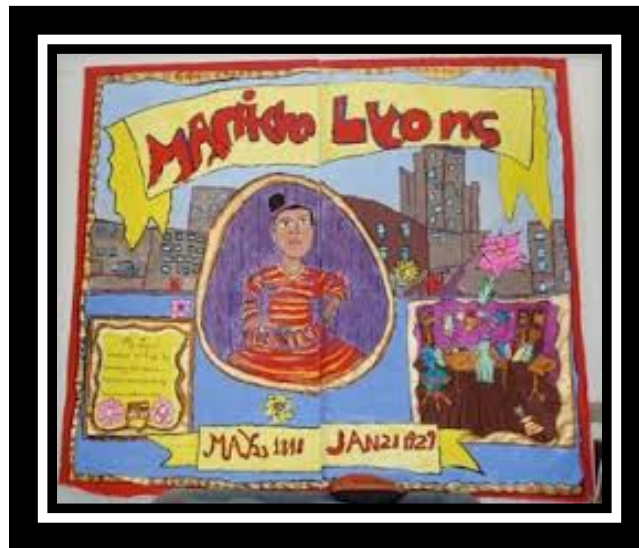




Lyons Community School

Brooklyn, New York

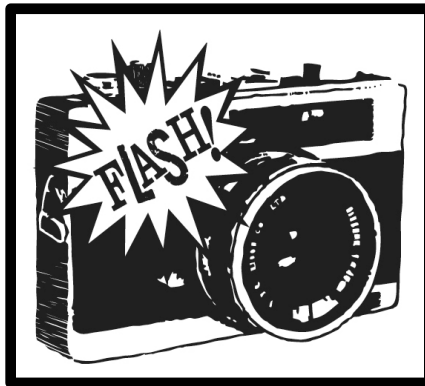


[Snapshot]

School: Lyons Community School

Borough: Brooklyn, NY

Author: Carmen Figueroa, Student, Graduated in 2014



Grade level: 6-12

Number of students: 520

Metal detectors: No

Number of School Safety Agents: 5

Demographics of students (according to *Inside Schools*): Black 39%
Hispanic 58% Asian: 1% White 2%

More about Lyons can be found in the following places:

- ✓ *Growing Fairness*, Teachers Unite's 2013 documentary:
TeachersUnite.net/GrowingFairness
- ✓ Dignity in Schools-New York's Case Study Reports from 2011 and 2013:
 - TinyURL.com/CaseStudy2011
 - TinyURL.com/CaseStudy2013

[Testimonial]

Author: Carmen Figueroa, Student, Graduated in 2014



Restorative Justice was always about repairing the harm I did to my community and the people around me. Being a part of Peer Mediation, Justice Panel and Youth Court was the start of me seeing my community as a puzzle, and I had to give the pieces of my puzzle back to be able to see the bigger picture.

I can talk for hours about the memories I have from when I was younger, and all the mistakes I made. But the memories that I cherish the most are the ones where I was interacting with the students at Lyons; being able to walk down the hall and everyone knowing my name, or when the younger students would come and tell me they needed mediation. Also, being able to see students that I mediated realizing that their friendships were more important than listening to gossip.

Restorative justice gave me a chance to be important and have a purpose. I realized a year after I had graduated that it wasn't only to give back to the community, but to benefit my own way of thinking. Being an intern at Teachers Unite gave me the chance to see Restorative Justice in a new way. I wouldn't have thought it would be this hard to be able to implement RJ in schools. I was able to talk to teachers and have conversations about their jobs. I easily understood the thinking of the students in school because I was a kid myself, but being able to understand the teachers too was something I gained through this work, and has ultimately helped to write this toolkit.

This all happened because people believed in me and spent a countless amount of time with me. I've seen the change in myself after years of work. This goes to show that no matter what, don't give up on any of the kids you

teach. For whoever is reading this, remember: if we are given the right tools to blossom, we will.

About Restorative Justice at Lyons

Lyons started Restorative practices in 2007. Mediation and advisories were the first “restorative practices” they started. As years passed, those programs evolved, but it was just in the last two years that school started considering their school a true “restorative justice school.” When I asked what the main priority was at Lyons, the Restorative Justice Coordinator, Darren, who was also a dean for eight years, said, “The main priority is to get the kids ready for college, which helps them prepare for life. Also, giving the students the tools to be good people.” It’s more than teaching the students how to do well in class; it’s also about helping them develop their own personalities.

Lyons is committed to keep growing within their community. When I first came to Teachers Unite as a intern, I would hear teachers ask, “What if my principal does not accept Restorative Justice in the school?” This made me think about the role of the Principal in R.J. Talking to Taeko Onishi, the Principal of Lyons, has made things more clear for me. Taeko said her job is to be supportive for the R.J workers, and also to make the structures in the school accessible so those people can do their work. For example, having longer classes and classes being co-taught. One thing that she does that was interesting to me, and useful for Restorative Practice as a whole, is Taeko writes about her thoughts and reflections in a letter that she sends to the rest of the school every week(see example in tools section). This letter is read to the students during advisories. The best part of these letters when I was in high school was seeing my name sometimes on them. This made me feel important and want to do more.

“ [Restorative justice] helped me understand why people do what they do. This helped me like people more.” - Taeko, Principal

Circles at Lyons

Circles are used throughout the community at Lyons. They help with being able to know people’s names, interact with others more, and help kids feel empowered. Circles also help students to know they have the power to help their peers. Teachers and parents are also included in doing circles.

Advisory is the first times students are in circles. Every student schedule has 4 to 5 slots of advisory time during the week. To start off advisory, the teacher asks the students questions like, “What did you do this weekend?” or “Rate your mood with one hand, 1 being the worst 5 being the best,” etc.

The deeper circles are the **Repairing Harm Circles**, which is where the “offending” students, the “harmed” students, and the community work to repair the harm. These circles are for coming together to hear what happened during the situation, giving the person who did the harm the opportunity to listen and speak about the situation with the people in their community, and given the harmed a chance to listen and reflect.

Return Circles bring together the supporters of the student who has been absent, to help show a student what is possible to do to catch up with school and to plan for him/her moving forward.

Lyons uses circles at every opportunity they can (see examples in the tools section). **New students** have circles, where potential teachers that might be in the student’s life when coming to school show the kid that they have something to offer to the school. This makes the transition easier.

Lyons even had a few **parent circles** this past year and they came out great. This took a lot of preparation to work, but was worth it for the student. An example Darron spoke about was when a student was having trouble in school and his teachers were concerned. They decided to bring in his family (mom, dad, grandmother) a friend, and a teacher to have a circle with. Him having multiple people helps the student and community see the whole picture of what they’re struggling with and what the student is capable of. During circles like this, people discuss strategies that can help the student be more successful. They are there to be the student’s support team, showing how much they care by having a conversation with them.

“[Restorative justice means] believing that people could change no matter how long it takes them to get there.” - Darron, R&J coordinator

Justice Panel

Students are brought to Justice Panel when they break community rules. Justice Panel are students in grades six through twelve who get trained to act as a jury, but instead of guilt or innocence, they are determining what happened and how best to repair any harm that occurred. They receive a brief description of the situation and come up with questions to ask the

student about the situation. They also come up with a sanction so the student is able to repair the harm done to the community and/or the person. The student who broke community rules can bring character witnesses in order to back up their story. The students on the panel gain empathy and critical thinking skills. The student who broke the rules gets the chance to be heard by their peers and to see potential other sides of situation by the questions asked.

The jury is taught to ask open-ended questions. The point is to get as much information from the student, to be able to understand their whole character, and help the jury come up with a better sanction for the student. This sanction is to repair the harm done, but also help the student to have the tools in the future to resolve their own problems. An example Darron explains is the difference between “Why did you do that?” or “What were you thinking?” vs. “Tell me about any problems you might be having?” The first two questions have the feeling of being attacking, while the third question will get you more information and lead you more justly to the root of the problem. This process works more fluently when the kids have more trust in their school, but especially with their peers. In this case, the kids are more likely to accept criticism from other students.

Justice panel is run differently with the middle school and high school. The high school gets trained within 3 days, the middle-school students finish in about a week. This all depends on if they get the material done (see training materials in the tools section). Lyons has figured out how to train the whole school to be able to do Justice Panel. The Middle Schools JPs are held during advisories. The high school class happens four times a week last period.

Here’s an example of a situation at Lyons that was brought to Justice Panel: The Middle School Students at Lyons were performing their play when a group of high school students got into a huge argument. Many high school students left the auditorium and went to the lobby of the school, and when they left, many more followed. In this process, they disrupted the whole play. All the students that began the loud disruptive argument went to Justice Panel. The panel heard what happened and decided that the students in the argument had to apologize to the cast of the play. The main students involved in the disruption had to set up a party and buy the snacks for the cast of the play.

The kids that had the argument had a circle with the middle school cast and the two main high school students involved in the incident. They asked the cast questions like “How long did you work on the play?” trying to show the cast that the older students cared. Darron spoke to the cast after the circle and they said it was difficult for them see if the older students were

really being vulnerable. He had to explain how hard it was for the older students to sit and talk about what they did wrong.

“[Restorative Justice means] showing the kids I’m human and we’re going to figure this out together... In the kids’ minds they will see that it’s ok to make mistakes in my class because the teacher is too.”

- David Gerold, 8th grade teacher

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation has been at Lyons since it opened. In pairs, mediators help the students in conflict talk through their issues and come to a restorative resolution for all parties. Peer mediators also gain trust in their peers to build a community within the students. Students can request a mediation or be assigned to one. The training has evolved over time. Lyons now has a class that teaches the students to be mediators. The training consists of mock mediations to teach the students how to approach the situations in the best possible manner. Peer mediation and Justice Panel have similarities, but they also have differences. Peer mediation is far more likely to be for two people, while Justice Panel would be for when the whole community would be harmed by one person or a group. In mediation there's usually no sanction for any of the students, while in Justice Panel most students have a consequence to repair the harm done to the community.

The mediators are sometimes briefed about the situation beforehand. Lyons has a layout on the rules that have to be set at the start of the mediation: Each student has to introduce themselves and say what grade they are in. One person speaks at a time. Everything that is said here is confidential. We won't tell our friends and you won't tell yours. Don't curse at each other unless it's in the story.

Next, each student is given a chance to tell their story and the mediators take turns to rephrase what they hear. This is to make sure everyone in the room understands what was said. Lyons students start to rephrase with “What I’m hearing you say is “ Another important factor is body language. Being aware of that informs you on how the student is doing and what they might be feeling. The mediator makes sure everyone is attentively listening and paying attention to the student talking. When the mediation is reaching the end, the mediators ask the students if they're ok with going back to class, and if after the mediation there would be a fight, making sure there will be no more disruption during school. After the mediation, the dean's briefly talk to the mediators about what happened, also check up on the students that were mediated.

Here's an example from Lyons: There's a class called Urban Workshop, where the kids go out in the community to help build things. One of the kids got into argument with a guy from the garden they were working at. Lyons had a circle with the student afterward. They also went to the garden and had a mediation with the guy and student. The mediation between the two turned out great. It was a great example of how this method works out in the real world.

“ I know he could do anything in his life, but I was worried about keeping him out of jail.” - Takeo, Principal

Peer Mentorship

Lyons uses peer mentorship as an alternative to suspension. The younger students shadow their mentor throughout the school day, attending high school classes. Lyons uses this method to teach the younger students how different it's going to be when they reach high school.

When I was still at Lyons, a middle school student wasn't doing well in school. There was something that was going on in her life that made her struggle. I had mentored her a few times before, but this time she asked me to be her mentor for the rest of the school year. When she was in class with me she'd work on her assignments from her class. Even though she wasn't in class we didn't want her to fall more behind with her class work. Sometimes my teachers would include her in the class discussion, after she would always tell me “Wow, the work you're doing seems really hard.” I was glad she felt that way. I didn't want to scare her, but I wanted her to know that it's harder than she thought it was going to be in high school. I would take her to class and stay for a while to make sure she was following the rules and not leaving class.

When she wouldn't be feeling good and needed a break, I would find a room for her to sit in to cool off. Her teachers and friends would see me and talk to me and tell me how she was doing. After mentoring her for a while, things were looking better for her. They informed me that she would be able to pass to the next grade. I was giving her a ear to listen too, which is the most important thing because sometimes there isn't anyone to listen. This wasn't only for her to learn from but for me too, I learned to be more aware of my decisions even if I thought no one's watching because there's always someone watching.

“ I am supporting an organization [The DOE] that I don't agree with but I'm willing to be in it to change it” – Taeko, Principal

Peer Group Connection

On the Peer Group Connection website from the center for supportive schools, this is how they explained their organization: “Peer Group Connection (PGC) is an evidence-based and school-based program that supports and eases students’ transition from middle to high school. This program taps into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming freshmen.

For more information visit the Center for Supportive Schools website: <http://supportiveschools.org/solutions/peer-group-connection/>

Lyons paired up with the Peer Group Connection for the first time this year. The class would be with 11th and 12th grade students. The curriculum the PGC gave was to help the older students be mentors to the younger students. They would teach them how to run circles with the 9th grade advisories.

Advice

“Starting small means you’re starting big. If you're starting with something small like mediation, this actually means you need to make a big shift in your school. For example the kids would have to miss some class times to do these mediations. Everyone would need to be on board to be able to do that. - Darron, R&J Coordinator

Starting off with circles in advisory and town hall will help create/build a community in the school. This would help the kids respect the school and the people in it. - Darron, R&J Coordinator

Q: How do you deal with the kid coming back to class after getting pulled out? A: Having a conversation with the student before coming back to class, connecting the student with another kid that has been in the class. – David, 8th grade math teacher

“How are you keeping it real with the students, not just giving them direction but telling them why? For example not just telling the kid they can't go to the bathroom for the first 10 minutes of class, but informing them why they can't. They could understand where they are, what is actually happening.” - David Gerold 8th grade math teacher

“There are some days that RJ is going to be hard being better at recognizing the situation to avoid being punitive. It takes a lot of time and effort from a lot of people. It can take more effort and energy to make all of that happen cohesively. It’s the kind of process you cant rush.” -Darron, RJ Coordinator

Suspension Data:

Lyons incidents and suspensions have dropped a great deal over the past several years:

School Year	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Total
2013 - 2014 to date	4	1	21	18	4	48 (74)
2012 - 2013	4	9	21	67	5	106
2011 - 2012	3	7	50	42	3	127
2010 - 2011	15	24	77	58	5	179

Suspension	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14 (to date)
Principal’s	144	93	98	47	31	16 (25)
Principal’s per student	0.430	0.192	0.181	0.113	0.057	0.030 (0.046)
Superintendent’s	44	31	33	14	19	7 (11)
Superintendent’s per student	0.131	0.064	0.061	0.026	0.035	0.013 (0.020)

[Tools]



Principal's Letter

Taeko frequently writes letters for the whole school in order to share news as well as reflections on the growing community. Below is a letter from 2010:

Dear Lyons extended community, Events of the week:

So much news it is hard to know where to start. I'll start with what I find to be the most exciting. Lynn Perez and Angela Arroyo, our awesome and wonderful sub paras who have been with us for a long time, were finally able to be hired by the DOE. They will now become official and permanent subs. Congratulations to them and yippee skippee for us.

And on to other wonderful news. We started third quarter and second semester this week. Though it was an exhausting week, it seemed to start off well in so many respects. I just send in some pictures and little blurbs to update our website, so I'm feeling a bit repetitive, of course, important things deserve repeating. We had our first official dance last night. Whooo hooo.... It was a smashing success. We had about 110 middle school students show up as well as large cadre of our staff. While it took them a while to get dance (we were probably all glad in the long run as it allowed for there to be less time when their inhibitions were lower), they were clearly have a great time, running back and forth, eating pizza, lining the walls, bumping and grinding (quite literally) and watching others bump and grind. Massive shout outs for everyone who stayed to help clean up (Yanira, Carmen, Ryan, Dan E, Alana, Kasi, Sabrina, Nicholas, Alexis) and particularly Frye, who organized the permission slips, Kelly and David G who really thought through all the details and did much of the shopping, and Evan for being a master DJ, and never losing his cool with our lovelies as they badgered him for their favorite songs. And of course all the others who stayed as long as they could to help out, including Theresa on bathroom patrol.

Earlier that afternoon Frye did his descriptive review of J, our beloved 8 grade student, and though I had to leave early to help with the dance, I think everyone who came learned a ton about her and helped us think about ways we can better help her.

At the same time, our high school boys' basketball team was having their first scrimmage of the year. If the game is any indication of where the year is headed, we seem to be in good shape. Darron shared with me that the final score was 40 - 81. Ouch. Our team, made up mostly of returning players showed off their new uniforms (that's right, white, purple and green!) and played like a team. Nice.

Even earlier that afternoon and on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons

as well, our 8 graders really came through with their Field Studies performances about immigration. While seeing their excitement over their work was thrilling, there was really nothing more priceless than Pedro's expressing the entire time he was watching them perform. The students in each class wrote a play collaboratively, one about the Puerto Rican "immigrant" experience, one about Chinese immigration and one about Irish immigration. Each one had its own style that was greatly enhanced by the various work that went into making the show a success. One group worked on creating the set, using an LCD projector the group was able to make the scenery for each scene from country to country and in and out of hard times. Curtains created a feeling of true theater in the dance room, and the playbills created by the media group gave audience members a sense of the scope of the work and learning that went into this project, as well as sense of authenticity to the performance. The leads in each play, Chris B and Kimberly, Carmen and Joshua B, Chris A and Ashley S gave some strong performances and were supported by truly supportive castmates. Without a doubt it felt like the most coherent and engaged our 8 graders have been since they started at Lyons. Exciting stuff.

Then of course on Thursday night there was the other big event for the week. The play Clue was performed by some of our 9 graders who were in a joint MAP 1 and 2 class of iBrians 2 quarter. Talk about good energy and stepping up to the plate. Those of us who were lucky enough to see the performance were treated to a performance that elicited genuine laughter and surprise. There were moments of students truly embracing their roles and getting lost in their characters. What was most striking was how supportive the students were of each other. Magically, but of course not the result of magic. There was a real sense of camaraderie that I think everyone in the room felt. iBrian already sent out his thanks, but the set pieces created by Urban Workshop and the painting done by the MAP 2 painting classes really added to overall show and I think we are well on our way to establishing a serious theater group and program here at Lyons.

Okay, I was going to switch thoughts, but I have to share this story: two seventh graders were just in here talking about how great the dance was last night. They wanted to have another one, and soon. They asked what needed to happen, could they have a Easter dance. I said, well in January you guys earned enough to have the dance, the HS only got about 40 dollars and you guys got about 400, so they haven't had a dance yet. If you keep doing what you are doing and do even more, then we are talking business we could be having dances all the time. Jason: so you mean we just come to school on time and we can have another dance? "Yup." "I'll be here early every day." "We'll you got to get everyone else here early too." "Okay. We are doing to do that. That's easy. Get everyone to get to school early. That's the plan."

Other thoughts:

What a difference a week can make. Even if all the tough decisions that were eating me from the inside out are still on the table, there is nothing like having the kind of week we had to remind you of why we do what we do, and just what an incredible amount of good we are doing and just what kind of community we have, and continue to establish here at Lyons. As I was watching our 8 graders through much of this week, I did a lot of thinking about how this coming year we will have our first group of 8 graders coming to our school in 9 grade. While we sometimes think of that happening with some trepidation, this week I've been thinking of all the benefits, and also just how much better prepared we might have been for our 9 grade if we really saw how our 8 graders act. I mean I think about how we treated our 9 graders that first year and how they are just a couple of months older than our 8 graders are right now.

Nicholas, Emily and I met with a representative of Restorative Practices on Friday. They are coming to do two workshops with us, the first two weekends in Saturday. It was an interesting conversation, mostly because it brought out some of not so latent frustration with educational organizations that try help you fix the school. Not against Restorative Practices, in fact I think they are quite amazing, but I think it got me thinking about how this school is trying to be different, and wondering if we actually are any different or whether we just like to think we are. It always intrigues me to hear other people talk about what makes Lyons different, what makes us special. Everyone wants to think their school is different, is something special, just like we want to believe that about ourselves. And on one level of course that is true. I often hear people talk about us trying to be progressive school, one that cares for students and staff, people talk about the freedom to teach as one sees fit, absence of a dictatorship... see even here I don't know how much I'm conjecturing what others perceive.

As much as I would like all those things to be true, that is not what I see as being the heart of Lyons. Yet, as I think my thoughts, I'm not sure how explicit these coming ideas are, they aren't even that obvious to me, so why should they be apparent to everyone else. However, if we want to continue remaking and creating this school, trying to understand these underlying ideas seems crucial.

I think this school is predicated on a belief that people are fundamentally good. (I know people don't want another Locke/Hobbes treatise, but.... It is relevant) People, both adults and children. That if people aren't doing what is in their own and their community's best interest that something is wrong. And by wrong I don't mean bad or blameful, I simply mean that there is a reason they aren't doing what would be most helpful to themselves and those around them. Part of this is a fundamental problem

with the idea of both caring for oneself and others. At times these ideas can come into serious conflict with each other at times. Does caring for yourself outweigh caring for others? We tend to greatly revere people who care for others more than themselves, but there is always that counter argument that you can't help others if you can't care for yourself (but that is still predicated on the idea that you "should" be caring for others as the great goal). Anyway, this isn't really where I wanted to go with this idea, but it is a worthwhile and crucial tangent.

Back to the school. You want a place where people are doing what they should be doing because they know it is what they should be doing. In other words the hope is for a community of people who are internally and self motivated. However, we know that not to be the case, so we create structures and try to create habits that will make it easier for people to do what they need to and should do. We rely on reflective practice, peer pressure, conscience, work ethic, and even love to get the work done. However, what happens when that isn't enough? It isn't enough for a plethora of reasons, there is simply too much work to be done is the most obvious and truest of answers. However, there are other reasons as well, and of course there are other ways to get work done, the most fundamental being control (or whatever word you want to use for such an idea). This a job, and when I say something like please do your attendance for after school, some people do it, but when I say, you won't get your per session unless you give me that attendance sheet, amazingly I get those attendance sheets so much faster. We ask folks to update google goals, or other such things and some people do, but what will it take to get everyone to do it? What is one to think? What are we doing wrong that things that need to get done don't get done? Folks will say that there isn't anything we can do to make them, get their grades in on time. They feel bad and say they are working on it. However, maybe there is something we can do? We could apply more pressures, more consequences. Believe me the idea is tempting, and is probably even something most people would agree to, and in all actuality will be something we end up implementing for the good of the school, etc... Yet, I want that line to be something always worth questioning. I guess what I'm saying is I don't want to be making those choices without thinking about the consequences, and when I say consequences I don't just mean morale being lower, etc... but about giving up on something worth fighting for, I mean trying to really created a paradigm shift around work and possibly life. This is the way in which I want to be a different school, not just that we love each other more and trust each other more and we support each other more, but that what we are capable with under our own free will is far more powerful that what we might do under duress.

When I say it like that is sound so absurd, but I realize it is how I operate, how I think about virtually ever decision I make, so perhaps that's relevant

to those trying to understand why we do what we do, and why things sometimes feels so frustrating because how does that not become a fuzzy line all the time. Anyway, as always I love to hear what people think.

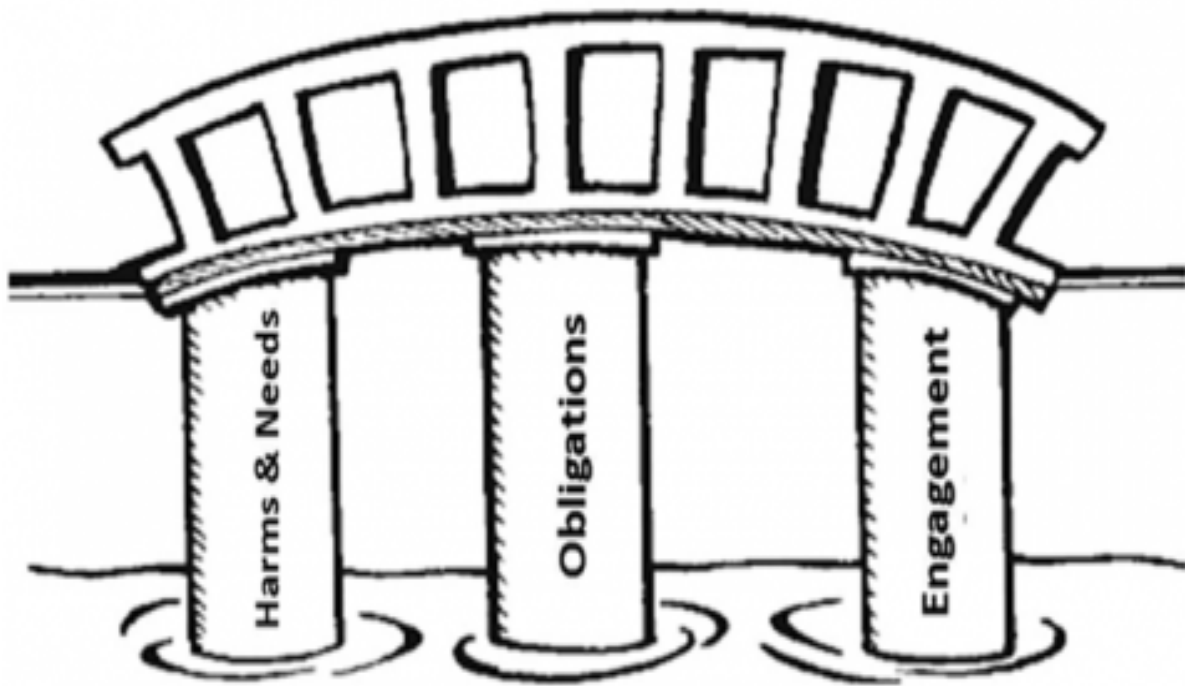
with love, taeko



THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO

PLEASE RETURN WITH CARE

Justice Panel Training Guide



Dear Students,

At Lyons we use a restorative approach to solving problems in our community. Justice Panel, which you are a member of, is a part of our restorative system. Today you will learn a little bit about how Justice Panel works and why we believe in solving our community's problems in this way.

Restorative justice is based on an old, commonsense understanding of wrongdoing. According to our understanding,

- When people break school rules, it harms students and teachers, and it harms the relationships that we have with each other.
- When a person breaks a school rule, it creates an "obligation."
- The main obligation that is created is to put right the wrongs.

Behind this understanding of wrongdoing is an assumption about our school community: **we are all interconnected**. All of us are connected to each other in a web of relationships. When someone breaks a school rule it causes a wound in the school community, a tear in the web of relationships. We believe harms such as littering, throwing things, bullying, cursing, disrupting class, and many other of the harms that occur in school, cause ripples that disrupt the whole web.

Because we are all connected to one another, we have obligations and responsibilities towards one another. The person who causes the harm needs to "put things right." The harmer must repair the damage that has been done to the harmed. But because we are all connected, once we talk to the harmer about what he or she has done, we may as a community see that we have obligations to "put things right" for the harmer as well.

When we are looking at a case for Justice Panel, we need to ask ourselves three important questions:

1. Who has been harmed?
2. What are their needs?
3. Whose obligations are these?

Three Pillars of Restorative Justice

1. *Restorative Justice focuses on harm.*

- Restorative justice thinks about rule breaking as a harm to people and communities. Instead of trying to make sure that students who break rules “get what they deserve,” we think about who was harmed by the student’s actions, and attempt to address that person’s needs.
- We also need to consider the needs of the harmer and why they might have chosen to harm others. We need to address their needs as well, when possible.
- Finally, we should think about how the community was harmed by this one person’s actions, and we must think about how to repair the community.

2. *Wrongs and harms result in obligations.*

- When someone harms our school community, they need to work to understand what they did wrong and how it affected others.
- They have to make things right as much as possible.

3. *Restorative Justice is based on participation.*

- We have a Justice Panel because it is important for the person who causes harm to participate in a discussion about his or her actions. Rather than just hand down a punishment, the panel works with the student to support him or her to understand what he/she did, how it harmed the community, and how to set it right.
- Members from the school community who have been directly harmed by the student may appear on the Justice Panel to talk about their experiences.
- As members of the Justice Panel, you represent the school’s community, your role is to understand the issue from all sides and support the repair of the community.

Thank you for taking on this responsibility in our school.

Sincerely,

The staff of Lyons Community School

*From The Little Book of Restorative Justice, by Howard Zehr, pp. 19 - 24

Sample Justice Panel Case Brief

Brenda V & Esmil O, 10th grade – 11/15/14

Brenda and Esmil got into a shouting match during a test. In the middle of them arguing, Brenda intentionally knocked over Esmil's water onto his test. Esmil became very angry and started to curse at Brenda. Brenda then left the room and Esmil refused to leave when his teacher (David) asked him to go to a dean.

Questions to ask the panel...

What are people's initial reactions (including questions) to what they've read?

Who was affected and how?

What questions do people want to ask and of whom?

Back Story:

Here's what Brenda and Esmil say happened...

Brenda – He came in late and he was making a whole bunch of noise getting into his seat. I really needed to get a good grade on that test so I told him he was too loud and then he told me to “shut the fuck up”. Then we started arguing and he told me he would slap me and nobody's scared of him so I knocked his water over because I didn't want to get in trouble for touching him.

Esmil – I came in late and I was taking off my coat and my book bag and she came with a attitude like “If you come late you better do it quietly” and I ignored her and then she said something else when I sat down and that's when I told her to shut the fuck up. I did say I would slap her but nobody was gonna slap her. I was just mad. Then she spilled my water all over my pants and I didn't want to hear nothing after that.

Post Statement Discussion

Based on what you've just heard, what suggestions do you have for appropriate next steps?

Once everyone has given their suggestions for appropriate sanctions, run through the list of options with these questions in mind:

How does this (or these) obligation(s) serve the needs of the offended?

How does this (or these) obligation (s) serve the needs of the offender?

How does this (or these) obligation(s) serve the needs of the community?

How did the panel decide in this case?

Suggestions:

1. Esmil and Brenda should have a mediation
2. Esmil should apologize to Brenda in a circle with the class
3. They should both write apology letters to their teacher and apologize to the class
4. There should be a circle in the class where Brenda and Esmil explain to their classmates what happened, why, and how they resolved it
5. They should have detention for disrupting their class during a test - Brenda (1 day), Esmil (3 days for cursing at Brenda and for not leaving the room when he was asked)
6. They should both have community service for one day for disrupting their class during a test

***Based on the guideline questions, which of these options do you think the panel chose?**

***Which of the suggestions do you think there was debate over?**

Obligations the Panel Chose

1. Esmil and Brenda should have a mediation

2. Esmil should apologize to Brenda in a circle with the class

3. They should both write apology letters to their teacher and apologize to the class

4. There should be a circle in the class where Brenda and Esmil explain to their classmates what happened, why, and how they resolved it

5. They should have detention for disrupting their class during a test - Brenda (1 day), Esmil (3 days for cursing at Brenda and for not leaving the room when he was asked)

6. They should both have community service for one day for disrupting their class during a test

Why do you think the panel chose these obligations?

If you were on this panel and you disagreed with any of these obligations, how would you try to reach consensus with the rest of the group?

The Art of Active Listening

Active listening is one of the most important communication skills we can develop. It can enhance our relationships with friends and family as well as improve our ability to lead groups. Active listening requires the ability to put yourself in the shoes of the speaker and pay attention to his/her opinions/issues.

Step One:

There are specific skills we can use when actively listening. Review the Active Listening Guidelines together and discuss how easy it is to fall into the traps that are listed.

Step Two:

On a note card, students write down a challenge they anticipate having as a member of the Justice Panel.

Step Three:

Students form active listening triads. Each person will have the opportunity to play the role of Speaker, Listener and Observer. *The Speaker* talks about the challenge he/she anticipates having for five minutes, while *the Listener* actively listens and *the Observer* takes notes in the Observation Chart on the next page.

Discussion Questions

What do you realize gets in the way of being an active listener? For example, what distracts you? Examine your private conversations?

What was it like having someone actively listen while you talked about a concern that you have?

How can you continue to develop your listening skills and become a more active listener?

As a member of this group, what agreements can you make now to support one another in listening more actively?

What are some of the challenges that we shared that warrant more discussion as a large group? (Create a list of these challenges and discuss them.)

Active Listening Guidelines

Active listening allows you to put yourself “in the shoes of another person,” and pay attention to his/her concerns.

Practice the following active listening interventions:

1. Paraphrasing:

“This is what I hear you saying... is that right?”

2. Asking for elaboration:

“Could you say some more about that?”

3. Making supportive comments:

“You seem to be very frustrated.” or “I can see how difficult this has been for you.”

4. Giving nonverbal support:

Good eye contact. Nodding in understanding. Sympathetic expression.

5. Asking probing questions:

“What do you mean by that?”

6. Summarizing:

“I hear you saying several things: first _____ , second _____ , and finally _____.”

Avoid the following traps:

1. Giving your own opinions:

“If it were up to me, I would...”

2. Making generalizations:

“Oh, that's common for many people.”

3. Interjecting your own story:

“Oh, me too! I remember when...”

4. Agreeing or disagreeing with what the speaker is saying. This includes making judgments:

“I agree with you, they should (not)...” or “He never should have...!”

5. Giving advice:

“You ought to...” or “Have you thought about doing...?”

Active Listening Observation Chart

Jot down an example of each of the active listening skills that you observe.

Active Listening Skill	Examples
Paraphrasing	
Asking for Elaboration	
Making Supportive Comments	
Giving Nonverbal Support	
Asking Probing Questions	
Summarizing	

Active Listening Reflection

SPEAKER

- Was the listener actively listening to you? What did she/he do that indicated this? (Give examples.)
- Did you have complete control over what you discussed and did not discuss? What happened that leads you to this conclusion?
- What was the experience like having the time to talk about whatever you wanted?

LISTENER

- What was the easiest about actively listening to the speaker? Most difficult? Provide one or two examples.
- Did you interject your own opinions or stories?
- What did you learn about the speaker that you did not know before this conversation?

OBSERVER

- What was easiest for you about being an observer of the conversation? Most difficult? Provide examples.
- Report your observations, remembering to provide examples and to avoid generalizations or advice.

Appropriate Speak for a Panel Member

One of the things we must remember when we are conducting our sessions is that it can be an intimidating experience for a student to sit in front of the Justice Panel - for the offender as well as the offended. It is important that we speak to every student that comes before the panel in a respectful and non-judgmental way.

Here again are the student statements from the sample case between Brenda V and Esmil O. Following each statement will be a list of responses from members of the panel. Have students select which response they think is the most appropriate, then have them explain what is inappropriate about the other responses and how they can be reworded in a respectful, non-judgmental way.

Brenda - He came in late and he was making a whole bunch of noise getting into his seat. I really needed to get a good grade on that test so I told him he was too loud and then he told me to "shut the fuck up". Then we started arguing and he told me he would slap me and nobody's scared of him so I knocked his soda over because I didn't want to get in trouble for touching him.

Responses from the panel:

- a) Is it your job or the teacher's job to tell Esmil to come into the room quietly?
- b) Even though you didn't hit him, did you think spilling the water on him was going to make things better?
- c) Do you think that he was intentionally being loud to distract you or other people?
- d) Once he cursed at you, you should have ignored him or told the teacher.

The best response here is **c) Do you think that he was intentionally being loud to distract you or other people?**

Why? Because it puts Brenda back into the situation before it escalated, closer to an objective point of view and gets her to think about Emil's perspective and/or motive. The more the offender and the offended understand each other's perspective and/or motives, the closer they will be to resolution.

How can we turn an inappropriate response into an appropriate one?

Turn accusatory questions into inquisitive ones.

Example: **Is it your job or the teacher's job to tell Esmil to come into the room quietly?** could be phrased as **Do you think Esmil might have responded differently if the teacher was the one who told him to come in quietly?**

Acknowledge good choices and ask where they could have made better ones.

Example: **Do you think that he was intentionally being loud to distract you or other people?** could be phrased as **It's good that you were aware enough not to hit Esmil but how else could you have dealt with your frustration other than pouring soda on him?**

Giving advice can be tricky. Even if the advice being given is obviously the right advice, it can still be received as being told what to do. Try turning your advice into a question.

Example: **Once Esmil cursed at you, you should have ignored him or told the teacher.** could be phrased as **After Esmil cursed at you, what could you have done to make sure the situation didn't escalate?**

Lyons Community School Circle Topics

low	Risk Level	open-ended vs. short and sweet	Time of Year	Category	Ideal Grade level	Notes
TOPICS	high, medium or low	open or short	any, early, late, seasonal, returning from break, holiday, endings, beginnings	building community, active listening, feelings, self-esteem, problem solving, academic	all, middle school, high school, reserved	
What do you think makes a good friend?	medium, high	open	any	active listening, building community	all	read - Frog and Toad books by Arnold Loebel - children's books with deep deep ideas about friendship
What do you think makes a happy family?	medium, high	open	any	building community, active listening, feelings	all	this prompt could be pushed asking students to describe their families, asking about what they might wish for in terms of their family. You could also connect this to a family tree project.
What do you like most about yourself?	medium, high	open	any, late	building community, active listening, feelings, self-esteem	all	
What are you afraid of? Why?	medium, high	open	any, late	building community, active listening, feelings	all	You can also deepen this by talking about different types of fears-- the fear of something like a spider versus the fear of not having a place to live. Are these fears different?
What makes you feel safe?	medium, high	open	any, late	building community, feelings	all	
What effects does watching violence have on people?	medium, high	open	any, late	feelings, active listening	all	
What are some examples of prejudice?	medium, high	open	late	building community, active listening	all	
If you found \$100 dollars, what would you do with it?	Medium	open	any	active listening, feelings, problem solving	all	This might prompt a follow-up on the ethics of lost and found; for older students, this can be a springboard for talking about haves, have-nots, and income disparity.
What's a skill you know well enough to teach to someone else? How did you learn it?	Medium	open	any	building community, active listening, self-esteem	all	
Where would like to live?	Medium	short	any	building community, active listening	all	
Who inspires you?	Medium	open	any	building community, active listening	all	
Would you rather laugh on a bicycle or cry in a limousine?	Medium	short	any	feelings	all	
What makes a good friend?	medium	open	any	active listening, feelings, building community	all	
Why do students fight? Why won't other students break it up?	medium	open	any	problem-solving, feelings, building community	all	
What is your favourite room in your home and why?	medium	open	any	self-esteem, building community, feelings	all	
What is something you are optimistic about?	medium	open	any	active listening, building community, feelings	all	
What is something you are pessimistic about?	medium	open	any	problem-solving, active listening, building community, feelings	all	

What is your most indispensable possession and why?	medium	open	any	building community, feelings	all	
What would happen if everyone wore the same clothes?	medium	open	any	active listening, self-esteem	all	
What would you do if a bully bothered you on your way home?	medium	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	step carefully with this one...will likely require teacher management
What would you do if you did very poorly on a test?	medium	open	any	academic, problem solving	all	teachers an encourage students to tell stories/anecdotes as well
What would you do if a friend borrows things from you but never returns them?	medium	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What would you do if you ordered an ice cream cone and you forgot to bring money?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if someone got in front of you when you were in line at the movies?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you dropped the cookie jar and it broke?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if someone said you did something wrong and you didn't?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if someone told you a joke that you don't think is funny?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if a friend comes to your house and his/her mom doesn't know he's/she's there?	medium	open	any	problem solving, feelings	all	
What would you do if you had four math problems marked wrong that were right?	medium	open	any	academic, problem solving	all	
What would you do if you wanted to be friends with someone who spoke no English?	medium	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
If you were a mouse in your house in the evening, what would you see your family doing?	medium	open	any	bulding community, active listening	all	this prompt could get very personal - be ready
If you owned a store, what would you do to discourage people from stealing from you?	medium	short and sweet	any	active listening, problem solving	all	could lead to discussions about human nature
If your friend told you of a secret plan to run away from home, what would you do and why?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	issues of what makes a good friend
What do you think someone your age can do to help reduce the amount of pollution in our environment?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	brainstorm ideas together - come up with an action plan as an advisory to work on - also "What can you do to reduce the amount of garbage at Lyons?"
What do you think should be done to keep people who are under the influence of alcohol off the road?	medium	open	any	problem solving	high school	facilitator may need to site DWI stats and or research to clearly define the problem
What do you think about people who take advantage of others?	medium	open	any	problem solving	all	add- solutions to this?
What do you think about when you can't fall asleep?	medium	short and sweet	any	problem solving	all	present articles on good habits for sleeping (i.e. no soda at night, stay off computer, keep phone in other room)
What do you think courage means?	medium	open	any	active listening	all	
What is more important to you, appearance or personality?	medium	open	any	buliding community, feelings, self-esteem	all	
What is most important to you in a friend--loyalty, generosity, honesty--why?	medium	short	any	building community, feelings	all	
What is something that makes you melancholy?	medium	short	any	building community, feelings	all	
What makes your best friend your best friend?	medium	short	any	building community	all	
What advice would you give to someone who stole something but now feels guilty?	medium	open	any	building community, problem solving	all	

What four things are most important in your life?	medium	open	any	feelings, active listening, building community	all	
What quality do you like about yourself--creativity, personality, appearance--why?	medium	open	any	active listening, self esteem, feelings	all	
What eccentric behaviour in a friend disturbs you the most?	medium	short	any	feelings, building community	all	
How do you feel when you do something wrong?	medium	open	any	feeling	all	
Do you think it is necessary to have alcohol at a party in order to have a good time?	medium	open	any	building community, active listening, feelings	high school	
would you rather lie to a friend to protect them, or tell them the truth even if it hurt them?	medium	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What do you think the world needs now?	medium	open	any, endings	problem solving	all	brainstorm ideas together - decide on prioritizing the list
What do you think the world will be like when you are a grown up?	medium	open	any, endings	active listening	all	
What do you think about ghosts?	medium	open	any, Halloween	active listening	all	
What effects do cigarette and alcohol advertising have on young people?	medium	open	any, late	active listening, problem solving, academic	high school	
What is something that really bugs you?	medium	open	beginnings	active listening, building community	all	
What is something that really makes you angry?	medium	open	beginnings	active listening, building community	all	
What would happen if you loved your neighbour as yourself? What if everyone did?	medium	open	beginnings, endings	building community	all	
Describe your perfect Saturday from morning to night.	Medium	open	early	active listening, feelings, building community	all	
Do you gossip? Is gossiping okay?	Medium	medium	early	building community, active listening, self-esteem	all	You may have to set rules, like "Please do not give use the names of people in this class if you give an example". Make sure students respect the talking piece.
Do you think it is more important in what a person says or what a person does?	Medium	short	early	building community, active listening, self-esteem	all	You could time responses; say, "You have one minute to answer and prove it with an example."
If you started a blog, what would you want to write about and why?	Medium	open	early	self-esteem, active listening, problem solving	high school	Have an example (or two) of a blog on the Promethean.
Is there something you are an expert about?	Medium	short	early	active listening, self-esteem	all	Similar topic: what is something you feel confident you could TEACH to someone else?
What is one thing you are good at? What is one thing you are not good at?	Medium	short	early	building community, active listening, self-esteem	all	This can become a more open-ended discussion if you add: HOW did you get to be so good at that? Who taught you? How did you practice?
What is the earliest memory you have?	Medium	short	early	active listening, feelings	all	Teachable moment about memory: WHY did they remember that earliest memory? What senses were activated or stimulated?
What is your favorite birthday memory?	Medium	open	early	active listening, problem solving, feelings	all	Find out whether kids like to make a big deal about their birthdays or want it kept on the down low.
What is the best birthday present you could receive?	medium	open	early	active listening, building community	middle school, all	can be used as a follow up to "What is the best birthday present you could receive?", teachers might want to note student responses for celebrating birthdays that year.
What would happen if children ruled the world?	medium	open	early	building community, problem solving	all	

What talents do you have?	medium	short	early	self-esteem, building community	all	
How do you deal with being upset (or frustrated or _____) – what do you do when you feel this way?	medium	open	early, any	feelings, problem-solving	all	
What would you do if you were at home and your homework was at school?	medium	open	early, any	problem solving	all	
What are you thankful for?	Medium	open	holiday	active listening, feelings	all	This can be expanded with categories: name 3 people you are thankful for, name three teachers who are thankful for, name three objects you are thankful for, three things you have learned . . .
What would you do if you got a present you didn't like?	medium	open	holiday	problem solving	all	
If you three minutes to talk to the President of the United States, what would you say to him?	Medium	open	late	active listening, problem solving	all	Have a timer.
If you were principal of this school, what would you do?	medium	open	late	community building, problem solving		avoid negative complaining about the school, keep it professional
What advice would you give a new student?	medium	open	returning from break, endings	self-esteem, problem solving, active listening	all	
What do you do to relieve stress?	Medium	short	seasonal	active listening, problem solving	all	Good to ask before state tests or holidays.
If you could do whatever you wanted to right now, what would you do?	low, medium	open	any	active listening, feelings, active listening	all	faciliator may need to push the answers a bit for more specificity
What things do you think are beautiful?	low, medium	open	any	building community, feelings, self-esteem	all	
What do we mean when we say, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence"?	low, medium	open	any	building community, active listening, feelings	all	To make this a little deeper, you could ask students to reflect on a time when they thought the "grass would be greener" but realized that it wasn't.
What does "You can't take it with you" mean?	low, medium	open	any	building community, feelings	all	This could be paired with a bucket list activity
What do we mean when we say, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar"?	low, medium	short	any	building community	all	
What does "There are two sides to every coin" mean to you?	low, medium	open	any	building community, active listening	all	This could be a good prompt to use if you want to reflect on a conflict within the group. It could also be a springboard to talk about good communication skills.
What are junk foods?	low, medium	short, open	any	building community, feelings	all	You could also have students reflect on which junk foods they crave at certain times or how the junk food makes them feel. This could also be done in connection with a nutrition project.
What are some nutritious foods that you like?	low, medium	short, open	any	building community, feelings	all	You could also have students reflect on which healthy foods they crave at certain times or how the healthy food makes them feel. This could also be done in connection with a nutrition project.
What are some rules you have to follow at home?	low, medium	short	any	buliding community	all	This could lead into the ways in which home is different than school in terms of the rules.
If you were five years older you would...	low to medium	open	any	self-esteem, building community	all	this prompt could determine students with optimistic futures versus those with more pessimistic ones
What do you think about the amount of violence on T.V.?	low to medium	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	may need to provide statistics or articles that address this problem
What do you think about people who are inconsiderate of others?	low to medium	open	any	building community	all	
What do you think about having set rules for people to follow?	low to medium	open	any, early	problem solving	all	connect to Lyons
If you had to describe yourself as a colour, which would you choose?	low - could be high	open	any	active listening, self esteem	all	could be loaded for some students

What would you do if an hour before the party you remember you don't have a gift?	low	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What would you do if only one hot dog is left and neither you nor your friend have had one?	low	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What would you do if two of your best friends went to the movies without inviting you?	low	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What would you do if Your friend had a broken leg? How would you cheer him up?	low	open	any	feelings, problem solving	all	
What would you do if your jelly sandwich fell upside down on the floor?	low	short	any	problem solving	all	
Desert island – what person (living or dead) would you bring?	low	open	early	active listening, feelings, problem solving	all	Possible categories: person from your family? person from school? person from history? You can also substitute a private dinner at a restaurant of their choice for the desert island.
How do you feel on the first day of winter? Why?	low	open	seasonal	feelings	all	
How do you feel when it's your birthday? Why?	low	short	any	feelings	all	
How do you feel when you do something that is very good?	low	open	any	feeling	all	
How would you feel if you were going to be on a show? Why?	low	open	any	feelings, active listening	all	
If it were your job to decide what shows can be on t.v., how would you choose?	low	short and sweet	any	active listening	all	faciliator may need to push the answers a bit for more specificity and rationale behind those choices
If there were no rules, what do you think would happen?	low	open	any	active listening	all	may get a lot of Purge (the movie) answers - also tailor the prompt to rules at Lyons and the absence of them
If you can invent one thing, what would it be?	low	open	early	active listening, feelings, problem solving	all	Possible tweaks: one thing to make your life better – one thing to improve your city – one thing to be remembered for – one thing to impress your friends.
If you could break the Guinness Book of Records it would be for?	low	short and sweet	any	active listening	all	go over some weird and far out world records and discuss
If you could give any gift in the world, what would you give and to whom?	low	open	any	active listening	all	
If you could have been someone in history, who would you have been?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?	low	open	any	active listening	all	
If you could only take 3 people with you on a trip around the world, who would you take and why?	low	open	any	active listening, building community	all	
If you could participate in an Olympic event, which one would you choose and why?	low	short and sweet	any, around Olympics	active listening	all	be careful some students don't know many of the events at the Olympics - could go over on promethium some of the lesser known sports
If you received any sum of money as a gift, what would you do with it?	low	open	any, also holidays, birthdays	problem solving?, building community	all	may be tough to get answers beyond spending it on myself
If you were an animal, what would you be and why?	low	open	early	active listening, feelings	all	It helps if you have a set of home-made flash cards with pictures of animals; it might provide more choices for our city kids who might not think of a spider crab, a platypus or a musk ox.
If you were lost in the woods and it got dark, what would you do?	low	short and sweet	any, seasonal	active listening	all	encourage the group to problem solve if certain situations arise - (access to food or shelter) - follow up prompt - if the whole circle was lost in the woods what would we do?
In the event of a zombie (or _____) apocalypse, describe your first move.	low	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	Lots of details here to pursue: how do you travel? who do you travel with? where is your ultimate destination? This could be done as a series of short answers.
Should cellphones be allowed in school?	low	open	any	building community, problem solving	all	
What celebrity would you like to be and why?	low	open	early	active listening, feelings	all	You might want to say that money is not the object.
What colour makes you think of happiness?	low	short	any	building communtiy, feelings	all	
What do we mean when we say, "Hitch your wagon to a star"?	low	short, open	any	building community	all	This could be paired with an activity about aspirations or dreams.

What do you do for exercise?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What do you like to do in your free time?	low	short	early	building community	all	
What do you think about people polluting the environment?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	connects to prompt #136
What do you think about students having to wear school uniforms?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What do you think of 3D movies?	low	short and sweet	any	active listening	all	
What do you think of someone who has bad manners?	low	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	add- What can be done to help this person? Why are manners important?
What does "Clothes make the person" mean to you?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What does "Have your cake and eat it too" mean to you?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What does "still waters run deep" mean to you?	low	short	any	building community	high school	
What does "The early bird gets the worm" mean to you?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What does Canada mean to you?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What has been the most fun activity at school so far?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What if all the streets were rivers?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What if everyone lived under water? Where would people live? What games would children play? What would school be like?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
what if everyone threw their trash on the ground?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What is a good neighbour?	low	open	any	building community	all	
What is something you do well?	low	short	any	self-esteem, building community	all	
What is the best advice you ever received?	low	short	beginnings	active listening, building community	all	
What is the best birthday present you ever received?	low	short	early	active listening	middle school, all	good for quick go-around shares, building/practicing protocol. can be used in conjunction with following question.
What is the best way to treat meddlesome people?	low	open	any	building community, feelings	all	
What is the funniest dinner you've ever had with your family?	low	short	any	building community, active listening	all	
What is the meaning of "He laughs best who laughs last"?	low	short	any	self-esteem, feelings	all	
What is the most ludicrous outfit you can think of?	low	short	any, early	building community,	all	
What is the weirdest thing that you have ever witnessed on the subway?	low	open	any	active listening	all	Follow-up: (for the high school) Are you responsible for the other people on your subway car or bus?
What is your favorite season – why?	low	short	early	active listening, feelings	all	Additional question: Is this your season or your family's season? Are there family traditions during this season?
What is your favorite smell?	low	open	seasonal	active listening, feelings	all	Since smell is used to treat amnesia because of its strong ties to memory, students might want to elaborate – what does their favorite smell remind them of?
What is your favorite TV show and why?	low	short	early	building community, active listening	all	Additional question: who do you watch it with? This addresses the question, is TV a social activity or a private activity? Do you talk while you watch?
What is your favourite book and why?	low	open	any	active listening	all	

What is your favourite day of the week? why?	low	short	any	active listening	all	
What is your favourite holiday? What makes this holiday special?	low	open	seasonal	active listening	middle school	
What is your favourite month? Why?	low	short	any	active listening	all	
What is your favourite song and why?	low	short	any	active listening, building community	all	
What is your favourite time of day?	low	short	any	building community, feelings	all	
What is your idea of a dull evening?	low	open	any	building community, feelings	all	
What is your routine when you get home from school?	low	short	early	building community, active listening, problem solving	all	Additional questions: what would you change about your routine? What something you need to add to your routine?
What kind of animal would you like to be and why?	low	short	early	building community	all	
What kind of pet would you most like to have-- monkey, snake, goat--why?	low	short	any, early	building community, active listening,	all	
What kind of program do you enjoy most on TV-- detective shows, comedies, game shows--and why?	low	short	any, early	building community, active listening	all	
What kind of t.v. commercial would you like to make? Describe it.	low	open	any	building community	all	
What kind of trophy would you like to win? and why?	low	short	any	building community	all	
What makes you laugh?	low	short	any, early	building community, feelings	all	
What parts of nature do you like best?	low	short	any, seasonal	feelings, building community, active listening	all	
What pollutants do you think do the most damage and why?	low	open	any	building community, academic	all	
What should NYC spend more money on? What should NYC spend less money on?	Low	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	Remind the students that they pay tax in NYC and their parents pay city and state income tax. What should that money be spent on?
What things are better than going to school? Why?	low	short	returning from break	building community, feelings	all	
What three words would describe you right now?	low	short	any	feelings, building community	all	
What TV or movie star would you like to invite to your birthday party?	low	short	any	building community	all	This could also be: What fictional character would you want to invite to your birthday party?
What would happen if animals could talk? What are some of the questions you would like to ask animals?	low	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	
What would happen if everyone lived in space? What type of houses would they live in? What type of clothing would they wear? What type of food would they eat? How would they travel?	low	open	any	problem solving	middle school	
What would happen if people never cooperated?	low	open	beginnings	building community	all	
What would happen if there were no cars, buses, trains, boats, or planes? How would this change your life? the world?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would happen if there were no television? Why would this be good? bad?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	

What would happen if you could become invisible whenever you wanted to?	low	short	any	active listening	all	
What would happen if you could fly whenever you wanted? When would you use this ability?	low	open	any	active listening, problem solving	all	MS version might mean flying as in super power, HS version might mean on an airplane
What would happen if you grew taller than trees? How would this change your life? the world?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would the world be like if you could walk up walls and across ceilings?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if the surprise party was for you but you weren't surprised?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you found a magic wand?	low	open	any	listening	all	
What would you do if you found money in the street?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you promised to feed your pet and you didn't?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you saw little bugs in your salad?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you were in the middle of the lake and your boat began to leak?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you were invited to two parties on the same day?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if You were the teacher and everyone forgot their homework?	low	open	any	academic, problem solving	all	this is an eye opening one
What would you do if you woke up in another country and no one could understand you?	low	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if your new shoes felt fine in the store but now they are hurting?	low	short	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do to entertain your family without spending any money?	low	short	any, holiday	building community, problem solving	all	
What would you invent to make life better?	low	short	any	active listening, building community	all	
What's a movie that everyone hates that you love?	low	open	any	active listening, feelings	all	Alternative: a movie you love and a movie you hated. (Takes out the comparative element of the original question.)
Where do you think we should go on our class fieldtrip this year? Why?	low	short	middle, any	building community	all (especially 8th and 12th?)	
Where is your favorite place to go?	low	short	early	active listening, feelings	all	This could be done in concentric circles: favorite place to go (a) in your home, (b) in your neighborhood, (c) at Lyons, (d) in New York City with possible (e) wide open anywhere.
Would you rather have the power of invisibility or the ability to fly?	low	short	early	active listening	all	Do this with a series of super-powers: the ability to move superfast or the ability to stretch? the ability to lift anything or the ability to see through walls? the ability to change size or the ability to always hit a target?
Would you rather live 100 years in the past or 100 years in the future?	low	short	any	building community, active listening	all	Tell them they won't know what the future will be like in 100 yrs. Variations: 200 years, 500 years etc.
Would you rather wake-up with a new body and the same brain or the same body and a new brain?	low	short	any	active listening, feelings	all	Be careful about stepping into the minefield of body image; respect the talking piece. Possible follow-up with older students: what would you change about your body?
Ask a question to the circle (or member of the circle) that you always wanted to know the answer to?	High	open	any	building community, active listening, feelings, self-esteem	all	
Do you know what an eviction is? Do you know what foreclosure is? Do you see these things in your neighborhood?	High	open	any	building community, active listening, feelings, self-esteem	all	
If your parents saw a condom in your wallet/bag, would they be upset?	High	open	any	active listening, feelings	high school	
Think of a person in your life who has your back (Don't name them!) What are three words you would use to describe them?	High	short	any	active listening, feelings, building community	all	

What's something you are really afraid of in the future? Not worried or concerned, but really afraid?	High	open	any	active listening, feelings, building community	all	
Where do you see yourself after high school?	High	short	any	active listening, feelings, building community, self-esteem	all	
What is the worst thing parents can do to their children?	high	open	any	problem-solving, self-esteem, building community, feelings	all	
What is something that makes you feel sad?	high	open	any	feelings, self-esteem	all	
What would you say if someone told you it was all right to steal from a large department store?	high	open	any	problem solving	all	
What would you do if you saw a friend cheating--report it, confront the friend, nothing--and why?	high	open	any	problem solving	all	
What do you think your friends say to each other when you're not around?	high	open	any	self-esteem	all	brings up issues of gossip, talking behind someone's back
What is something you dislike about yourself?	High	open	late	personal, self-esteem	all	yes
What is...						
What if...						
What do you think...						
What...misc.						
How...						
How do you feel when you play a trick on someone?						
How would you feel if a new child moved into your neighbourhood?						
How do you think the new child would feel?						
How do you feel when you have had a fight with your best friend?						
How do you think your friend felt?						
How do you feel when you are in bed with the lights out?						
How do you feel when you want something very badly and you cannot have it? Why is this so important to have?						
How do you feel on a warm sunny day?						
How do you feel when you stay with a babysitter?						
How do you feel when you're leaving home on vacation?						
How do you feel when you sleep at someone's house?						
How do you feel during a thunderstorm?						
How do you feel on the first day of school?						
How do you feel when your parents are upset with you? Why do they become upset with you?						

How do you feel on Thanksgiving? What are you thankful for?						
How do feel on (any holiday)?						
How do you feel when something scares you? What do you do when this happens?						
How would you feel if someone told you that you were his or her best friend?						
How do you feel about your appearance? How would you change the world to make it better?						
How do you think eating junk food affects you? How do you have the most fun--alone, with a large group, with a few friends--and why?						
Explain how to play your favorite game. How would you describe your house to someone who has never visited there before?						
I wish...						
I wish I had a million... Then I would...						
I wish I had one... because						
I wish I could be like.... This person is special because....						
I wish to be a _____ when I grow up. Then I will....						
I wish there were a law that said..... This would be a good law because....						
I wish I could forget the time I because....						
I wish trees could..... because....						
I wish I could see..... because....						
I wish I could learn..... because....						
I wish I didn't have to eat..... I don't like this food because.....						
I wish everyone would learn to Then everyone would.....						
I wish I never.....						
I wish I had one more chance to..... Then I would.....						
I wish there was an electric.....						
I wish I had enough money to.....						
I wish everyone loved.....						
I wish all children would.....						
I wish everyone had.....						
I wish I could touch.....						
I wish animals could..... If they could, then.....						
I wish I looked like.... because.....						
I wish there were no more.....						
I wish I didn't have to.....						
I wish I could go to.....						
I wish there really was..... If there really was, then.....						
I wish I could hear.....						

I wish I could give.....						
If all my wishes came true, I would.....						
When...						
When you are angry, how do you look?						
When are you happiest?						
When have you felt lonely?						
When do you feel proud?						
When was the last time you cried and why?						
When a friend was in an embarrassing situation, what did you do?						
When it might hurt their feelings, how do you feel about telling your friends the truth?						
When might it be bad to be honest?						
When someone picks on someone else, how do you feel? What do you do?						
Once, when you were very frightened, what happened?						
Once, when you were embarrassed, what happened?						
Once, when your feelings were hurt, what happened?						
Describe a time when you felt vengeful.						
When you have a problem who do you talk to? Why?						
Which...						
Which quality best describes your life--exciting, organised, dull--and why?						
Which quality do you dislike most about yourself--laziness, selfishness, childishness--and why?						
Which place would you most like to visit--Africa, China, Alaska--why?						
Which holiday has the most meaning for you--Canada Day, Thanksgiving, Valentines Day--and why?						
Which is least important to you--money, power, fame--and why?						
Which is most important to you--being popular, accomplishing things, being organised--and why?						
Which is your favourite Star Wars character (or other movie/book/t.v. show, etc.)? Why?						
Why...						
Why is it important to be honest?						
Why is important to have good manners?						
Why do you think adults smoke/drink?						
Why is exercise important to someone your age?						
Why do you think some people encourage others to smoke/drink?						
Why do you think the rules you must follow are good or bad?						
Why would it be good to be honest?						
Why have men and women usually only done certain types of work?						

Why should or shouldn't a man stay home to care for the house and children while his wife goes to work?						
Why do you think some people take advantage of others?						
Why do you think prejudice exists in the world?						
Why would we say that someone is "passing the buck"?						
Why would a Prime Minister have a sign on his desk which read, "The buck stops here"?						
Why do you think tact is an important quality?						
Why is it not wise to squander your money?						
Explain why we say, "dead as a door nail".						
Think of your favourite toy. Why do you like it best?						
Think of the best teacher you ever had. Why were they a good teacher?						
Misc...						
Do you think there is too much fighting on t.v. Why or why not?						
Does it bother you to be around someone who has bad manners?						
Should there be a dress code in places such as school, restaurants, and places of business? Why or why not?						
Should animals be used for medical research?						
Should the Canadian Government financially support Olympic teams?						
Should people be prohibited from smoking in certain places?						
Families are important because...						
Would you like to be famous? Why or why not? What would you like to be famous for?						
Who or what has had a strong influence in your life?						
Where would you prefer to be right now--mountains, desert, beach--and why?						
Should you have to do chores around the house? Why or why not?						
Should you be required to wear a bike helmet? Why or why not?						
Should skateboards be allowed on sidewalks?						
Should you have to take tests in school?						
Can television (or videogames) influence your behaviour? How?						
Should schools be year-round?						
Should junk food be banned from schools?						
Should students be required to learn a second language?						
Would You Rather.....						
would you rather have no arms or no legs?						
would you rather be rich and miserable or poor and happy?						
would you rather be super fast or super strong?						

would you rather have telepathy or telekenisis?						
would you rather have xray vision or be able to walk through walls?						
would you rather have the ability to fly or the ability to teleport?						
would you rather be blind or deaf?						
would you rather stuck alone in a desert or on top of a mountain?						
would you rather be a cat or a dog?						
would you rather a lot of friends or a small number of really good ones?						
would you rather would you rather walk around all day with spinach stuck in your teeth or with toilet paper stuck to the bottom of your foot?						
would you rather be a stay at home parent or the bread winner?						
would you rather a million dollars right now, or a thousand dollars a week for the next 30 years?						
would you rather brush your teeth with mud or wash your hair with bird poop?						
would you rather never take another test or never write another essay?						
would you rather cheat and get a 90 or work hard and get a 75?						
would you rather go to school 7 days a week for 7 months, or keep the schedule you have now (5 days a week for 10 months)?						other versions include 4 day school week/3day weekend but go to school year round
would you rather no one on earth is poor, or things stay as they are except you and your closest friends are rich?						
would you rather discover life on another planet but not be able to come back to earth, or never have left earth in the first place?						
would you rather be alive at the beginning of time or at the end of time?						