



Restorative Justice Programs at Elanora SHS

Mediation is one of the restorative practices in use at Elanora SHS. All of the restorative practices use as the philosophical base that the individual has to own his or her behaviour and therefore take responsibility for it and need to repair the harm caused to the relationship by his/her actions. Other restorative practices include: restorative justice mediations, restorative circles, restorative thinking classroom, return-to-school from suspension agreements.

Purpose

As a school we constantly strive to build a culture where students are respectful and take responsibility for their own behaviour. Conflict is a natural part of adolescence and it is important for young people to see that conflict can be constructive rather than destructive. Mediation and other restorative practices are research proven processes which help resolve conflict. They model a constructive way for young people to take control of their issues and take responsibility for a constructive resolution. In mediation students own both the problem and the solution. It is a process that once learnt can be applied to ongoing conflicts a person experiences throughout life. Positive change usually only develops in a climate of healthy and respectful debate.

What is mediation?

Mediation is a form of facilitated negotiation, where a third party can be used in a neutral way to provide a directed process to support the parties towards an acceptable agreement. Peer Mediation is described as the process by which the students in a dispute, together with the assistance of a neutral student or students, systematically isolate disputed issues in order to develop options, consider alternatives, and reach a consensual settlement that will accommodate their needs.

The mediation process at Elanora SHS:

Mediation runs through an established process that uses the following stages:

- *Introductions* – the ground rules of the mediation are established e.g. using respectful language, referring to the other person by name and not interrupting the other person. The stages of the process are outlined.
- *Individual statement* – each student in the conflict gets an opportunity to state their perspective on the issue without being interrupted.
- *Summaries* – the mediator provides a clear summary back to each student as to how they see the problem.
- *Agenda development* – central themes are drawn from the statements for discussion to ensure each student's issues are addressed.
- *Exploration* – each section from the agenda is thoroughly explored.
- *Negotiation* – the students discuss possible areas of negotiation.
- *Agreement* – a formal agreement is reached and put in writing which the individual students sign and receive a copy of. If an agreement cannot be reached this is also written down and signed. At times, consequences will be stipulated if the agreement is broken. A copy of the agreement will be entered onto the individual student's file.
- *Close* – students are thanked and reminded the agreement is theirs and not the mediators and they can return at any time if the agreement is not working to re-negotiate.

Peer mediators

Student leaders are offered the opportunity to learn the skills involved in mediation through a training workshop. The purpose of the training is to improve the students' interpersonal skills and support their role as leaders within the school.

Restorative practices are combined with a number of strategies used at Elanora SHS to reinforce that all have a right to be safe which includes both physical and emotional safety.