Integrating Restorative Practices into Residence Life

Jessica N. Chisholm
Norwich University, Strategic Leadership
Introduction

NHTI-Concord’s Community College was founded in 1965 with three engineering programs. We have now expanded to 66 academic programs with 110 full-time and 300 adjunct faculty. The typical class size is 15 to 25 students. We have approximately 4,568 students, with the age of our average students being 25 years old. Our community college is one of seven in the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH); currently we are the largest community college and the only one to have a true Residence Life Department (“Mission,” 2013). Our Residence Life Department consists of three Residence Halls with approximately 350 total students living on campus.

In Residence Life the Residence Director’s (RD’s) live and work with the students everyday. Doing anything from counseling and event planning, to facilities and crisis management. Within Residence Life we also work with our students when they get in trouble. We use a predefined judicial system with a set of guidelines as to different judicial sanctions. Most are punitive in nature and do not always result in an educational learning outcome. There is no consistency between the professional staff who are adjudicating the cases, so depending on which Residence Director you meet with, outcomes could be different. The problem statement and reason for this change initiative is to incorporate restorative practices into the everyday life of the Residence Halls, mainly in our judicial system but also in the general lifestyle of the building. “To be ‘restorative’ means to believe that decisions are best made and conflicts are best resolved by the most directly involved in them... [this] movement
seeks to develop good relationships and restore a sense of community in an increasingly disconnected world” (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009, pg. 7). The hope would be an overall change in behavior of our students, that they learn from their actions, and have an understanding of how their behavior has affected those around them. The expected impacts from this process are: that the students will learn from their mistakes, reduce the overall number of incidents in the halls, and to create a safer more welcoming environment. The hypothesis is that restorative practices would enable peer-to-peer education, create a standardized structure for the professional staff, a safer living environment and a process that is understood by the students and staff with realistic outcomes.

“We have found that troublesome students often find themselves in a pattern of behavior that they don’t know how to change...Rather than simply punishing offenders, restorative justice holds offenders accountable for their crimes by involving them in face-to-face encounters with the people they have harmed” (Costello et. al., 2009, pg. 6-7)

The focus of this program would be solidifying consequences, which would help re-educate offenders and the public community that was affected. This would create a safer community and culture at NHTI. The vision is to create a judicial system and restorative practice movement that can be integrated into the school where the students can learn how to develop their community, change “bad” behavior, and transfer what they learn from this into their everyday lives.
Background

Currently the organization is in a state where it works, but it could work better in a way that promotes more education in our students. This initiative focuses on creating a new culture and environment, not just judicially, but across the residence hall communities. The larger focus will however be on the judicial system. When the students' leave, they should be taking away life skills that they can use for years later. As an institution, the following is our mission:

“The mission of the [Community College System of New Hampshire] CCSNH Colleges Judicial System shall be educational in emphasis. Its purpose is to foster self-discipline and self-direction in the student. Its goal is to enable the student to learn from his/her experiences, to foresee consequences of behavior, and to avoid behaviors that would violate ethical and moral standards” (“Judicial policies philosophy,” 2015).

As a department, we do our best to incorporate education into all of our sanctions. The standard sanctions put in place by the college system are: Warning-written notice of the policy violated. Probation- set for a certain period of time, if the students violates policy again then it could result in more severe sanctions. Loss of privileges- the students will lose specific privileges for a designated time period (for example have guests visit). Fines- these are established amounts set by the system. Restitution- in the form of service or compensation for damaged items. Residence hall suspension- for a specific amount of time where there are requirements to return back. Other sanctions- in addition/in place of above sanctions, examples are essays, service, apology letter, and meetings with a counselor. Expulsion- this can be
from the residence halls or colleges in the CCSNH system. Interim sanctions - put in place before a hearing can occur for the safety of the individual or community ("Judicial policies disciplinary proceedings," n.d.).

When a student violates a policy there is a specific procedure. A student is given a letter stating the policy that they are in question of violating. They have a set amount of time that they can schedule an appointment with their Residence Hall Director. Once an appointment is set, they meet with the Residence Director and discuss the incident. Depending on how many people are involved in the incident, a sanction will either be determined then, or after all parties involved have been met with. Some sanctions have a more freedom for choice of which sanction, where others are set in stone (an alcohol policy violation has a set list of sanctions that cannot be changed, while someone who has violated the guest policy there is no preset sanctions, so there is more freedom for the Residence Director to choose).

When looking at McKinsey's 7-S model there are gaps in our structure, systems, style, and shared values. Of these four gaps, shared values will be the most difficult to overcome. Shared values are "the core fundamental set of values that are widely shared in the organization and serve as guiding principles of what is important" (Bradach, 1996, pg. 6). While in our current system we do have shared values, by implementing this new structure that could change, and there could be some resistance. Implementing restorative practices means changing the structure, system, and style, and adopting new shared values. This new restorative practice philosophy will bring to us a better foundation to teach our students.
As a department we lack in creating a culture where our students are accountable for their actions and are capable of confronting the individual they've had an issue with. Using a restorative practices philosophy, we will educate our student population on life skills that they can apply to their everyday lives. It will enable to students to know how to interact with those who have harmed them, and create a culture of accountability and connection with those around them.

**Scope of Change**

As a department, we will need to change our structure, system, style, and shared values, all major components of McKinsey’s 7-S Model. The scope of change will look at these different parts and how they will be implemented. With the right mindset and training these areas of change can be employed smoothly.

Structure and system comprises of what work we do and the processes they encompass (Bradach, 1996). Some of the processes will have to remain the same and punitive in nature, like the sanctions for alcohol violations as an example. However, “restorative practices helps to revise our thinking so that we see conflict in a school setting as an opportunity to foster learning and build better relationships” (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009, pg. 16). The starting point for this type of program is circles. Circles symbolize community, a place where everyone is equal, and also has a voice. “While circles can be used as a response to wrongdoing, they are also very effective as a proactive process for building social capital and creating classroom norms” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 23). When
wrongdoing does occur, there are different circles depending on the circumstances and who is available to facilitate, see figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>By?</th>
<th>In response to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative enquiry</td>
<td>peer mentors, teaching staff, colleagues</td>
<td>minor student worries, minor disruptions, need to debrief, challenging situations, worried parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative discussion</td>
<td>teaching staff, middle and senior management</td>
<td>disruption, causing ‘harm’, staff disciplinary issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>peer mediators, teaching staff, senior managers, restorative justice co-ordinator, governors/senior management</td>
<td>minor student conflict, serious student conflict, staff conflict, staff–student conflict, staff–parent conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Victim/Offender’ mediation</td>
<td>peer mediators, teaching staff, senior managers, restorative justice co-ordinator, governors/senior management</td>
<td>student conflict, serious student conflict, staff conflict, staff–student conflict, staff–parent conflict (when there is acknowledged responsibility for the harm caused)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. The restorative justice options (Hopkins, 2004, pg. 163-164)
There are certain questions that get used, specifically affective questions. Affective questions focus more on the behavior, and less on the ‘why’ it occurred, see figure 2. “Young people usually don’t know why they did something wrong. In all likelihood they were simply being thoughtless or impetuous, without any reason” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>TO HELP THOSE AFFECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What happened?</td>
<td>• What did you think when you realized what had happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were you thinking of at the time?</td>
<td>• What impact has this incident had on you and others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What have you thought about since?</td>
<td>• What has been the hardest thing for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way have they been affected?</td>
<td>• What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you think you need to do to make things right?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Restorative questions (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 16)*

Style is how and in what ways interactions occur and the norms that are set by the organization, in short how the work actually gets done (Bradach, 1996). These norms are in both the professional level and also the students level. As professionals we need to create an environment where circle become the norm, and are almost second nature. “In order to make [students] feel comfortable speaking in circles, you must use circles in a variety of ways” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 26). For example, starting off the opening hall meeting in a circle could do this. Finding a space to fit 100-150 students comfortably in a circle could be difficult, but it is an important precedent to start the year off. It is also important to be consistent across
the board. Every hall should be implementing the same style/practice, having those shared values.

Shared values give our organization its purpose and are uniform across the board (Bradach, 1996). Figure 3 shows the Organizational Change Window. As you can see staying in the ‘with’ area provides both enough pressure and support.

![Organizational change window](image)

*Figure 3. Organizational change window (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 85).*

In any of the other areas this is lacking, and is therefore not as effective. “Real change will occur only when teachers and staff recognize that they will be held accountable for change and simultaneously are given the support and tools they need” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 86). Those involved need to all buy in to this new
practice. This is done with fair process which is composed of three parts: “engagement, explanation, and expectation clarity” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 86).

People should have the opportunity to contribute how they feel, and have a voice in what’s going on. This doesn’t mean they can pick whether or not the process is implemented, but there needs to be open communication about how the process is going and how they feel.

While implementing a new change to the ‘norm’ can be hard it is important to remember that it is not insurmountable. “Small affective exchanges, over a period of time, can have a huge positive impact on students” (Costello, et. al., 2009, pg. 16). By creating an environment where students learn how their behavior affects those around them. We are creating the future leaders of tomorrow who are capable of confronting challenge in a respectful way.

**Resistance Plan**

When change occurs, the ‘norm’ is affected and those involved may resist. “We are wired to survive, so we hang on to what has worked in the past. We hang on to successful past ‘mental maps’ and use them to guide current and future behavior” (Black & Gregersen, 2011, pg. 3). This section will look at how and who will resist the change initiative, when and why they will resist it, and how we will overcome the resistance.

Black and Gregersen talk about how change initiatives are only successful when you lead by example, you can’t expect those around you to change unless you do so yourself (2011). As previously mentioned with McKinsey’s 7-S Model, we will
specifically be focusing out change on the structure, system, style, and shared values. At NHTI the hardest transition will be for those who implement the restorative practices the most, the Residence Directors (RD's) and Resident Assistant's (RA's). As you move up the chain of command, these practices will still need to be supported, but their change in practice is minor compared to that of the RD's and RA's. The first implementation of restorative practices will begin during the professional staff training. Currently there is already buy-in from the Director and Vice President, it is just a matter of making sure they understand and are able to implement the practice themselves. From there it will be taught to the next level down, the student staff or RA's. The RA's will be the frontline for this new initiative, and it's imperative that there is buy-in at this level. If we do not have them on board with the restorative practices, then there is no way it will work.

During RA Training the staff is open and ready for new ideas. RA Training is held twice a year for at least a week. The training sessions range from policies and procedures, to programming, counseling, and crisis management. This is a time where the RA's learn how to handle all kinds of conflict, with also a very large focus on community building. We have made large-scale changes to our policy enforcement style in the past, and the change settled in well. The style was militaristic, and authoritative, the mantra being 'the house always wins', no matter what. We had people that did not like the changes we made, and there will always be those individuals who resist the change. As a leader it is important to address how and at what rate you are trying to influence change. Black and Gregersen (2011) discuss a valid point that the faster leaders try to push change, the more resistance
they will face, in turn creating a huge barrier for that change (pg. 12). Once the students arrive will be the real test, for who follows through with the change and who does not.

To overcome this change in-service trainings will be presented. This way there is continuous help and opportunity for growth. This will also give the RD’s and RA’s a chance to have open communication about how the change is being implemented. As a team we can discuss what is working, and what is not. “What really matters in organizational transformations is the change in people’s behaviors and how systems either enhance or detract from that” (Black & Gregersen, 2011, pg. 87). With buy-in from all levels of the organization it is possible for this change in practice to be implemented well. Training, practice, and positive attitudes will focus the organization and create a unified vision for everyone. By doing this, resistance can be overcome.

**Communication Plan**

By creating a clear vision and showing the path that must be followed, resistance will be less likely to occur. Having the how-to knowledge and steps to reach the end product will alleviate many of the stressors and causes for a plan that does not work. This section will look at the stakeholders, who they are, and how they will be implementing the change, how the practices will be effectively implemented, and what impact the organizational dynamics will play on the initiative.
The stakeholders in this change initiative are the people who are directly affected by the plan being put into place. The major players affected by this plan are: the upper management, the RD/RA staff, and the students. Each of these stakeholders has different objectives, how the message is received, and when the message is given.

For the upper management this includes the Director of Residence Life, the Vice President of Student Affairs, and the President of the college. The objective for them would be to learn the philosophy of restorative practices and support those of us who are implementing it. They would need to have a greater understanding of what the program involves. This would be done through training sessions, posters/pamphlets, and meetings. The timeframe for this would be prior to the training of the RA’s. This would give enough time for questions and follow-up, so that they are prepared once the RA’s arrive. Meetings would be continued through the school year with continuous evaluation of how the program is going.

The RD’s and RA’s would be the next stakeholders. Their objective would be to learn the philosophy and implementation of restorative practices. Both of these stakeholders would be implementing restorative practices on a day-to-day basis, so it would be very important for these people to have a good foundation and a clear understanding of it. This would be achieved through training, meetings, and pamphlets. The timeframe for this would be prior to the students’ arrival to campus. This would give enough time for any questions or concerns with the program and continuous evaluation would be done throughout the year.
The last group of stakeholders is the students. They are the ones who will be utilizing and living in an environment where restorative practices are common ground. Their objective will be to learn about the philosophy of restorative practices and how to incorporate into their lives. This would be done with initial floor meetings and pamphlets. The initial instruction of it would be the first day the students move in to the halls, and there would be continued education throughout the year.

When implementing change there are some key areas to remember. Eisneberg, Goodall, and Trethewey discuss four key areas that are important realities of a change initiative which are: “people want to be engaged and inspired...People are more likely to support something they have helped to create...Clear line of sight is a reliable indicator of success...And actions speak louder than words” (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2014, pg. 316-317). To effectively implement restorative practices as a department, we will implement as many of these as we can. Each level of stakeholders will require a different level of engagement. While the RA’s will be practicing and role-playing scenarios, the Vice President may be inspired through meetings with the department when they see how engaged the team is. While the entire team will not be able to help create to entire initiative, there will be areas that can be tweaked and improved through group brainstorming and how the initiative is implemented with the students. The indicator for success will come at the end of the first year when we look at data over the year. Through this we will be able to see how and if the culture of our students has changed. For our students as stakeholders the last area will be the most
important, actions speaking louder then words. On all levels this will speak volumes, but most of all in the student population as they watch the levels of stakeholders above them. As leaders we need to be role modeling, and our actions speak volumes.

On all levels it will be important that we model the correct behavior. The organizational dynamic has a direct effect on this. If the RD’s are seen doing something that does not align with the initiative, then the students will see that what we have taught them does not matter. The same goes for those in any position that could be seen as a role model, even those stakeholders who are students. It takes everyone in the team to make this work. Without buy-in across the board it will be impossible to create a new culture where students accept responsibility for their behavior and learn how to address is.

Through a clear vision and role modeling this change initiative can have a positive outcome on the culture of the community. When looking at the different levels of stakeholders, how to implement the restorative practices, and the dynamics of the initiative we see that this task is not impossible. With an organizational development model and the proper channels being used, the vision is tangible.

**Change Leadership Plan**

Kotter states that there is set of steps that must be followed to implement change successfully. These steps are: establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture.
This paper will look at each of these steps, what they are and how my department will implement them.

**Establishing a Sense of Urgency**

While the department of Residence Life at NHTI is not in a state of emergency or in a downward spiral, a sense of urgency is the starting point for any change initiative. It is step one in the process and “establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gaining needed cooperation” (Kotter, 2012, pg. 37). It is important to remain ahead of the curve, and with that comes incorporating new practices. Restorative practices are not widely used in this region, by implementing them into our program it would give us the advantage over other institutions around us. This creates the foundation of a “mini-crisis’ per say, where instead of waiting for a crisis to occur you are staying ahead (Kotter, 2012).

The department will address this change initiative during the RD training. The sense of urgency will be discussed along with the potential impacts an initiative like this would have on the community. As it would be too expensive to bring in an outside trainer, the professional staff will be trained in house. This is not the most desirable way to train the team, but it will be the first step in creating a guiding coalition.

**Creating the Guiding Coalition**

In this initiative the Residence Director (RD) team would be the guiding coalition. “A strong guiding coalition is always needed—one with the right composition, level of trust, and shared objective” (Kotter, 2012, pg. 54). As a team of
three we each bring different expertise and leadership characteristics, but across the board there is a great level of trust. Kotter (2012) discusses the four key characteristics that are essential to this coalition are position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership (pg. 59).

The RD’s are the core group that train and work directly with those who would be implementing the initiative. While we may be met with resistance in the beginning from the Resident Assistant’s (RA’s), there is a high level of emotional commitment from those in the guiding coalition.

**Developing a Vision and Strategy**

A vision clarifies direction, motivates people, and coordinates people (Kotter, 2012). It is important for any organization to have a clear and attainable vision. Characteristics of an effective vision: imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, communicable (Kotter, 2012, pg. 74). The following is the vision for implementing the change initiative of restorative practices.

*It is our goal to create a student population who is connected, develop positive relationships with the people in their community, and are accountable for their actions. We will do this by working with our students in a high support and high control environment (Costello et. al., 2009). It is our vision that when they leave the institution they will be able to apply what they have learned to their life post-graduation. This vision will require a change in the foundation, which the principles of our judicial system are built upon. We believe that as a team, we can accomplish this*
goal through the daily interactions and process of restorative practices. In turn this will not only impact our community positively, but those communities that our students touch outside of our institution as well.

Before the start of the semester the professional staff have training. During this time we will talk about the vision and discuss the direction of the initiative. Talking and discussing is an important component of implementing the initiative. It helps alleviate resistance and questioning of why the change is about to begin.

**Communicating the Change Vision**

Kotter (2012) states, “the real power of a vision is unleashed only when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have common understanding of its goals and directions” (pg. 87). Being open and transparent is key. Those involved will have many questions that need to be answered. Some important factors when your vision is being communicated are: keeping it simple, repeat your vision, find different ways to deliver your vision, lead by example, and listen to your team because communication is a two way street (Kotter, 2012).

As a department the vision will initially be communicated two weeks before the RA’s arrive. It will be presented to the Director of Residence Life and the two Residence Directors. As the leader of this initiative I will have a three-hour session to discuss the vision and how it will be implemented over the next year. From there we will work on training and empowering the team.
Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action

To begin empowering our team we will start by giving them the tools that they need to properly communicate the vision. The first step will be training. This will give the team a chance to learn and ask questions about what they will be implementing. By utilizing the RD staff, as a team of three we can work together to train and do follow up sessions throughout the year. Follow-ups can be done in our weekly team meetings and during in-service sessions where the entire staff is brought together to do small training sessions. This will also be an important component in breaking down obstacles that might hinder the forward motion of the initiative. By continuously training and working with our individual teams we can harbor an environment with open communication and continuous learning.

Incorporating attainable goals and positive incentives will motivate the team to continue the forward motion that they have, these could also be called short-term wins.

Generating Short-Term Wins

Short-term wins are important to keep the team motivated. In our department we have a strong positive incentive program for our students. With a new change initiative being implemented, something similar would also be set up. In our staff meetings and one-on-one’s we also do personal recognition. Things like an RA initiating a circle would be something that would be recognized. We would also check in each week to discuss where each staff was, and create a list of benchmarks for the teams to hit. We would also track progress throughout the semester, looking at number of circles done, how many incidents throughout the semester, and
statistics on grades and progress of the students. At the end of the year we have a big award ceremony. We could also create an award that the RA’s know about ahead of time to recognize the RA who best implemented the restorative practices.

**Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change**

To continue the forward motion of implementing the restorative practices it is important not to lose urgency. You want to keep the momentum going and build upon it. The team should always be looking for continuous improvement and learning. For every win and fail take a look and see what worked, what didn’t, and what can be improved upon.

As a department at the end of each semester we take a look at the past one and see where we can make changes. Then before we begin the next one we incorporate new ways to implement any changes that need to be made. With this initiative it will be important to do this with both the RD’s as well as the RA’s, especially setting goals. Another important factor will be looking at our hiring practices. Only those who are engaged and excited about this style of community culture would be brought into the team. This new culture would be a defining feature of the department as a whole.

**Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture**

“Culture refers to norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people” (Kotter, 2012, pg. 156). Culture is a huge part of whether or not the change initiative will continue. This is why hiring is so important, because if the employees of the future don’t value and support it, then eventually it will cease to exist. As a
department we strive to hire those team members who have similar values to what
we do. We have a long and intensive hiring and training process, so through this we
are able to weed out those who do not align with our department vision and goals.
Culture is a powerful thing.

While change can be difficult, with the right team it can be accomplished.
“Change is so difficult to bring about that the transformation process has eight
stages instead of two or three, that it often takes so much time, and it requires so
much leadership from so many people” (Kotter, 2012, pg. 166). Each step in this
process is important, and non can be skipped. By using Kotter’s eight-step process, it
is possible to implement effectively a change initiative with a supportive and
engaged team that is motivated towards a common goal.

**Employee Engagement**

Leaders need to “create a climate of winning collaboration they need to
determine what their team needs are and how to motivate their team around
common goals that are reinforced by strong relationships between teammates”
(Rye, 2009, pg. 83). Leaders can accomplish this through coaching and mentoring
their team. This paper will address what techniques will be used to gain employee
engagement, how a learning organization will be fostered, and why a learning
organization is important.

Employee engagement will be needed throughout the entire change initiative
incorporating restorative practices into the Residence Life Department. There are
many different avenues to obtain this. Some examples are influence, leading by
example, and setting goals. “Influence is the act of producing an effect on someone
without exerting force or command” (Rye, 2009, pg. 229). This is an important feature because if the change is forced then people will not be engaged, and your initiative will ultimately fail. Your team also needs to see you leading by example. You can talk to them as much as you want about the change you are trying to implement. However if you can’t even follow what you’re saying, then others for sure will not have trust, and you will lose your credibility. Last but not least, are creating goals. This step gives the team direction, a key component to engagement. If you don’t know where you are going, how do you even begin? Once this is accomplished you can start to work towards your initiative by way of mentoring.

A learning organization will be fostered through mentorships. “Learning is the process where knowledge is created through the mentoring of experience from a coach to team members who want to be more effective” (Rye, 2009, pg. 166). As an organization these relationships are huge. By teaching someone a skill, both parties benefit. As the teacher you are enhancing the skills that you already have, and you may even learn something new. As the learner you are able to grow individually, and add to the culture of a learning organization.

A learning organization is important because you want to continue not only personal growth, but also the growth of your team and your organization. You want to continuously find ways to improve because “if you stick with a ‘what’s working today’ mentality, you will not only miss out on opportunities, but you’ll find yourself struggling to maintain obsolete systems that demand to be changed” (Rye, 2009, pg. 175). As an organization you want to keep your competitive advantage, and by using this mentality of learning, you can foster this kind of development. It also keeps
employees engaged because it’s not the same thing every day, and they learn skills that will benefit them as an individual and for the team.

Through both the leader and the learner it is important to foster a culture of learning. Through mentoring and coaching this can be accomplished well. By engaging your employees you can harness their energy and avoid resistance. Mentoring creates an environment of constant learning. Through these mentoring programs you can focus on your team and make sure that knowledge is transferred effectively. With this happening you can be sure that your initiative will be on the path to success.

Transfer of Knowledge

Transfer of knowledge is important when planning any change initiative. Mentoring, “coffee talk,” and structured face-to-face meetings are just a few examples of ways knowledge can be transferred to a team. Having engaged and willing employees will create a smoother transition with the change. This paper will look at the effects of employees that are engaged in the transfer of knowledge, to maximize buy-in, facilitate an effective training, and having a successful initiative.

Learning Objective: Maximizing Buy-in

Maximizing buy-in is important because without it your initiative will not be successful. This is why it is also important that “knowledge transfer methods should suit the organizational (and national) culture” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pg. 92). You need to meet your team on their level. For example, if an organization is big on
meeting as a team and talking about projects coming up, having a training that is online would probably not work well, at least on its own. Many people are resistant to change at first, so it’s important to get buy-in from the start. At my institution I will obtain buy-in through training and individual conversations with the staff. Training will provide an opportunity for the staff to ask questions and really experience what restorative practices are all about. The most important people to have buy-in are the RA’s. They are the ones on the frontline implementing it. Without the RA’s this change initiative would not happen.

**Learning Objective: Effective Training**

Once you have that buy-in, the next step is training, and doing it effectively. Some different ways to accomplish this are a formalized training plan, continuous support, and mentoring. Davenport and Prusak (1998) discuss how “companies committed to transferring tacit knowledge often set up formal mentoring programs and make passing on knowledge to young employees part of the job description of skilled senior staff” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pg. 95). At NHTI this mentoring partnership would be between the professional staff and the student staff. This mentorship is set up from the start of training. Each student has a team, and that team continues to grow and support each other over the course of the year. Each week there are face-to-face meetings to go over different agenda items and continue learning. Face-to-face meetings are important because they “are by far the most important channels for transferring knowledge to the member firms” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pg. 90). This is an opportunity for the team to ask questions and see
how progress is going with others. Others may think of questions that will benefit the team, and continue that knowledge transfer. This will in turn lead to your initiative succeeding.

**Learning Objective: Initiative Success**

A successful initiative starts with a solid training and effective knowledge transfer that is absorbed and put into action. “Even transmission and absorption together have no useful value if the new knowledge does not lead to some change in behavior, or the development of some new idea that leads to new behavior” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pg. 101). This is why there needs to be time for people to ask questions and talk about what’s going on. Resistance and frictions can inhibit your initiative and enable setbacks. “Frictions...slow or prevent transfer and are likely to erode some of the knowledge as it tries to move through the organization” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pg. 96). Davenport and Prusak show some examples of these frictions being: lack of trust, intolerance for mistakes, lack of time/meeting place, status and rewards, lack of absorptive capacity (pg. 97). Being transparent and open about the change is important. It gives your team the opportunity to question and really understand why the change is occurring. Even having “coffee talk”, a time for unplanned discussion, is a great way to find solutions to problems in ways you may never have imagined (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Not all time at work has to be regimented and every second of the day planned out. These types of informal meetings are important to the team and can provide great opportunities
for open discussion. To have a successful initiative you need to break down some of these barriers, and help your team see the vision that you do.

While bringing about change can be hard when resistance is met, helping your team see the vision is imperative. Davenport and Prusak (1998) say that, “everyday knowledge transfers are a part of organizational life” (pg. 88). This statement is an important concept and tool for any change initiative. Maximizing buy-in from your team through meeting them where they are at is the first step towards a successful initiative. Then moving into a training where it is open to questions and has the opportunity for face-to-face meetings. And then finally, to being transparent about your initiative and finding ways to get everyone on board. These steps will help ensure an effective transfer of knowledge and lead to a successful change initiative.

The Execution Plan

A successful strategy execution plan is balanced by both focus and freedom. Focus looks at milestones and success making sure all resources are allocated correctly, freedom is given across the organization so that every team member is able to be creative and innovative with the goals that have been put in place (Syrett, 2007). This paper will look at the components of the pathway to a successful execution plan. These steps are: create the focus, clarity of role, communication and support, behavior and coaching, measurement systems, alignment, a culture of innovation, and impact of the change.
Focus

The focus of this change initiative is to “build healthy communities quickly and effectively so that students can live together productively and harmoniously” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 2). This will be achieved through the practice of utilizing circles, both proactive and responsive. “Circles foster community. They build connections. They allow voices to be heard. They provide a method for dealing with problem. Circles teach and facilitate conflict resolution and encourage diversity as well as mutual understanding” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 42). Overall the ultimate goal would be to create a culture of learning where the students would learn how to handle conflict and emotion on their own once they leave our institution. It is an important skill that more and more students have a lot of trouble. The role of the staff is key in the learning process.

Clarity of Role

The goal of the department staff is to be the facilitator of the restorative practices. This section will bring clarity as to how that goal will be achieved. “Restorative practices is a huge paradigm shift in which staff confront behavior but also share their own feelings as part of that process” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 10). Respect and trust are important factors when building the community and creating an environment that will be successful with restorative practices. This goes back to the Organizational Change Window (Figure 3). To work towards that behavior change in your community you need to focus on working with your students, not to or for. It will also be important for the staff to shift from focusing on
the ‘why’ to the actual event and how that behavior impacted the community (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012). This change in thinking and process will be discussed during our bi-annual training.

Communication, Behavior, Innovation, and Change

This training will be communicated in two-parts. The first part will go over the philosophy, and the second will be the implementation and role-playing. The philosophy was discussed above, so this section will look at the implementation of the program. The basis of restorative practices is the idea of circles, both literally and in practice. Taking a step back and looking at the practice as a whole, if an organization is on the restorative track there is an 80-20 rule. Meaning “80 percent of all restorative actions will tend to be proactive circles and other informal restorative practices, while only 20 percent will tend to be responsive” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 38). Basically the more proactive you are as a team, the better outcome you will ultimately have. It is important to start incorporating the idea of circles from the very beginning, starting with opening floor meetings. There are some basic questions to be covered, but it is important to allow that innovation and creativity. The RA’s will all be given a skeleton ‘plan’ as to how the meeting should go, but it will leave plenty of room for individuality. After the opening meeting, informal circles (in place of what was once floor meetings) will be held at a minimum of once a month. The RA will be able to cater each meeting towards topics that are on a need-to-need basis depending on the floor. From there circles will be incorporated into our confrontation techniques. When confronting students about
issues, it will look at the feelings involved and how their actions are affecting the community around them. They will utilize the questions in Figure 2 to talk through the situation. Like stated earlier, this will get to the real root of the problem and help the students realize how they are affecting those around them. It is also important to note that circles need to be engaging and relevant, if not the students will lose focus (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012). As stated earlier, the issue will determine what type of circle is utilized. The concept is to think of a problem like a pebble thrown into calm waters,

“the impact can be felt radiating out in concentric circles. Depending on the size of the pebble. The affected community may include roommates and other small groupings of individuals, an entire floor, multiple floors within a building, a whole building or complex and even the entire campus” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 62).

It is important to realize how many people some issues can really affect. As we incorporate restorative practices on the professional staff side, we will also be integrating it with the judicial system we already have in place. So circle may be done in addition to the sanction that follows school policy. It will be very beneficial to the student who had the challenging behavior to learn about how they affected others, because this is what really changes the culture of the community.

**Measurement**

The ultimate milestone will be seeing a direct impact on the culture of the community. This will be seen through our end of semester reports and statistics.
The hope will be to see a drop in incidents, and an overall more aware and enabled group of students who know how to confront issues on their own. For our staff tools to measure progress would be a more balanced community, students who a generally happier, and have a good relationship with the staff and students. While these milestones can be hard to measure statistically, this could be done through surveys, and also by looking at the reports done at the end of the year. Specifically we will be measuring the number of incidents, percent of mid-term grade warnings, number of circles completed, and attendance at programs. This data may reflect the change in many different ways. An incentive program will also be put in place for the staff to motivate them to be an advocate for the change initiative. With innovation being a key component, it will allow for each RA to implement the program (with guidelines) in their style. This also gives each RA ownership and pride in what they are doing.

While this change initiative is a big change in process, it is something that is very doable. The department will be motivated and enabled to work towards this new culture of the community. With the right training, positive incentives, and benchmarks it is an achievable goal.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Restorative practices are an important aspect of changing the culture within the community. They “offer a model for putting the ideal of communal problem solving into practice... Restorative practices have allowed us to engage community members about the impact of incidents on them” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 64).
The current structure of our judicial system would continue to be in place, however restorative practices would be an important component. The idea being that it would build upon what’s already in place, and help move the culture in the direction of teaching our students how to work through their problems in a respectful manner. When we can separate the “deed from the doer,” we can confront a person’s negative behavior while at the same time affirming the goodness of the person... Free expression of emotion inherent in restorative practices not only restores but also proactively builds new relationship and social capital” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 84). An important component of restorative practices are circles, from the literal shape to the practice of them. There are different kinds for different problems, each with the same end goal. “In circles, we face each other and speak respectfully, one person at a time, diminishing the feeling of disconnectedness that permeates our modern world and restoring the sense of belonging that constitutes healthy human community” (Wachtel & Watchel, 2012, pg. 85). Implementing this initiative will take buy-in and help from many stakeholders. From the students who will be learning these life skills, to the Resident Assistants who will be implementing it directly, to the professional staff who will be implementing and overseeing everything. This will take a team, not a single person to do this. To create the buy-in there will be many levels of training. The initial training will set up the foundation. From there each week the staff will report back during staff meetings to discuss progress. Measurement will be tracked along the way, ultimately looking at the incident numbers at the end of the semester. While this does seem like a big
initiative to take on, it is something that can really enable the students. These are life skills that they can use for the rest of their lives.

These skills add personal value to myself because I am very passionate about the work I do. I am always looking for better ways to work with my students, and this approach adds a whole other meaning when we are interacting with our students. It is important that we realize that restorative practices are a way to build upon the systems that are already in place. This additional educational component adds a huge value to our students, and teaches them a life skill that they can use long after their time at NHTI-Concord’s Community College.
References


