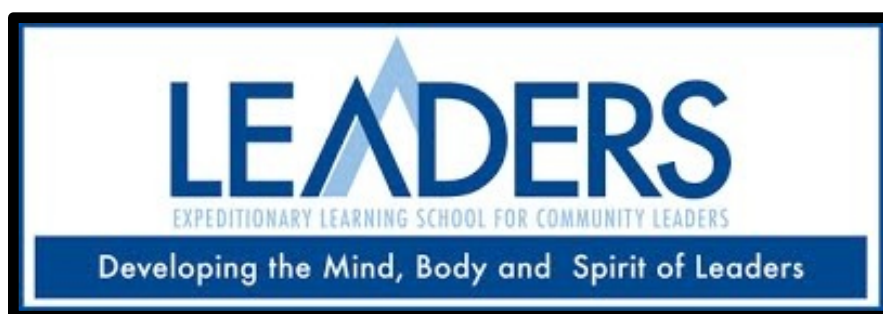




**Expeditionary  
Learning School for  
Community Leaders**

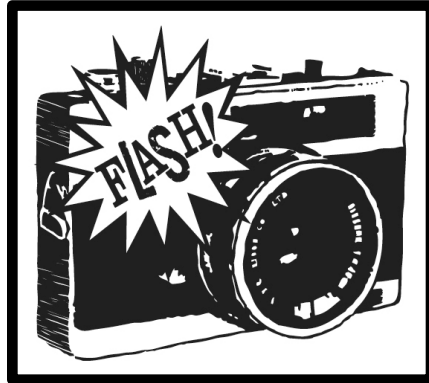


# [Snapshot]

**School:** Expeditionary Learning School for Community Leaders

**Borough:** Brooklyn, NY

**Author:** Jason Ernest Feldman



- Grade Levels: 9 - 12
- District: 21
- Number of Students: Approx. 280
- Scanning? Yes
- Number of students or % Title 1: Whole School Title 1

# [Testimonial]

**Author:** Jason Ernest Feldman



## **Ownership**

As one of five schools in the Lafayette High School building in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, Leaders strives to create a tight-knit community amidst a diverse setting. Despite the various surroundings, Leaders succeeds at creating a supportive, communal feeling amongst the staff and students. Through the establishment of an advisory group called crew, students are able to first relate on a five-day, Outward Bound backpacking and high-ropes expedition. Each crew has one teacher who serves as the crew leader for four years. Crew members are then empowered to support one another throughout their high school experience. Teachers feel a great responsibility to be mentors to students, both as crew leaders and as heads of clubs, activities, and programs. Every staff member is deeply committed to keeping all students in school.

Everyone in our community can be a stakeholder, given the situation. Those who are in danger physically or emotionally always receive priority in a given situation.

## **Organizing**

It became clear that a traditional, punitive approach was not leading to results. It was not one defining moment, but a series of moments, that failed to make a change. The community has responded slowly but supportively. As we explain the philosophy and results of restorative justice, most individuals understand and are willing to try something new. Many of our staff members were trained in by Morningside Center (<http://www.morningsidecenter.org/restorative-circles>) in running restorative circles. From there, a Restorative Justice Committee was created and met weekly. We started holding different circles, and reflecting on each one. The key element of success was unanimous support. Every individual is treated with compassion and respect, and the community is committed to creating a physically and emotionally safe environment for every staff and student at the school.

# [Tools]



## **Restorative Justice Manual: Introduction**

*This tool on-boards new staff members and sets clear expectations.*

**Introduction:** Based on the educational values and beliefs of Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, the Expeditionary Learning School for Community Leaders (Leaders) guides itself based on the Expeditionary Learning Core Practices. In the same way the students are expected to self-assess in order to improve culture and character, Leaders has self-reflected on its approach concerning disciplinary actions, and has shifted its thinking towards a positive, restorative approach. As each individual student's social and emotional needs vary from case to case, so does the disciplinary approach that will help that student become positive, contributing members of the community.

**Vision Statement:** The entire Leaders' community fosters a restorative school culture that promotes community, accountability, positive relationships and repairs harm amongst all stakeholders. The Leaders' Restorative Justice program involves youth and adults to promote awareness, understanding, sharing and learning. Our school community effectively addresses behavior and other complex issues through restorative practices that integrate empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance and responsibility.

**Mission Statement:** In order to fulfill the Restorative Justice vision, all members of the Leaders community will support and/or participate in the structures of Restorative Justice Circles, Peer Mediators, and Restorative Justice Trainings, in order to create a more equitable justice system where community members understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility for their choices, and work to repair harm. Leaders will create systems and structures that ensure student voice, student leadership, and an overall positive and empathetic school community. For these systems to be effective, ***members of our community will be treated like individuals, and conflicts will be addressed strategically.***

**Current Results:** During the 2013-2014 academic year, Leaders conducted thirty-three mediations, eleven peer mediations, six restorative circles, and over fifty conferences regarding individual student behavior. These efforts resulted in forty-six principal suspensions, which was a decrease from the fifty-four during the previous year. The school also had zero superintendent suspensions, decreasing from the ten superintendent suspensions the year before. More impressively, as one of five schools in the building, Leaders was the first school in thirteen years to have zero superintendent suspensions within the old Lafayette High School. Monthly data analysis also shows improving trends, as more data comes in supporting positive approaches.

## **Restorative Justice Circles Process at Leaders High School**

*This tool assists crew leaders with preparing their crew members for circle. It keeps both staff and students informed with the process. Even those who have never experienced a restorative justice circle can enter prepared.*

### **Steps:**

1. Staff member emails Justice@Leaders6-12.org with a situation. They use referral questions to structure their email (making sure to include grade team in the subject) and CC Crew Leaders of involved students. If you think that the circle will need to include students or teachers outside of the grade team, mention this in your referral and the RJ committee will convene to coordinate the circle. If you are referring a peer mediation, email mediation@leaders6-12.org.
2. Grade team decides if the situation is appropriate for Restorative Justice Circles. If so, the team will determine the stakeholders and contact each of them to find out if they are willing to participate in a Restorative Justice Circle. The Restorative Justice committee will coordinate larger Restorative Justice circles and Dana and Jorge will coordinate mediations.
3. If all participants agree to a Restorative Justice Circle, Crew Leaders will be contacted with the time, location and date of the Circle as well as the name of the Circle Keeper. Grade team will determine who the Circle Keeper is based on the availability of trained staff members.
4. Crew Leaders are expected to complete Pre-Conference with their crew member(s) before the Circle using the Pre-Conference Script (see following pages).
5. The Circle Keeper will conduct Pre-Conference with other stakeholders (indirect participants and staff members). Circle Keeper will check in with Crew Leaders to make sure that crew members are ready and have completed the Pre-Conference.
6. The Circle will meet with all stakeholders and the circle keeper. A contract will hopefully be agreed upon by the end of the Circle.

## **Pre-Conference Restorative Justice Scripts**

*When a formal restorative justice conference is required, much of the work takes place in the pre-conference with “the offender” and “the victim”. Here is where you lay groundwork by clearly setting expectations so that each feels safe and ready to proceed. Feel free to customize the scripts to suit age, maturity, personality, of each student, as well as the nature of the offense, and the willingness of the individuals to participate.*

### **Script #1: Offender Pre-Conference**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. Gonzalez referred your case to Restorative Justice Circles and we need to do some pre-conferencing in order to help you find a way to repair the harm you caused on (date) when (describe offense). I’m going to explain the process but first, why don’t you tell me in your own words what happened that day. (Now ask clarification questions that help you gain a clear understanding of what happened.)

Can you tell me what you were thinking about at the time? Who do you think was affected by your actions? (Or, How do you suppose (name of victim) is feeling about all of this?)

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently? (Or, Do you feel now that you had other options at the time that may have resulted in a more positive outcome?)

What do you think would be the best possible outcome from this restorative justice conference gathering? (Or, How would you like to see things turn out?)

Now, I’m going to give you an idea of what the restorative justice conference will look like. At the restorative justice circle, you’ll sit in a circle facing one another to discuss what happened. The Circle Keeper will ask some questions and give everyone a chance to answer. You will have the opportunity to invite people to the meeting who will support you. (Optional) I can be there to support both you and the person who was harmed.

Your job will be to talk about what happened just like you’ve done with me today, and then listen to what the others have to say about how your behavior affected them. So, this is a chance for you to learn – in a safe environment – how the incident affected others. Then everyone will brainstorm and come up with the ways to repair the harm. I want to make sure you understand that it is your behavior that is the issue, not you as a person. And we all can change our behaviors.

Note: If the offender has minimized his/her responsibility, you might say: I want to be sure that this conference goes well for you. I hear you describing what happened. You’ve admitted that you did it, but you also seem to be blaming

others (or “...to be minimizing your own behaviors”). That might make everyone angry with you. Perhaps there are some reasons why things happened the way they did, but it might be best if you took responsibility for what you did right up front. We can’t control what others do. We can only control what we ourselves do. So, when a person is really honest and sincere and admits what they did was wrong without any justifying or making excuses, things get a whole lot better. Do you understand? Why don’t you try it again. Just say what you did, and take responsibility for that. (Acknowledge the student if he/she has revised his statement successfully).

Who would you like to have with you at the Circle to support you?

Do you have any questions? Please do not hesitate to ask. I am very pleased that you want to proceed with the Restorative Justice Circle. I’m confident you will do well.

### **Script #2: Victim Pre-Conference**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. Gonzalez referred your case to Restorative Justice Circles. I understand that there has been an incident on (date) when (name of offender), (describe offense). I’m so sorry that you were harmed by his/her behavior. At the Restorative Justice Circle you will have a chance to tell (name of offender) how his/her actions have affected you, and give him/her a chance to repair that harm. My job, and the job of the Circle Keeper, is to make sure you are safe, and make sure you have a say in how that harm will be repaired.

I’m going to explain the process for you in just a minute but first, why don’t you tell me in your own words what happened that day? (Add any clarification questions that will help you as a facilitator gain a clear understanding of what happened).

Can you tell me what you were thinking about at the time?

How did all this affect you? (Look for physical, emotional, mental and financial harms).

Who besides yourself do you think was affected and how do you think they were affected?

What do you think would be the best possible outcome from this restorative justice circle? (Or, what would you like to see (name of offender) do to repair the harm and help you feel safe again? Or, How would you like to see things turn out? If the victim cannot answer this question right now, encourage him/her to think about that before the Circle).



Now I'm going to give you an idea of what the Restorative Justice Circle will look like. (Name of Offender) said he/she is willing to come together and hear what you have to say and work on repairing the harm. You'll sit in a circle and have that discussion. I want you to be able to invite people to that meeting who will support you. Is there someone you can think of that you'd like to be there?

Each person in the Circle will be given an opportunity to speak in his/her turn. The benefit to you is that you'll get questions answered and have a say in (name of offender)'s consequence. You'll also be helping (name of offender) to make better choices in the future.

Your job will be to talk about what happened just like you've done with me today, and then to listen to what others have to say about the incident.

Do you have any questions? Please do not hesitate to ask. I'm very pleased you want to proceed with the Restorative Justice Circle. Again, I'm so sorry that you've had to deal with this, but I'm confident that together we can make things a lot better for you by doing this. Thank you for helping us to make our school community safer.

### **Referral Questions For Both Peer Mediation and Restorative Justice**

*This process gives voice to all community members who believe an event should result in a circle. It gives everyone a voice, and gives the committee/grade team necessary information. This tool also allows the submitter a little time to reflect on what happened as he or she gets their thoughts down on paper. A struggle using this tool is: **What do we do with referrals that the committee/grade team thinks should not be a circle?***

Subject: Student-Grade team

Date of incident:

Who are the stakeholders/disputants?

What happened? (please include when and where)

What results would you like to see?

Note: For Restorative Justice circles, your referral will be addressed at your grade team meetings. If you think that the circle will need to include students or teachers outside of the grade team, mention this in your referral and the RJ committee will convene to coordinate the circle. If you are referring a peer mediation, email [mediation@leaders6-12.org](mailto:mediation@leaders6-12.org).

# [Summer 2016 Update]

**Author:** Caitlin Delphin (Peer Mentor Facilitator)

## ***Origin:***

Teachers at Leaders realized that ninth graders were involved in far more “incidents” than students in any other grade. Incidents ranged from very minor, such as being out of uniform, to much more serious, such as physical violence. As a solution, teachers began the peer mentor program to create a structure for introducing ninth graders to Leaders’ culture and fostering relationships between upperclassmen and ninth graders.

## ***Structure:***

At Leaders students have advisory or “crew” for 45 minutes a day four days per week. Peer mentors visit crews during this time every other Friday or more often when necessary to prepare for upcoming events such as student-led conferences, roundtables at the end of each semester, or pep rally.

There are approximately 15 peer mentors chosen every year from 11th and 12th grade students who fill out an application and complete an interview process. Peer mentors are divided into groups of 3-4 and are assigned to a crew. The peer mentor group remains with the crew for the semester and hopefully for the entire year. One or two peer mentors are selected to be peer mentor leaders and help facilitate communication between students and the teacher-adviser and provide extra support for peer mentor groups.

Before the school year begins peer mentors have an orientation that is approximately 4 hours long to prepare them for their responsibilities as a peer mentor. They meet with their teacher-adviser after school for about an hour once a week or once every other week during the school year.

Peer mentors visit their crews at least every other week and sometimes every week. While with the crew, the peer mentors usually run initiatives and conversations based on what their crew needs at the time (ice breaking initiatives, initiatives to help move past or enhance stage of group development-forming, storming, norming, and performing, or a crew leader request such as an anti-bullying initiative). The ninth-grade crewmembers form a strong bond with their mentors.

All ninth-grade students at Leaders go on a camping trip with their crew, their crew-leader (teacher), and two of their peer mentors. The peer mentors who have the opportunity to go with their crew during a four-night overnight trip are usually able to form strong bonds that last through the year and beyond.

# [tools]

## **Attached below are:**

*Initiative Planning Sheet:* Peer mentors use this to plan their time with their crew including initiative, debrief questions and materials.

*Peer Mentor Reflection Sheets:* Peer mentors fill out periodically throughout year in their mentor groups. Peer mentor groups can share their successes and challenges and get advice.

*Debriefing Info Sheet & Stages of Group Development Info Sheet:* Peer mentors use information to help with planning and understanding group development.

*Sample Initiatives:* These are a few of the peer mentor's favorite initiatives. More initiatives can be found in many books and on many websites.

## **Results/Positive Outcomes:**

A huge positive outcome is that the students love this program. Ninth graders almost always talk positively about their mentors and students in all grades cite their mentors as people who made them feel comfortable in the school and who they could look up to. The peer mentor program has been around long enough now that the students applying to be peer mentors had peer mentors themselves. During interviews this year the most cited reason students said they applied to be peer mentors was because of their positive experiences as mentees.

The peer mentor program facilitates relationships between students in different grades. Students at Leaders are almost completely in classes with only students in their grade. Providing a way for students to form relationships with students in other grades helps keep Leaders a multi-laterally supportive community.

The peer mentor program provides another way for students to take a leadership role in the school. Students view being a peer mentor as a privilege and tend to take their responsibilities seriously by striving to be positive role models for their mentees at all times during school. The mentors also help to facilitate communication between their mentees and adults at the school and may help their mentees to mediate disputes and make good decisions.

## **Challenges/Areas for Growth:**

One enduring challenge is that ninth graders continue to have a far higher rate of incidents than any other grade, even with the schools implementation of the peer mentor program and the transition to a restorative justice based system.

Another challenge is finding a time for peer mentors to meet that works for all mentors. The meetings occur after school and students have many different responsibilities that can make it hard to find a time where all students in the group can meet consistently. If all peer mentors are not at each meeting communication from the facilitator to the mentors can be obscured and more importantly communication among peer mentor groups can fall apart, creating tension within the group and disorganization during the crew visit.

*Initiative Planning Sheet*

Name of Initiative:

Goals for Crew to Achieve (why is this initiative being played):

Materials Needed:

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Framing:

Instructions:

What should happen during initiative:

Debrief:

What?

So What?

What Now?

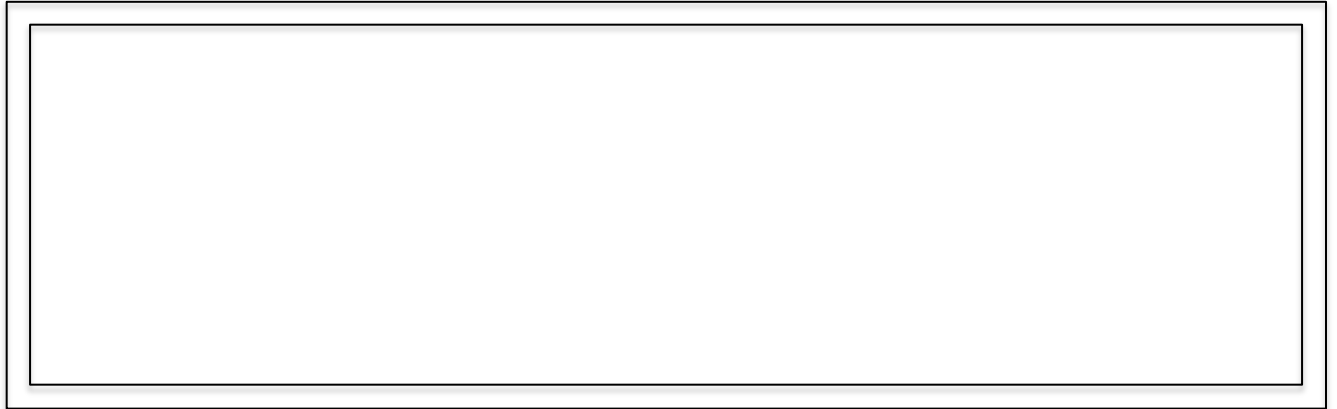
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Crew: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What are some areas where your crew is doing well?

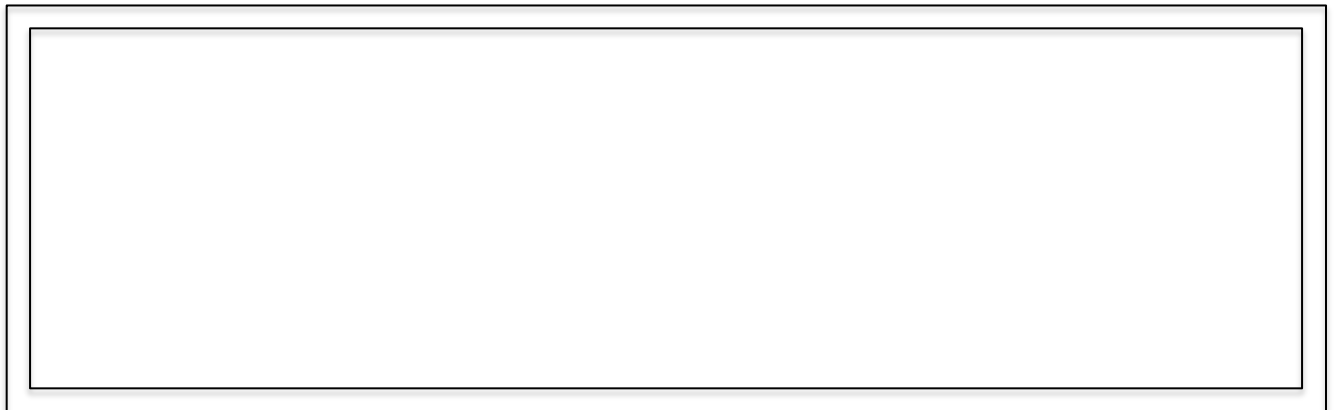
What are some areas where your crew could improve?

How has your crew grown or changed since you first met them in September?  
(be specific, give examples)

In what ways does your mentor group work well with the crew?

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for the respondent to write their answer to the question above.

In what areas could your mentor group improve interactions with the crew?

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for the respondent to write their answer to the question above.

## Debriefing

As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to help a group discover the meaning and gain insight from their activities. The debrief is where this understanding takes place. A debrief is simply a conversation, a journal, or any forum that allows the group to process the experience. The facilitator's role is to ask carefully constructed questions to allow the group to draw their own conclusions.

Here are some questioning strategies:

**What?** – What happened? What did you experience in this activity?

**So What?** – What does this experience tell us? What might it mean?

**Now What?** – How does this experience apply to our lives? What can we learn about ourselves from this experience?

Where you successful? Why or why not?

What helped you succeed? What held you back?

What does this tell us about ourselves? How can this relate to our lives?

Journal: what new understandings can you pull from this activity? How can those apply to your life?

Remember – these strategies are just a formula, questions should be adjusted to be more specific if the activity calls for it. For example: in Building Bridges, instead of asking “what did you learn,” we asked “what did you learn about leadership styles?”

It is *always* a good idea to plan your debriefing questions before hand, but be ready to adjust them depending on what the group experiences.



# Group Development

Every group goes through a process of getting to know each other before they can really work effectively with each other. For some groups, this is a quick and relatively painless process. For some groups, this is long and arduous. No matter who the group is, they will go through the following stages of group development.

## **Forming**

### **Norming**

### **Storming**

### **Performing**

**Forming** - This stage is often when a group has just met, and is a period of hesitancy by the individuals. The members are just getting to know each other and are feeling out how much to trust each other, how much to share, and are generally guarded and careful about what they contribute.

**Norming**- This stage represents the process of identifying each other's boundaries. The group will try to identify what is acceptable, what is not, and what the values of the group are.

**Storming**- At this stage, group members face conflict within and among the group. Members of the group have not yet found the best method for working productively together and are frustrated with the group and group process.

**Performing**- Having overcome obstacles and found roles and routines within the group, this stage is the phase where groups can work effectively together and truly achieve more than as individuals.

These stages typically occur in this order, but groups can vary and move in any direction among these stages. A facilitator's role is to assist a group in moving through these stages, reaching the performing stage, and maintaining it.

## **Group Juggle**

### Goals:

1. participants learn each other's names
2. participants consider how they personally contribute to the group's success
3. the group practices working together toward a low-stakes goal

### Group size

One group of 6-15 members

### Materials

5-10 soft throw-able objects

### Process

1. facilitator models how an object is thrown (underhand, say the person's name, the person says "thank you, name")
2. F explains that they need to establish a pattern, so the ball will be thrown around the circle in any order, so that everyone gets it once. Remember the pattern and use the model
3. now, tell the group that success means that the model was held to, the pattern is kept, and no one drops the ball. Our goal is to have the fastest time we can. Go around again.
4. this time ask the group how they would rate themselves: dropped? Pattern? Time? Can we do better? Maybe try again.
5. now, if we "have more on our plate" can we still be successful? Show the group that you have 9 more balls. Ask: how many of these can we juggle at once? Set a goal as a group, encourage a compromise. Try the goal - throw out one ball at a time and after it gets by 3 or 4 people, throw out the next ball, and so on. When it gets completely disorganized, stop action and discuss what happened.
6. ask group members to offer strategies on how they can improve if they try again. Try again
7. debrief

## **Tarp Flip**

### Goals:

1. Problem-solving group work
2. Practice listening to each other's ideas
3. practice leadership

### Group size

One group of maximum 15 people

### Materials

A tarp, folded or cut to an appropriate size for the size group (so that they all stand on it, closely and just slightly uncomfortably)

### Process

1. put the tarp on the floor and have entire group stand on it.
2. frame the scenario: this raft is all you have. Unfortunately you are surrounded by shark infested lava and can not leave the raft under any circumstances, not even a toe. The raft will take you to safety, however, the bottom will melt in 15 minutes. That means your task is to flip over the tarp before it melts without losing a single member of your group. Think safety, the facilitator should intervene if you plan compromises anyone's safety.
3. Go! Allow the group their 15 minutes. If anyone touches the lava, put a bandana on their body part, they can no longer use it.
4. at the end of time, debrief in terms of how well they listened to each other, were they able to find a successful strategy, and so on. If they were not successful, discuss what they need to change about their process and allow them to try again.
5. debrief

## **Silent Jenga**

- Students play Jenga without talking
- Rules:
  - Completely silent (no whispering)
  - Each student must go before anyone can go again
  - Everyone participates
- Every 3 rows built higher equals one point-play a few times to try to get as many points as possible

### Materials Needed:

- Jenga

## **Human Knot**

### Goals:

1. Problem solving group work
2. Respecting each other
3. listening
4. sharing leadership

### Group Size

A group of 10 or less

### Materials

1 bandana for every member of the group

### Process

1. group stands in a circle
2. everyone holds their bandana in their right hand, by one corner
3. hold out your right hand so the bandana is dangling in the center
4. with your left hand, grab someone else's bandana by the other end (try not to grab someone's who is right next to you or who grabbed your bandana)
5. now, the group's task is to unknot themselves. Rules: you can not ever let go of your 2 bandanas. Be respectful.
6. Debrief when they are done.

## **OBJECT TRANSFER**

A rectangle, perhaps 15' x 20' is set up using rope, tape or whatever, and two diagonal corners are marked off leaving a foot or two triangular area, like this:

Then, in one of the triangular areas, put a large assortment - 12 - 20 throwable objects, the more varied the better; stuffed animals, balls, a hat, rubber chicken, etc.

Then give the participants the following:

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Name of Group

TASK: Transfer as many objects as possible in one minute from one object area to the other.

### CONDITIONS:

1. Each object must be transferred separately.
2. Each object must be tossed and caught at least once by each team member.

3. There must be at least one team member behind each of the four lines (sides) at all times.
4. No one may step inside any marked area.
5. Each toss must take place over some part of the marked area.
6. No ones feet may move when that person has possession of an object.
7. Dropped objects may not be retrieved.
8. No one may toss an object to the person on their immediate left or right.

#### NOTES

9. You may ask the facilitator up to three clarifying questions. If you have a question, you should first ask everyone in the group.
10. You have     minutes to plan or practice before your one minute timed transfer. It is suggested that you designate a timekeeper.

## **Memory**

This is a community building activity you can do with your students to show them connections they have with each other that may surprise them and elicit some interesting conversations and groupings in your classroom:

-Each student receives 5 index cards.

-On the LINED side, students write one thing they feel defines them/a group that's important to them that they are a part of/etc. The students write one thing per card. Essentially, students are writing anything they feel defines them (gamer, red head, Latino, gay, brother, etc). They can write anything they feel identifies them.

-After they have written one identifier per card, the students get into groups of 4.

-The cards are collected and mixed up.

-The cards go back on the table in rows and the first student selects 2 cards.

-The words on the cards do not have to match each other, they have to 'match' by the student identifying with both cards. If the cards match the student (ie-Mikela finds woman and teacher), she can pick those cards up and hang on to them. If the cards do not match her (ie-Mikela finds Black and man), she leaves those cards in the same place she found them.

-The students collect cards and at the end they organize their pile in order from what they identified with most to the least.

-The students then discuss with each other why the card they chose was most important to them. Students can choose to share stories or not.

-Once the cards are discussed, students can give the cards back to the original owner and find out why they wrote the card.

The purpose of the activity is to show students connections they have with each other they may not otherwise be aware of because they may not speak to each other regularly or at all. It is a great tool to build a sense of community in your classroom. Feel free to modify the activity to your needs if you have more standard academic aspirations as this activity can be modified fairly easily!