phase 1 of the ERIS Project

At post-program teachers reported on impact and application of the ERIS program in the school, and hours taught of ERIS curriculum

(Trinder, Wertheim, Freeman, Sanson, Richardson & Hunt, in press; Wertheim, Freeman, Trinder & Sanson, 2006a; Wertheim, Freeman, Trinder, Sanson, Richardson & Hunt, 2006b). Phase 1 ERIS pre-post program changes were evaluated on the basis of teachers' responses to scenarios describing a student dispute (teacher responses were rated according to steps of the conflict resolution model used to resolve the dispute) and reports of teachers' conflict management styles. Field notes during school support visits supplemented questionnaire data.

Findings suggested that ERIS was positively received by participant schools, however, the full intervention (FI) was found to be more effective than the partial intervention (PI), with the greatest gains being made by FI core team teachers as opposed to other teachers in the FI schools or core teams and other teachers in the PI schools. Field notes suggested that FI schools more often embedded ERIS into policy and practice (6 full versus 3 partial intervention schools), had principal involvement in ERIS (6 vs. 3), and disseminated ERIS-related information to parents (4 vs. 2).

In FI schools 25% of classes included ERIS conflict resolution curriculum in the first year, increasing to 36% in the second half year; while in PI schools 20% taught ERIS curriculum in the first year, dropping to 11% in the second half year. The mean number of hours of conflict resolution reportedly taught to students ranged from 14.3 to 27 hours over a one-year period; a Kruskal-Wallis Test, H (3, N = 62) = 8.09, $p = .044$, indicated significant differences between the four groups and post hoc (Mann-Whitney U) tests showed FI core team taught significantly more than PI groups.

Pre-post program change analyses indicated that at post intervention, all groups of teachers, except non-core team staff in PI schools, increased use of the conflict resolution model steps in conflict scenarios, Kruskal Wallis Z (16) = -3.43, $p = .001$. Groups also differed at post-program on use of a general integrative problem solving style for managing conflict, c^2 (3, N = 63) = 11.49, $p = .009$, with post hoc tests showing FI core team teachers most often used a cooperative problem solving style.

Core team staff, particularly in FI schools, also reported ERIS to have had greatest impact in improving conflict management ability across a range of nine contexts such as managing negotiations or conflicts with students, staff and parents and resolving conflict between students, Kruskal-Wallis Test H (3, N=61) = 22.67, $p < .0005$. The mean impact across contexts on a 5 point scale (5 = *very much so* and 1= *not at all*), for FI core team = 4.22, PI core team = 3.89, FI other staff =3.01, and PI other staff = 2.16.

Phase 2 of the ERIS Project

Following the first phase of the ERIS project, our aim in Phase 2 was to replicate and extend it in another round of 16 months of professional learning for other primary schools. Because of the superior outcomes in the full intervention group in the first ERIS trial, we decided to repeat the 16-month format, this time having all core teams attend 7 full-day workshops. In addition, our findings from ERIS Phase 1 that the core teams (i.e., teachers who attended the ERIS workshops) had greater levels of knowledge and implementation of curriculum and skills at post program than other teachers in their schools, led us to make one of the 7 workshops a full-school professional development day, which all teachers (and in some cases ancillary staff) attended. The aim was to encourage the whole school to become more involved early in the program and to introduce all staff to the program concepts and skills. The second phase of the ERIS project began in 2008 and has involved offering the program to 10 Victorian primary schools, including both state and Catholic schools. While some schools comprise mostly Anglo-Australian families, others include students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The 10 program schools are being compared to three control schools. Questionnaires and field notes during school visits are forming a major part of the evaluation of this field study. In addition after each workshop participants completed an anonymous post-workshop evaluation in which they rated how useful each workshop component was (rated from *not at all* to *extremely* useful) and they suggested future topics and concerns to inform subsequent workshops. The full day workshop format and school visits enabled us to work closely with school staff over an extended period. These collaborative relationships were pivotal in enabling us to adapt and redevelop our resources to ensure they were useful to a diverse range of school settings and reflected the lived experience of the staff. The aim of the current paper is to discuss changes that took place in our practice of working with this new group of schools. As the evaluation process is ongoing, we will not describe final empirical outcomes of pre-post changes on participant questionnaires. However, we will refer instead to the post-workshop evaluations which gave indications of how well received these new approaches were.

Developing a briefer conflict model to encourage greater application

The first conceptual modification we made in Phase 2 was how we portrayed the conflict resolution process. In Phase 1 of the project, we had received feedback from some teachers that the full conflict resolution model was too complex to use regularly in a school context. Core team teachers described themselves as having little time to engage in putting into practice lengthy conflict resolution models or to teach an elaborate model to their colleagues during staff meetings. While we encouraged teachers to consider, when judging how much time to put into a conflict resolution process, the positive long-term outcomes of spending time doing that (e.g., preventing future conflict by resolving current conflicts thoroughly), we also understood the need for schools to have processes that were going to work in their context and acknowledged the practical constraints in schools.

On the basis of studies that examined which core elements of the conflict resolution model are associated with improved negotiation outcomes (Davidson & Wood, 2004; Soltys, 2003), we developed an abbreviated version of the conflict resolution model called the SIB model (Setting the scene for cooperation, Identifying interests, and Brainstorming options) or two-minute model (since it could be done efficiently). Figure 1 shows the SIB model, which was taught initially during the full school workshop.

The SIB model was well received. Post workshop evaluations of the full school day indicated that of 203 school staff , 65.5% described the session in which we presented the SIB model as very or extremely useful, 24.5% somewhat useful, and 10% not very useful. We found, however, that a one session exposure to the simplified model (in the context of other material presented) still did not result in most core team members recalling the model readily in later professional development sessions. We therefore returned to the SIB model at subsequent core team workshops, engaging in role plays to practice using the model when negotiating with students, mediating conflicts, or coaching students to solve their own disputes. Schools that most fully embraced this model then adapted the approach as standard practice on yard duty for the whole school and taught it as part of student curriculum.

Integrating ideas about respect for cultural diversity into the ERIS conflict resolution model

A further development in ERIS Phase 2 was an increased focus on assisting schools to develop greater respect for differences associated with cultural diversity. Culture and multiculturalism have become increasingly viewed as important elements to consider when addressing conflict, since (1) many of the global and intra-state (i.e., within countries) conflicts today have ethnic or cultural elements to them, such as when a non-dominant group is marginalised by a dominant group and when the dominant group's actions pose threats to their identity, safety or security (Coleman, 2006; Peck, 1998), and (2) researchers have identified cultural misunderstandings as exacerbating

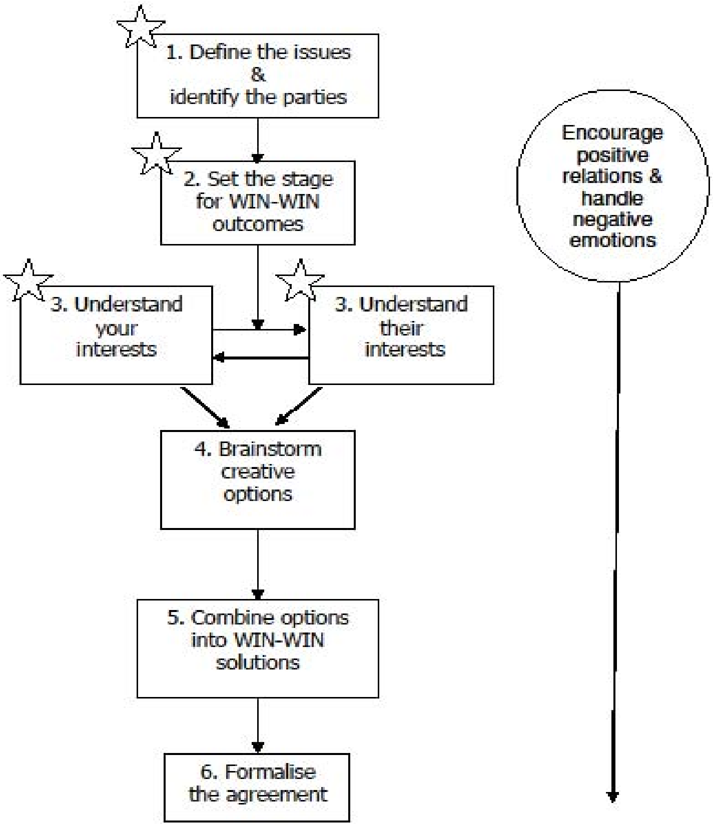
1. Define the issues & identify the parties
2. Set the stage for WIN-WIN outcomes
3. Understand your interests
3. Understand their interests
4. Brainstorm creative options
5. Combine options into WIN-WIN solutions
6. Formalise the agreement
Encourage positive relations & handle negative emotions

Figure 1. Simplified S.I.B. (or 2 minute) Conflict Resolution Model. Adapted with permission from Wertheim, Love, Peck, & Littlefield, (2006). *Skills for resolving conflict.* Eruditions Publ.

conflict (Kimmel, 2006, Pedersen, 2006). From these points of view, our initial conflict resolution model appeared to omit possible elements that could be important to consider when conflict takes place between members of different cultural or linguistic groups.

Pedersen (2006) has summarised numerous advantages of taking a multicultural perspective when resolving conflict, such as making more accurate assessments of conflict situations, reducing the tendency to misattribute causes of behaviours, understanding the source of our own values, finding common ground across cultures, and providing a broader understanding of standards of justice. Pedersen further pointed out professional guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) about multicultural competencies (Sue et al., 1998, cited in Pedersen) that could be applied to conflict resolution, including (among other points): awareness of one’s own assumptions, values and biases; knowing about oppression, racism and discrimination; being skilled in self-improvement toward a non-racist identity; and understanding the world view of clients whose culture is different from one's own. More recently APA's (2003) *Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists* also stress the importance of a commitment to cultural awareness and knowledge of self and others, and of employing constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in education and research.

In addressing issues of cultural diversity, in ERIS Phase 1 the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC - Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne) was invited to present some sessions to core teams. Then in ERIS Phase 2 we became full partners in an ARC Linkage grant called *Creating Culturally Respectful Primary Schools*.

The work of the CEIEC is grounded in post structuralist and postcolonial theory and research (MacNaughton, 2005; MacNaughton & Davis, 2009), and involves raising awareness about the discourses which are associated with, and perpetuate, a lack of respect for individuals from different cultures, races and backgrounds and that lead to prejudice and discrimination. Discourses in this context are the ideas, words, images and feelings that shape how we make sense of the world, what we value in the world and how we act in it. They shape what we believe is just or unjust and they shape how we exercise power in the world (MacNaughton, 2005). From this viewpoint, the source of conflict is not differences between cultures but rather certain discourses and behaviours associated with prejudice and discrimination. This assumption is consistent with a growing consensus in the conflict resolution field of the negative effects (in terms of destructive conflict) of marginalisation of nondominant groups in societies (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006; Peck, 1998). What is therefore advocated by the CEIEC is taking a socially just stance towards respecting cultural diversity, which includes being aware of our own attitudes, values and behaviours towards individuals and groups with backgrounds different from our own; being alert to the effects of race and racism in everyday life; and taking action to reduce social injustice. These views have implications for how a school would approach their policies and practices, and how culture could potentially be approached in a specific conflict context.

Prior research suggests that professional learning about cultural diversity has most impact when programs: (a) overcome resistance to the cultural diversity program by exposing participants to diverse cultural groups and experiences; (b) increase the dominant cultural group's understandings about the effects of discrimination on 'other' groups; (c) provide strategies and extended time for participants to explore cultural diversity principles and pedagogical practices; and (d) allow time for participants to reflect critically on their present social location and their experiences (or lack of them) of cultural marginalisation (Brown, 2004; Brown, Cervero & Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Dee & Henkin, 2002).

On the basis of these past findings and the CEIEC concepts, during ERIS Phase 2 workshop presenters from non-dominant cultures (e.g., Phillipines, India) shared their experiences and participants were assisted in working with their own discourses, assumptions and values about cultural diversity. The stories students and staff tell about themselves and others in terms of culture and ethnicity were addressed through questions of 'Who am *I*?', 'Who are *we*'? and 'Who are *they*?' As part of this process new concepts were introduced that formed key components of these discourses. Specifically, discourses of injustice were seen as relying on dominant cultural and racial groups exercising their power to *homogenise*, *essentialise*, *other* and *silence* minority and non-dominant cultural and racial groups in a specific society (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009).

Participants were encouraged to consider these discourses, for example, looking at how those in lower power positions may be *silenced*, so their true experiences are not given a space to be expressed. The importance of being alert to creating *safety* for people to express themselves was highlighted. Other concepts involved how we tend to *homogenise* other groups, assuming that all those in a particular ethnic or cultural group are the same (e.g., ‘all Americans are loud’). *Essentialising* involved perceiving that a particular group is defined by essential characteristics (e.g., ‘unless you know about cricket you can’t be a true Australian’). *Privileging* was described as the process through which those in higher status or power groups have greater access to resources and voice than those in lower power groups. Prejudice, racism and discrimination were further discussed with the aim of identifying when they take place, and of helping teachers and students to become motivated to talk about it, instead of ignoring it, and to take action when it is present.

These discourses were analysed through what the CEIEC calls *justice alerts* or *justice watchpoints*. Justice alerts were reminders during the conflict resolution process to consider how power may be exercised and experienced by parties (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005; MacNaughton & Davis, 2009). Justice alerts were used as a basis to approach relationships in general, to explore existing school policies and practices, and to stimulate adjustment of these policies and practices.

After the general concepts had been introduced as general considerations in relationships in school communities, in a later session the justice watchpoints were mapped onto our conflict resolution model through key questions at each point in the conflict resolution process. For example, prior to beginning negotiations (when analysing who the parties are and what the issues appear to be), one would ask: ‘How might cultural differences play a role in how the parties and issues are framed?’, ‘What are potential value differences between parties?’, ‘Am I missing important parties, e.g., assuming all people from a particular culture are the same?’, and ‘Are there secondary actors who might help us all understand better?’ The last question encouraged engaging or consulting with others who are familiar with, or preferably representatives of, the specific ethnic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds of the parties.

The first action phase of the SIB model involves *Setting the scene for cooperation*. While the method for doing this does depend on the context, our basic conflict resolution approach recommends making overt statements about one’s aim to cooperate and find a mutually agreeable (i.e., win-win) solution, and to encourage other parties to see the process as a problem being solved together. Adding justice alerts to this phase of the model was operationalised through inserting questions such as: ‘How can we create a safe and respectful space for discussions in this context?’, and ‘Who would be the best person to initiate the discussions?’, keeping the cultural and ethnic context in mind. In the next SIB phase of *Identifying interests* of all parties, negotiators and facilitators were encouraged to ask themselves questions such as: ‘What are my potential biases here?’, ‘How has my history influenced my views?’, and ‘How might gender, race or class be impacting on my views and approach?’

In practical terms we produced visual models of these justice alerts embedded into the conflict resolution model that core teams could take back to their schools. Visual models of these concepts aimed to assist the core team members to disseminate the concepts in their schools and make the concepts more accessible in daily interactions. The introduction of justice alerts embedded clearly as part of the conflict resolution visual model was responded to positively in evaluations; that session was rated as *very* or *extremely* useful by 88.8% (n = 31) and *somewhat* useful by 11% (n = 4) of the core team members attending the session.

The concept of justice alerts was

sometimes a challenging one at both a professional and personal level, as teachers were encouraged to reflect deeply on their own beliefs, values and assumptions as well as those of the institutions in which they work. Truly integrating these justice alerts into all aspects of teachers' work required time for reflection and discussion, as well as ongoing support for staff undertaking this journey.

Integrating ERIS into other school structures and processes to increase implementation

Other developments of the ERIS project have related to our aim of finding methods for enabling new initiatives to be accepted by and implemented in schools. The original ERIS program was designed with these considerations in mind, based on findings about factors that enhance program implementation and maintenance in schools (Gager & Elias 1997; Ishler, Johnson, & Johnson, 1998). For example, the program included a long-term partnership with schools (16 months) and use of core (professional learning) teams that were responsible for implementation in their schools. School visits by the ERIS team were embedded in the program to sustain motivation, assist in overcoming barriers, and support schools to tailor the project to meet the specific needs of their school community. Continuing professional development opportunities, with time for reflection on practice and networking with other ERIS schools, were built into the program (Wertheim et al., 2006a). These processes were continued in ERIS Phase 2.

Potential implementation problems (echoed by participants in our program) include competing agendas in schools, an already overcrowded curriculum, increasing accountability for students' literacy and numeracy skills, as well as reduced professional development time. To address these concerns, in the ERIS project we have sought to highlight ways in which a focus on constructive conflict resolution and cultural diversity supports schools to address concerns they had in these areas and also contributes to fulfilling required academic outcomes. Specifically, in the state of Victoria, where the ERIS project took place, schools must be able to demonstrate satisfactory fulfilment of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Of relevance to the ERIS project is the strand of Physical, Personal and Social Learning (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2004). Included in this strand is the learning domain of Interpersonal Development which emphasises the importance of helping students learn to build positive social relationships, work and learn in teams, and manage and resolve conflicts. The other relevant learning domain within this strand is Civics and Citizenship which emphasises the need for students to "develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to take action as informed, confident members of a diverse and inclusive Australian society" (VCAA, 2005, p. 5). As a mandated systemic initiative VELS increased the potential to link the ERIS approach with mainstream curriculum. By explicitly building the links between these standards and ERIS content and curriculum we hoped to enable teachers to better defend to others the introduction of ERIS content into the school curriculum and practice.

Two types of curriculum were offered in Phase 2 of the ERIS program, one on conflict resolution and one on cultural diversity. By one year into the program, nine out of 10 intervention schools had taught some ERIS-developed curricula, and ERIS program core team (n = 19) and non-core team teachers (n = 89) reported teaching significantly more hours of curricula on these topics than comparison teachers (n = 31) from three control schools that had applied to do the ERIS program and were given the curriculum but no program or support, Kruskal-Wallis Z (2) = 12.91, p=.002.

Another structural consideration for implementing ERIS is that schools often have had some prior exposure to alternative models and processes to address conflict, and interpersonal problems. While most of these processes do not contain the key elements of the ERIS approach, many of them are consistent with such an approach (such as peer mediation or assertive discipline). However, core team members reported in workshops, evaluation feedback, and school visits that prior exposure to different approaches was potentially problematic for them when the relationship between the approaches and the ERIS program was unclear. In addition, school leaders reported concerns that we might expect them to set aside existing programs to make room for ERIS, or to ‘start from scratch’ by adding a completely new structure and set of processes in the school, which would be difficult and time consuming to implement.

Our solution to these teacher concerns has been to encourage schools to find links with, and embed the ERIS concepts and practices, into existing structures and frameworks, rather than seeing ERIS as yet another stand-alone program to add to, or replace, existing ones. As long as the different approaches are not contradictory, our feedback from teachers has been that a strategy of integrating new ideas into existing structures is generally more acceptable and achievable and therefore more likely to lead to implementation of the ideas; previous research in schools supports this view (Everhart & Wandersman, 2000; Stevahn et al., 2005)

Integrating restorative practices and the ERIS conflict resolution model

As Phase 2 progressed it became particularly apparent that we needed to address the Restorative Practices approach which has been promoted in schools by the Victorian State and Catholic Education systems in recent years. The Restorative Practices approach is based on the concept of restorative justice. Traditional western justice is based on a retributive (or punitive) approach to creating fair and just outcomes following crimes or offences. A retributive justice approach suggests that when people perpetrate offences, they should be punished for it to balance the scales again. In contrast, restorative justice processes view offences as harm to relationships and the process of attaining a just solution involves restoring the relationship. This outcome can be brought about through a variety of methods which are referred to as *restorative practices*. For example, community conferences can be held, in which the offender and the injured party are brought together in a meeting, each with support persons present and a facilitator guiding the process. A facilitated discussion between the offender and the person harmed can also take place. Restorative outcomes may include apologies, compensation, restitution (i.e., fixing harm done), rehabilitation of the offender and so on, with the aim of fixing wrongs, ensuring offences do not recur and re-integrating the offender into the community (Wertheim, Love et al., 2006).

Programs have been developed to assist schools in adopting a restorative justice philosophy and implementing associated practices for repairing relationships after hurtful events and offences of students. The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM), for example, has developed a model which incorporates preventive strategies and informal and formal practices to address situations in which relationships have been harmed. These include methods for assisting teachers to talk about harmed relationships with students through *affective questioning* that elicits empathy and focuses on repairing and avoiding future harm; formal or informal ‘circle’ time in which teachers assist students in discussing different issues; peer mediation; and formal restorative conferences. Embedded in the Restorative Practice model, although historically not as well developed, is also creative conflict resolution and problem solving.

Some schools participating in ERIS had previously participated in Restorative Practices programs. Teachers from these schools had questions about how to integrate the two approaches in practice, such as for which student incidents would one apply the conflict resolution model versus a specific restorative approach. In addition, teachers often asked how our conflict resolution approach could be used to address discipline issues. It was particularly important to clarify that ERIS and restorative practices could indeed be integrated and were not ‘competing’ or inherently different processes. Partly as a result of these queries, along with our partnership with the CEOM, we decided to work with the CEOM Restorative Practices program to integrate aspects of the two approaches.

Our ERIS approach fits clearly into the cooperative conflict resolution and problem solving aspect of restorative practices. Furthermore, the affective questioning component of the Restorative Practices program appeared to be a parallel process to our own process when a dispute or problem arose.

With these parallels in mind, a new practice model was developed that described when to use each approach and a pictorial model was presented (Figure 2), depicting at what stage to use affective questioning, and at what stage to use the CR questions and prompts. The concept was that when an incident or conflict occurs, one first identifies whether to approach it as a ‘problem to be solved and potential conflict’ or whether there has been harm to a relationship. If the former is the case, the incident is seen as an opportunity to teach students to cooperate in solving interpersonal problems, consider everyone’s interests, and then engage in generating win-win options (using the ERIS SIB Model). If however, an offence has occurred or a relationship has been harmed, restorative practices may be a first stage, in which each party considers, through affective questioning, who has been harmed. In effect this is an empathy eliciting stage of the process, in which an offending party is encouraged to look at the consequences of their actions both for themselves and those around them. Once this initial affective questioning phase is completed, then one can use the cooperative problem solving model (ERIS SIB) to find ways to consider how the harm can be repaired and how to ensure that it does not happen again. Once again, it becomes important to identify the interests (needs or concerns) that parties had which led to the problematic behaviour and if there are other ways to more constructively meet those needs.

The new, integrated Restorative Practices and ERIS CR model was received very well on the core team day (towards the end of the Phase 2 program) in which we presented it. In post-workshop evaluations teachers (n = 30) rated the session very positively, with 90% rating it as *very* or *extremely useful* (two teachers found it *somewhat useful* and one *not very useful*). In addition, 70% of core teams reported plans to take the model back to their school for further dissemination over the following weeks. These responses all indicated that the integration of Restorative Practices and CR was found to be helpful for teachers and in future programs we would introduce the integrated model earlier. The integrated flowchart has been disseminated in the Catholic Education system (Wertheim et al., in press). In addition we have taught the integrated model in the context of a CEOM Restorative Practices professional development program, further embedding the ERIS model into the CEOM Restorative Practices approach.

Featuring in the program the experiences of participating schools

Our own status as university-based researchers, psychologists and academics can have both advantages and disadvantages when working with schools. While we bring expertise, knowledge of the research literature, and ability to evaluate program outcomes, school staff were keen to ensure that university-based facilitators truly understood their school context and pressures. Our team, in fact, included a number of former teachers, which assisted in raising our understanding of school constraints as well as our credibility to participants. However, in Phase 2 of the program we also had the advantage of involving schools that had completed the ERIS program in Phase 1 and who could speak more directly about their experiences with the program. Principals of two of the ERIS Phase 1 schools were therefore each invited to present at a core team day about how they had guided implementation of the ERIS program and what

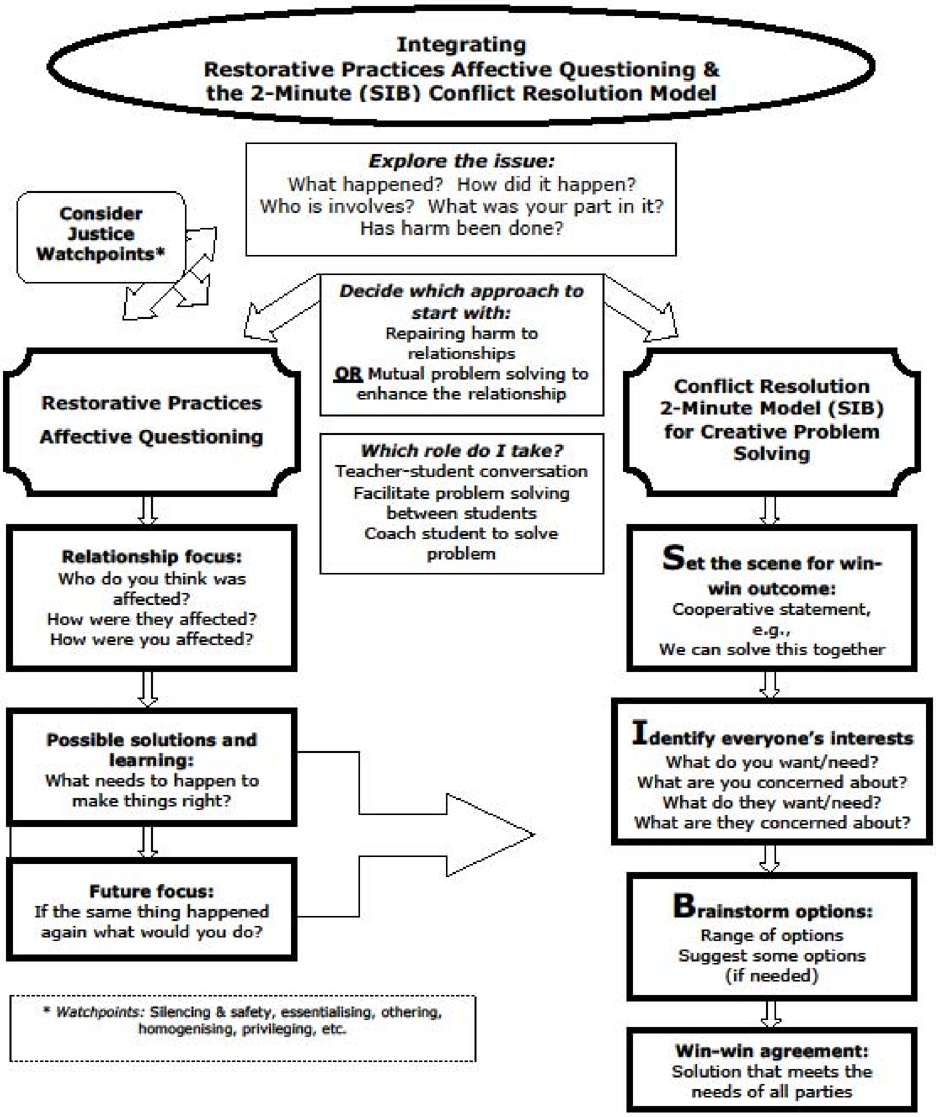
Integrating
Restorative Practices Affective Questioning &
the 2-Minute (SIB) Conflict Resolution Model
Explore the issue:
What happened? How did it happen?
Who is involves? What was your part in it?
Has harm been done?
Consider Justice Watchpoints*
Decide which approach to start with:
Repairing harm to relationships
OR Mutual problem solving to enhance the relationship
Which role do I take?
Teacher-student conversation
Facilitate problem solving between students
Coach student to solve problem
Restorative Practices Affective Questioning
Relationship focus:
Who do you think was affected?
How were they affected?
How were you affected?
Possible solutions and learning:
What needs to happen to make things right?
Future focus:
If the same thing happened again what would you do?
Conflict Resolution 2-Minute Model (SIB) for Creative Problem Solving
Set the scene for win-win outcome:
Cooperative statement, e.g.,
We can solve this together
Identify everyone's interests
What do you want/need?
What are you concerned about?
What do they want/need?
What are they concerned about?
Brainstorm options:
Range of options
Suggest some options (if needed)
Win-win agreement:
Solution that meets the needs of all parties
* Watchpoints: Silencing & safety, essentialising, othering, homogenising, privileging, etc.

Figure 2. Combined model developed by Enhancing Relationships in School Communities project and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. An alternative version of this model appeared in Wertheim, Freeman, & Trinder (in press).

they had seen as the outcomes for their schools. The principals were able to discuss how they had addressed implementation challenges in their different settings. A classroom teacher from one of these schools also came with her principal and talked about the work she had done with her students and how helpful the ERIS curriculum had been. Furthermore, by explaining the positive outcomes the principals' schools had experienced (including one principal showing a figure displaying the school's reduced incidents in the playground over time), these presentations helped increase the credibility of the ERIS program. Post-workshop evaluations of these sessions indicated that the teachers found these presentations very useful.

In addition participants reported benefiting from hearing and learning from the experiences, challenges, perspectives and solutions to problems of a diverse range of schools, which differed along dimensions such as demographics, size, school system, and history. Learning about other schools' experiences took place during small group exercises in which teachers from different schools worked together, in full group discussions, and also informally. In both Phases 1 and 2 of ERIS we also set aside time at one of the workshops for each school to present how they had been implementing the ERIS ideas in their schools. Phase 2 workshop evaluations suggested core team staff found the school presentations very useful (87% *very* or *extremely*, and 14% *somewhat* useful). There was particular value for schools in hearing about applications of the ideas in specific contexts, and how the ERIS concepts and resources were tailored to meet each school's specific needs.

Other lessons learned

A common pattern we found across schools that reported the greatest levels of change was that they reported having a 'champion' within the school who understood the change process and who was committed to the ERIS project values and aims. However, a champion on her own would not be sufficient, as change would not be maintained. For these champions to effect *sustainable* change, they needed to (1) work with their core team to become an effective working unit in which members developed a shared vision and understanding of the change process for their community, and (2) enable school changes at the level of policy and practice.

Schools with a pre-existing culture and process of collaborative problem solving and decision making fared well in putting the ERIS ideas into practice, as did schools that prioritised time for their ERIS team to meet – either as a separate ERIS-dedicated group or as part of an existing school team (usually the student wellbeing team). Many schools also cited the external support of the ERIS research team as critical to helping them address the obstacles they encountered when engaged in their change process.

Other lessons we learned were that schools needed resources that are user friendly and school staff were very creative in adapting resources to suit the needs of their specific communities. Sometimes impetus for change was planned by the ERIS team, for example, we presented at a core team workshop the research data we had collected from the students in participating schools to assist participants in understanding their students' experiences of diversity. Other times, a particularly salient incident at a school produced acceleration of learning, and we were able to support the school in using the ideas offered to solve a current and important problem of the school.

Finally, an important consideration in supporting schools to implement our programs was the diversity represented both across and within schools. Participating schools varied along dimensions of size of school, socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic characteristics of students and parents/carers, and school culture. Each school had a unique history of prior change; some had relatively stable environments while others had experienced numerous transitions that influenced school decision-making processes as well as staff and school leaders' enthusiasm for new initiatives and change. Given the diversity of project schools it is understandable that different rates and patterns of progress would be made by different schools. Each school needed to work through its own process of change management. Throughout both phases of the ERIS project, foremost in our minds was the importance of working with participating schools to promote effective change within their respective school communities. Each school was in reality an action research project in its own right and the end results were not always predictable at the outset, but emerged as each school identified and addressed their specific needs. The collaborative process was rewarding, yielding benefits not only for the schools but also for the development of our ideas as researchers.

References

American Psychological Association. (2003).

Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists. *American Psychologist, May,* 377-402.

Australian Psychological Society. (1997). *Wise ways to win.* Melbourne: Hill of Content.

Brown L. (2004). Diversity: The challenge for higher education, *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 7,* 21-34.

Brown, A.H., Cervero, R. M., & Johnson-Bailey, J. (2000). Making the invisible visible: Race, gender, and teaching in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 50,* 273-288.

Coleman, P. (2006). Intractable conflict. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict resolution* (pp. 533-559). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Davidson, J., & Wood, C. (2004). A conflict resolution model. *Theory into Practice, 43,* 6-13.

Dee, J. R., & Henkin, A.B. (2002) Assessing dispositions toward cultural diversity among preservice teachers. *Urban Education, 37,* 22-40

Deutsch, M., Coleman, P. T., & Marcus, E. C. (Eds.). (2006). *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and* practice (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Elias, M. J., Zins, J. E., Craczyk, P. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2003). Implementation, sustainability, and scaling up of social-emotional and academic innovations in public schools. *School Psychology Review, 32,* 303-319.

Everhart, K., & Wandersman, A. (2000). Applying comprehensive quality programming and empowerment evaluation to reduce implementation barriers. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 11,* 177-191.

Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.* London: Business Books.

Gager, P. J., & Elias, M. J. (1997). Implementing prevention programs in high-risk environments: Application of the resiliency paradigm. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 67,* 363-373.

Girard, K., & Koch, S. (1996). *Conflict resolution in the schools: A manual for educators*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ishler, A.L., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. (1998). Long-term effectiveness of a statewide staff development program on cooperative learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14,* 273-281.

Jones, T. S., & Compton, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Kids working it out.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kimmel, P. R. (2006). Culture and conflict. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice* (pp. 625-648). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Littlefield, L., Love, A., Peck, C. & Wertheim, E. H. (1993). A model for resolving conflict: Some theoretical, empirical and practical implications. *Australian Psychologist, 28,* 80-85.

MacNaughton, G. (2005). *Doing Foucault in early childhood studies*. London: Routledge & Falmer Press.

MacNaughton, G., & Davis, K. (2001). Beyond 'othering': Rethinking approaches to teaching young Anglo-Australian children about Indigenous Australians. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood. 2,* 83-93.

MacNaughton, G., & Davis, K. (Eds.) (2009). *Race and early childhood education: An international approach to identity, politics, and pedagogy,* New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Peck, C. (1998). *Sustainable peace*: *The role of the U. N. and regional organizations in preventing conflict*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Pedersen, P. (2006). Multicultural conflict resolution. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice* (pp. 649- 670). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Soltys, A. M. (2003). *Evaluation of the Wise Ways to Win conflict resolution model.* Unpublished master's thesis, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia.

Stevahn, L., Kealey, K., & Munger, L. (2005). Conflict resolution in a French immersion elementary school. *The Journal of Educational Research, 99,* 3-18.

Trinder, M., Wertheim, E. H., Freeman, E., Sanson, A., Richardson, S., & Hunt, S. (in press). Comparison of the effectiveness of two forms of the Enhancing Relationships in School Communities program for promoting cooperative conflict resolution education in Australian primary schools. *Journal of Peace Education.*

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA]. (2004). *Introducing the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.* East Melbourne:Author.

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA]. (2005). *Victorian Essential Learning Standards: Physical, personal and social learning strand: Interpersonal development.* (Revised ed.). East Melbourne: Author.

Walker, H. M. (2004). Commentary: Use of evidence-based interventions in schools: Where we've been, where we are and where we need to go. *School Psychology Review, 33*(3), 398-407.

Wertheim, E. H., Freeman, E., & Trinder, M. (in press). Developing a safe and respectful learning environment with restorative practices and constructive conflict resolution. *Learning Matters, 14*(2).

Wertheim, E. H., Freeman, E., Trinder, M., & Sanson, A. (2006a). Lessons learned from the Enhancing Relationships in School Communities project. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 18,* 71-81.

Wertheim, E. H., Freeman, E., Trinder, M., Sanson, A., Richardson, S., & Hunt, S. (2006b). Evaluation of the Enhancing Relationships in School Communities program. In M. Katsikidis (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 2006 Joint Conference of the Australian Psychological Society and New Zealand Psychological Society, 26 – 30 September 2006, Auckland, NZ* (pp. 484-489). Melbourne: Australian Psychological Society.

Wertheim, E. H., Love, A., Peck, C., & Littlefield, L. (2006). *Skills for resolving conflict.* (2nd ed.). Emerald, Vic.: Eruditions Publishing.

Acknowledgements
The project was supported by funding from the Psychologists for Peace, interest group of the Australian Psychological Society, Scanlon Foundation, the Morawetz Social Justice Fund (Melbourne Community Foundation), and an Australian Research Council Linkage grant. We also thank Prasanna Srinivasan, Anne Farrelly, Merlyne Cruz, Andy White, Jo Hutton, Birgit Campbell, and Cindi Raccolini for their assistance with Phase 2 of the ERIS project.

Address Correspondence to
Professor Eleanor Wertheim
School of Psychological Science
La Trobe University
Bundoora VIC 3086
Phone: (03) 9479 2478
Fax: (03) 9479 1956
Email: e.wertheim@latrobe.edu.au