



## How it Works: When things go wrong for students

For the most part Macquarie Primary School students enjoy classroom and playground environments that are relatively free from planned or habitual negative actions between students. To ensure maintenance of a happy and safe social environment the Macquarie Top 6 Values (respect, kindness, honesty, responsibility, acceptance, and cooperation) are communicated, modelled and rewarded across the school at every opportunity.

We recognise that things will go wrong for young people from time to time and that every problem presents a learning opportunity. Macquarie's differentiated practices are underpinned by the *ACT Engaging Schools Framework* (ACT Education and Training Directorate)

### Problem Solving Approach

Central to our approach to supporting students is the language of 'Problem Size'. Problems can be small, medium or big, depending on the age, experience and relationships between students involved.

When things go wrong for students, members of the education team guide individuals to take turns to tell the story of the incident.

Key points of agreement become the focus.

Each student identifies what actions changed the nature of the problem – increasing or decreasing the problem size.

Each student identifies the problems they were responsible for.

Students are offered the opportunity to think about and share

- what needs to be mended for them and
- what mending they need to do

Students mend the problem and/or engage in the consequences determined through the conversation.

### Sample Playground Scenario:

A teacher on playground duty notices a student swinging a branch close to a group. A student reports that he has been hurt by the swinging branch.

A typical Macquarie response:

- Playground duty teacher ensures safety of students then directs the injured student for a first aid check.
- The teacher investigates the incident

- The Problem Size approach is used to determine who contributed to the problem, and what mending needs to occur on the spot.

It is important that the duty teachers are able to watch over the whole playground. Therefore, if the incident is taking time to make sense of, or if students are unable to resolve the manner in a way that reflects the Top 6 Values, students may be referred directly to the silver seat area for time out. If students fail to comply with this request, an emergency red card will be sent to the office and a member of the school leadership team will come to assist.

- Depending on the outcome of the investigation and the context and climate of the incident, the most appropriate selection of the following strategies is undertaken:
  - Student/s can be removed from normal learning programs including playground situations until there are indications that the student/s understands the severity and affects of their actions
  - A problem solving conference can be conducted with the aim of highlighting the effects on students. These circles aim at changing behaviour and empowering students
  - Parents are contacted for unusual and/or high level problems
  - Student support plans can be put in place to assist all parties involved in an incident
  - Parent support can be requested including their time to assist student inclusion, management of behaviours, and to engender positive learning
  - Temporary exclusion of individuals from activities or situations in which the risk of non compliance or dangerous behaviour is obvious
  - Suspension from school may be used to interrupt a cycle of behaviour, to reinforce the requirements of the school, to reinforce individual student plans or to signal to the student the severity of their actions.

The education team is encouraged to debrief with the school leadership team in the interests of monitoring and supporting student success.

