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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- NAVIGATING CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS
- COCREATE: CALL IT "QUITS"
- D15 DIVERSITY PLAN CELEBRATION: ZEN VISION - YOUTH REP
- RJ COORDINATOR SAMEERA ABADI

# Restorative Justice Scoop



**MS447**  
THE EXPLORATORY SCHOOL

**RJ Department:** Dallas Alexis, Sameera Abadi, Joy Canning, Administration

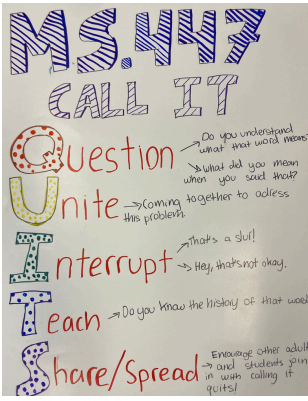
## Navigating Crucial Conversations:

On our recent Professional Development Day (Anniversary Day) teachers and staff participated in a workshop geared toward learning how to better respond to and engage in crucial conversations. [Facing History and Ourselves](#) defines **Crucial Conversations** as conversations that touch on emotional topics or spark controversy between people. They can be difficult and are also crucial because they help us **build strong communities of belonging**, despite and including our differences. The rationale for this workshop included the truths that 1) in order for students to feel that they belong, **their voices need to be heard and valued**, 2) as a restorative community our classrooms and school spaces are places where **students learn that their voices matter**, that there is **shared power**, and they can **practice informed community engagement** and 3) we all practice **empathy and perspective-taking** when we participate in conversations that are not about winning or proving someone wrong, but about **building understanding**.

We watched a [video](#) where John Amaechi discussed the connection between concepts of identity, the creation of a safe learning environment, and the potential for student achievement. Additionally we practiced applying the [Straight A's for Facilitating Crucial Conversations](#) as they related to selected scenarios. We invite you to engage with these resources too as we try to achieve and maintain some consistency between restorative practices utilized at school and reinforced at home.

## CoCreate: Call it "Quits"

Our 8th grade CoCreate group created the **Call it "Quits"** slogan to help support our students and staff in disrupting discrimination and hateful language and actions at MS447. The students brainstormed, dialogued, and problem solved through multiple lunch periods the past three months. In the next week 8th grade students are taking their plan into some of our 6th and 7th grade Advisories and classrooms through teach-ins. They hope to leave the returning students with strategies like posing **questions** to help students acquire new understanding, **uniting** together to create safe spaces, **interrupting** harmful words and actions in the moment, **teaching** each other new ways of being together and also the meaning, history, and impact of words they use, and together **sharing and spreading** these upstander strategies. **We are really proud of the agency and powerful and thoughtful student voice of our 8th grade students!**



**Call it “Quits”  
A student  
collaboration --  
problem solving to  
disrupt discrimination  
and to encourage  
upstander behavior**



**Zen Vision  
Youth Equity Congress Representative  
D15 Diversity Plan Celebration 2024**

## **D15 Diversity Plan Celebration: Zen Vision, Youth Rep**

Zen Vision has been one of our three Youth Equity Congress representatives this year, the other two are Emily Baez and Clover Nichols. Zen was invited to participate as the Student Representative on the D15 Diversity Plan Celebration Panel. Zen was asked to respond to the following questions:

- In what ways has your participation in the Youth Equity Congress enhanced your understanding of the significance of diversity, equity and inclusion work among your peers and school faculty?
- What work has the youth equity congress done this year that you think has made the greatest impact on DEI work across our schools?
- What area of focus do you think needs to be prioritized across the district?

Zen delivered an eloquent answer and left us with these final words, **“Community, community, community.”** He couldn’t stress enough the importance of community in doing the work of equity and inclusion.

**Ways of Belonging:** *The ultimate purpose of Restorative Justice in Education is to **create spaces of belonging** that embrace everyone in the way they require.* Restorative Justice in Education by Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering  
**The MS447 Lit Magazine: “Howl at the Moon” is one more space of belonging in our school.**

Check out the first issue of [“Howl at the Moon”](https://www.flipbookpdf.net/web/site/a850bfe0a9938d1d3a83c0bf36bec49b114e36a5202406.pdf.html#page/22). Follow the link to the online flipbook. Ms. Velez and Ms. Carlson took a vision and dream they had at the beginning of the school year and helped it come to fruition. Throughout the year they have been meeting with the students who joined the Lit Magazine group, creating yet another important space of belonging at MS447 and encouraging creative genius!

(<https://www.flipbookpdf.net/web/site/a850bfe0a9938d1d3a83c0bf36bec49b114e36a5202406.pdf.html#page/22>)

## **Reflection from RJ Coordinator: Sameera Abadi**

*My role as a restorative justice coordinator has been an incredible journey, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work with such a supportive community. One moment that stood out to me was when several friends came to me with a conflict with one of their friends. Through facilitating a restorative circle, I facilitated a meaningful conversation that restored their friendship. Moments like these remind me of why I love my role. It's not just about solving conflicts, but about building empathy and community for all of us.*

*I'm looking forward to continuing to grow in my role to support the social and emotional development of the children in the MS447 community. - Sameera Abadi*

