

## July Newsletter 2019 - The Responsible Thinking Process at Parklands

A lot of us grew up with detention in school - I know I did. Detention is typically a place where a student will sit for a period of time and a) do nothing, b) write lines, c) pick up rubbish or some other task under supervision. Usually these tasks have very little learning attached to them and is more about wasting a student's own time for their misconduct.

As an RTP Facilitator, one of the misconceptions that I often hear is that the RTC is for "naughty" students and sometimes the RTC is perceived as a "detention" for these naughty students to come and be punished. When one looks from the outside in, with little education or understanding around the RTC, I understand how people can perceive the RTC to be this way. A child demonstrates a disruptive behaviour and leaves the classroom to attend the RTC due to this. Sounds like detention or punishment right? Wrong.

Detention has a negative connotation attached to it, where the RTC rather, is a space for students to learn responsibility, self-control and to devise strategies for positive life choices. It is very different to a detention as the student is thinking, self-reflecting, learning to think from another person's perspective and developing a plan for future.

Where staff would usually supervise a detention, the RTP Facilitators exist to provide emotional support, to positively challenge and coach students through this process and then support them to re-engage in class and put their plan into place. Very different to detention.

So then, now that we have clarified the difference between a detention facility and our RTC, it is important to understand the process that student's experience when engaging.

If you think about it, each person is raised in a home and taught a wide selection of life skills as they age and interact with others. For example, being raised in a large family might mean that a child may learn how to interact confidently with different age groups or genders, or being raised with a sibling with a disability may teach another child how to have compassion and empathy for others and so on.

Not all children experience the same upbringing or learn the same skills. It makes sense for students to be referred to the RTC to learn the skills that they might not have been raised with. For example, at home it might be acceptable for a child to invade their siblings' personal space in a playful way, however at school this might not be perceived as appropriate. The child might need to visit the RTC for a friendly chat with the RTP facilitator to have the difference explained to them or to consider how invading someone else's space might make the other person feel.

Each time a student is referred, they are given the opportunity to utilise the Responsible Thinking Process to help them learn new skills such as how to manage conflict, how to follow class rules, how to be better prepared for class, how to be a kind friend and so on. This is done through discussion with the RTP Facilitator and also the completion of a RTP plan which enables students to think through self-reflective questions such as "what rule was I not following", "how did this impact on others", and "what is my goal for when I return to class".

From what I have seen, students who are given the opportunity to come and discuss their behaviour or mistakes and learn from them – they tend to be much better off and well-rounded in the long run. Our team has found that when students are consistently referred, they are able to put their goals and strategies into practice. Eventually they come to a place where they have learned the skill of thinking before acting and ask themselves questions like "how will this make my friend feel" or "what will be the consequence of this behaviour". Our goal is that a student will be able to successfully and

independently implement the Responsible Thinking Process in time without needing to attend the RTC as often.

So if your child is regularly referred to the RTC for behaviour, please don't see it as your child attending detention and being punished, rather, please see it as their opportunity to continue developing life skills and learning new ways of thinking.