

## Towards Restorative Learning Societies 2000-

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### Eighteen years work for restorative practices in the field of education in Finland

Restorative practices and mediation gives schools a genuinely participatory and socially safe tools, with which all members of a school can learn restorative thinking and skills. In the case of conflict the parties can themselves take part in the resolution of their conflict. As an impact restorative approach:

- increases democracy and conflict management
- gives capability to take responsibility of their own lives
- strengthens childrens rights and social skills
- avoids social exclusion and labeling
- prevents bullying and violence
- transforms a schools to restorative one's

*"This education gives a human way of solving conflicts."*

*"Well, it is definitely useful in schools.. it is pretty educational."*

*(teachers who joined the programme 2013)*

### Trainings

We are running trainings for restorative approaches:

- *Peer mediation*, where pupil mediators help parties of a conflict to find a solution to their conflict by themselves
- *Circles and adult-led mediation*, where trained staff members guide the parties (can also be conflict between pupil and teacher) to find a common agreement to the conflict
- *Conferencing* led by trained staff members - pupils and their parents are participating
- *Advanced trainings* of whole school restorative approach for education professionals
  - o In this training teachers learn not only to use restorative practice reactively in the case of conflict but also proactively when teaching. This means that after the training the head and teachers of a school can implement the restorative thinking as a whole school approach and use the restorative tool in daily work in school communities. Experiences of using restorative approach in teaching are very promising and followed up in an academic research, of which the results will be published during next years.
- *Trainings for parents* to learn restorative methods and mediation skills to use in family life
- *National and local seminars*

### Materials

We are sharing:

- books, articles and research reports
- tool kit to pupils
- tool kit to staff members
- videos
- homepages and extranet
- social media arenas

*".. so, first mediation makes our school more peaceful, then our city more peaceful, and finally the whole country more peaceful! It starts like expanding all the time..."*

*"We have learned good skills to our coming marriages."*

*(peer mediators 2009)*

## Statistic and research

We are doing ongoing evaluation:

- over 800 schools trained: primary, secondary, high schools, and vocational schools
- over 1200 day care units trained
- 9000 trained peer mediator pupils and 2000 trained staff members active yearly
- over 10 000 cases mediated yearly
- about 25 000 parties solves their conflict successfully in mediation yearly

Table 1. A summary of the elements of restorative learning in peer mediation (Gellin 2011)

<b>Where to learn?</b> <i>The characteristics of restorative environment</i>	<b>How to learn?</b> <i>The social elements of restorative learning</i>	<b>What to learn?</b> <i>The results produced by restorative learning</i>
Participation Encounter face to face Cooperation Resolution	Listening, Respect and Dialogue Interaction and Reflection Understanding Impressing Thoughts, Feelings, Actions, Needs	Empathy Social skills Sense of responsibility Capability Active citizenship

## Active cooperation

Since the programme is part of the Finnish Forum for Mediation (NGO), we do close cooperation with other mediation arenas, which are: victim-offender mediation, work place mediation, court mediation, environmental mediation, neighborhood mediation, family mediation, street mediation and peace mediation. More: <https://sovittelu.com/in-english/>

As a non profit programme we are doing cooperation also with f.ex.:

- PLAN International for developing mediation in other cultures – for example we have organized trainings in Africa, Uganda from 2013
- Steiner Pedagogic Union
- Finnish Refugee Council
- Finnish Victim-Offender Mediation service offices

As an European organisation we are participating to cooperation with:

- European Forum for Restorative Justice
- International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO),
- European Council of Juvenile Justice (ECJJ)
- participating actively to international conferences and seminars

## More information

<http://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/in-english/>

Programme Director Maija Gellin, PhD Student, MA education, BA youth work, mediator  
gsm: +358407079076 / email: [maija.gellin@sovittelu.com](mailto:maija.gellin@sovittelu.com)