



Hudson High School of
Learning Technologies
Manhattan, NY



[Snapshot]

Author: Leia Petty, guidance counselor, 2014



Name of School: Hudson High School of Learning Technologies

Website: www.hudsonhs.com

Grade Levels: 9-11, in 2013-2014 will be 9-12

District: 2 (Chelsea Neighborhood)

Number of Students: 350 (will be 500 by next year)

Scanning: No

Number of SSAs in school: We have officers at the front desk but no officers than roam the hallways so not sure how many are technically assigned to our school (we have 5 other schools in the building).

Number of students or % Title 1: 62% Free Lunch

Closing Status: Growing school

Demographics of your school staff & students: (According to Inside Schools) Come from almost every borough, 6% Asian, 24% Black, 7% White, 63% Latino. 16% IEP, 9% ELL. We are expecting percentage of ELL and IEP students to increase.

[Testimonial]

Author: Leia Petty, guidance counselor, 2014



This is my first year at Hudson. I came from the Bushwick Campus where I spent the previous four years as a guidance counselor, and the school culture is remarkably different. One reason is that the school does not have metal detectors and students can leave for lunch. The bathrooms are always open and students are allowed to wear hats. This was a huge change from Bushwick where we had metal detectors, locked bathrooms, and closed lunch. So the basic level of trust between staff and students makes a huge difference in how the students feel about themselves. This doesn't mean our school is all one big happy community—there is a lot of yelling to get to class in the hallways, etc., so students feel trusted but also antagonized. Students also feel like suspensions in the school are given unfairly.

We have a mixed grade advisory program where students stay with teachers throughout the four years. The main deterrent to a feeling of community is that we currently have a blocked schedule and all students check out a laptop for classes. This leads to a sense of alienation from each other where you travel with the same students the entire year and a lot of classwork is laptop based. This gives students less time to interact with other members of their own grade and also the school as a whole.

Staff members are very open to the idea of student-centered learning, but after the first three years (that feel chaotic, systems always changing, demands of the DOE for testing/observations), it's been hard to maintain this.

I came to the school having started Restorative Justice practices at another school, and was hired on the basis that I would start this approach at Hudson. This meant that I had buy-in from administration from the beginning, which gave me much more leverage with the staff and students to begin immediately. I held three lunchtime meetings with interested staff to get a sense of how to kick

things off. Since I was new, I wanted to know how the school was currently running and what staff would respond to most. Since those meetings, staff has been supportive, but the maintenance and implementation [of Restorative Practices] is my responsibility (mainly due to time and feeling by staff that this is part of my job).

We had three goals at the beginning: have more circles take place in advisory, begin Fairness Committees, and start the Justice League (student club dedicated to restorative justice). We, remarkably, have gotten a great start on all three.

My estimate is that half of staff hold advisories using a circle, we have held 10 Fairness Committees, and the Justice League has been meeting weekly since the beginning of the year. The bulk of the Justice League work has centered on discussing student issues, preparing for fairness committees, and, most recently, organizing school-wide assemblies. The assemblies thus far have really changed the school culture for the better. They've helped create a school-wide identity and community, have lifted student spirit, and proven to administration and teachers that an assembly is not something to fear!

The Fairness Committees have also been successful and helped to get buy-in from more teachers that this approach wasn't just a "softer" approach to discipline, but something that worked. I think the feeling of administration, while they agree in theory with the practice, is also that this is a "nicer" form of discipline instead of an alternative to punitive practices that actually requires much more from students. But because we are a small, growing school with many systems not in place, there is a general feeling among staff that we need a sense of stability and "order" that currently doesn't exist. Quick fixes would involve a more robust detention system and more streamlined process for student removal and suspensions. However, many teachers don't realize that even if those processes were in place and running more smoothly, it would get to the heart of *why* students act in certain ways. The central piece of Restorative Justice is radical in the most literal sense: getting to the root. Fairness Committees are currently the only practice in the school that give time to figuring this out.

The main challenge in fully implementing R&J is resources. We are able to conduct Fairness Committees only once a week, but they take place during advisory time. Often there are weeks when we cannot make this happen due to school-wide issues that end up taking precedence. I would like to have more staff able to facilitate circles, but during the time Fairness Committees happen, all teachers are teaching—this would require coverage for those teachers participating. Coverage during advisory is not as hard to get but still adds an extra burden on teachers participating and relies on good will of other teachers who are willing to cover at no pay. We are a small school that already demands teachers go "above and beyond" so having a practice at school that requires even more is at times a hard sell. My approach is to create a system for setting up fairness committees that is streamlined and feels easy for teachers to participate.

The Justice League is by far the biggest success and just recently grew, which added more new voices and perspectives. Students are chosen through teacher grade-team nominations, or students will ask me to join and, given the size of the group, I will get approval from teachers. We currently have about 8 active student members of Justice League. All of them have participated in a Fairness Committee (except the newest recruits) and have had very positive experiences. They also recently made an announcement at a school wide assembly introducing themselves and encouraging students to come seek them out in order to prevent conflict. It was a big step forward and we are hoping to shift from (currently) teachers bringing students, to having students bring other students as well. This is a goal moving forward.

Reflecting back on the year, I still struggle with how to make this a practice that is more widely understood and used. I think this will involve implementing “Jury Duty” or some form of student involvement beyond Justice League. I also feel at a loss about how to incorporate parents other than making them aware of this practice in the school.

The biggest struggle for me was finding ways to overcome understandable apathy amongst teenagers. Fairness Committees have been successful but when discussing how to collectively change the Hudson community, there is a lot of negativity and cynicism. I believe this comes primarily from students feeling powerless and controlled by adults. They are often without a voice and most of their greatest ideas we are not able to implement in our school due to resources. The new recruits into Justice League have provided a much needed boost to the cynicism that was creeping into the Justice League and the three assemblies Hudson has held this Spring will hopefully increase their confidence that what are doing is making an impact. But I also know deep down inside that the way our education system is structured is to make all stakeholders—parents, students and teachers—feel powerless. I don’t believe restorative justice will be able to transform this dynamic fundamentally but to believe it provides a window for the school community to see an alternative, no matter how limited its ability to bring out fundamental change. Seeing and experiencing alternatives is a powerful thing.

[Tools]



Tools are from Academy for Environmental Leadership, Leia's former school

FAIRNESS STRUCTURE

Roles:

- Facilitator
- One Teacher
- Panel: two or three students
- Person taken to fairness
- Person bringing one to fairness

The facilitator convenes the fairness by introducing everyone and explaining the basic ground rules, which include confidentiality and openness to process. S/he also explains the way that the process works, including the speaking order and role of the panel.

The person calling the fairness is allowed to explain, uninterrupted, why s/he is doing it. S/he is asked to explain which core value s/he believes has been violated.

Next, the person brought to fairness explains his or her side of the story, also uninterrupted.

After that, the panel is allowed to ask questions to either person to obtain a more complete and holistic picture of the situation at hand. This process has no beginning or end and is dependent on the context of the situation and the nature of the dialogue. The intent is to come to some agreement or understanding among all parties. At times, this happens easily and other times this requires much more work.

Questions you can expect the panel to ask:

Clarifying questions like who, what, where, when, and why

Restorative Justice Questions

- What happened?
- What were you thinking?
- How were you feeling?
- Who else has been affected by this?
- What do you need now so that the harm can be repaired?
- How can we involve everyone who has been affected in finding a way forward?
- How can everyone do things differently in the future?

Justice Circle: Facilitator's Role

Before: CHECK-IN WITH THE PARTICIPANTS THE DAY-OF AS A REMINDER.

- Welcome everyone.
- Four points to introduce the justice circle:
 - Different from alternative discipline- focuses on holding community members accountable.
 - non-hierarchical
 - Restorative: consequences designed to heal and repair harm.
 - Confidential.
- Explain the process:
 - Explain each person's role.
 - First, bringer will speak uninterrupted. They should include what core norm they feel has been violated (on the role card).
 - Then, person being brought will speak uninterrupted.
 - Panel will ask clarifying questions to get a more complete picture of what happened--- examples are on your role cards.
 - Then each panel member responds to what they have heard. They will also say whether or not they agree that a core value was violated.
 - An open discussion begins, facilitated with speaker's list. Goals:
 - getting everyone to see what happened through the lens of the core values
 - to settle on a consequence, keeping in mind that the consequence needs to be restorative.
- Run the process, as outlined in the explanation.
- Thank everyone. Remind them that the justice circle is confidential. Talking about circle in general is good, but specific names and situations should not be discussed.

After:

- Log how the JC went in the Google doc and include the consequence!
- Follow-up with bringer/brought to be sure consequence was followed-through on.

Consequences to Consider:

Time and support: As a consequence for a violation of a school norm, time spent contributing to the school community or school environment may be considered, especially as it connects to any harm done.

Examples:

- Helping a teacher clean desks, blackboards, or tidy rooms.
- Helping another student (tutoring, during lunch working on project together)
- Helping to create a bulletin board.
- Helping the school secretaries or aids with tasks.
- Coming in early to support a member of the school community in setting up for the day.
- Staying late to support a member of the school community with any help that they need.

Letter of apology: As a consequence for a violation of a school norm, a letter of apology or explanation could be written, especially as it connects to any harm done.

Examples:

- A private letter written to members of the school community who were harmed.
- A public letter written to members of the school community who were harmed.
- Public apology to class (with or without discussion following)

Educating others: As a consequence for a violation of a school norm, students may be given the opportunity to educate others around a particular issue, especially as it connects to any harm done.

Examples:

- Create a lesson for an advisory or health class that teachers can use to teach about a topic.
- Create a lesson for an advisory or health class and teach that class!
- Create a bulletin board related to a specific concern that can be shared with the school community.

Restorative Questions:

To respond to challenging behaviour:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have your thoughts been since?
- Who has been affected by what you did?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

To help those harmed by others actions:

- What did you think when you realised what had happened?
- What have your thoughts been since?
- How has this affected you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right

Checklist for Guidance Counselors: Justice Circles

- Receive and review notice requesting a Justice Circle
- Open Google doc and fill in all necessary information including choosing a facilitator as well as another teacher and two students to participate in the justice circle
- Choose a day to have the justice circle
- Have a conference with the student, asking them if they are willing to participate in the justice circle to discuss the issue that occurred and/or was discussed
- Send out invitation to Justice Circle participants
- Send email to facilitator with list of participants.

Content for Google Doc Spreadsheet for Coordinating Justice Panels

- Date
- Form Submitted
- Bringer
- Person Being Brought
- Brief description of incident
- Chosen facilitator (list below)
- Chosen student from Committee (list below)
- Other teacher chosen
- Other student chosen
- Brief description of guidance convo with student
- Date chosen for circle (Monday, Thurs, Fri)
- Brief description of Outcomes, consequences

AEL Justice Committee Request Form

Bringer's Information: Name _____ Room # _____

Telephone # _____ E-mail _____

Person Referred to Committee: _____

AEL School Norms and Values

Please check the school value(s) you feel have been violated
Respect for the personal space, property, privacy, feelings and body of others
Respect for freedom and voice
Respect for individuality, identity and culture
Respect for the learning environment
Respect for the physical environment.

Description of Harm:

What interventions have been attempted?:

Fairness Role Play Roles

Mr. Cuttler

Yesterday during your English class Luis had seemed agitated and wasn't staying on task. When you asked him to start focusing on his work he cursed and swore at you angrily. When you took him into the hall to try to have a private conversation, he just walked off and never came back to class. You've noticed that, though he used to be a pretty good student, his grades have really been slipping lately. You've never done a fairness committee meeting before.

Luis

You are a junior who has done pretty well in school so far, but you have to take the English and US regents in less than a month and you're feeling pretty worried. You don't know why you did what you did in Mr. Cuttler's class, but you don't really think it's that big of a deal and you wish everyone could just get over it. You've noticed a lot of your teachers are getting on your case more lately but you're not sure why, and you just wish everyone would get off your back. You also have had good relationships with teachers in the past though and you're sad that your feeling like you're losing some of those.

Ms. Acevedo

You have taught Luis in the past but you don't know anything about the incident in Mr Cuttler's class. Luis did well in your class and you always felt like he was a kid who worked hard and was respectful to teachers. You've done a fairness committee meeting before.

Jazmin

You've seen Luis around but you don't know him that well. He seems like a cool kid. You've done a fairness committee before one time and it actually went pretty well for you. You think Mr Cuttler is a really good teacher.

Kevin

You don't know Luis at all, but you know Mr Cuttler can be tough when kids are making trouble in class. You've never done a fairness committee meeting before but you're curious about it.

Template for Reminder Passes for student Fairness Committee Members

NAME HERE (401) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (414) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (401) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (228) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (426) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (426) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (402) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (416) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (405) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (412) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (426) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (228) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)
NAME HERE (414) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)	NAME HERE (401) Reminder! Meeting today in 431. :)