

March/April 2025

IN THIS ISSUE:

- PEACE AND DIVERSITY DAY
- FAIRNESS CIRCLE TRAINING
- STUDENT EQUITY TEAM RUMMAGE FUNDRAISER FOR JUSTICE
- TALKING STICK CHAPTERS 5-8

Restorative Justice Scoop



MS447

THE EXPLORATORY SCHOOL

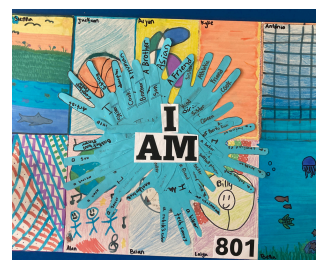
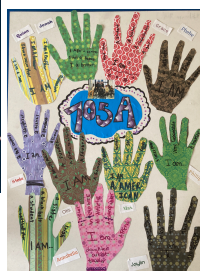
RJ Department: Dallas Alexis, Sameera Abadi, Joy Canning, Administration

Peace and Diversity Day Celebration March 28, 2025:

Originally, this day was connected to Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History Month. It was a way for us to come together and celebrate diversity outside of our regular class curriculum. Over time, it has evolved into a celebration of our school's diversity, and how we can impact the world around us. The entire day is about creating peace in our world and honoring the diverse cultures in our community.

On March 28th, students had the opportunity to explore aspects of peace and diversity that interested them and discover ways to be activists within their communities. They chose from topics such as "Don't Wait to be Great" which encouraged them to be activists, organizers, and justice workers NOW, "Professional Troublemakers" where they looked at John Lewis and other role models who knew that sometimes justice and equity require getting into a little good trouble, and "Envisioning the Future" where students used vision boards to dream of greater equity, justice, and peace in the world. The day also included a showcase of "I am" poems created by each pack, a gallery walk of cultural and identity artifacts and a student showcase.

I Am Poems



I Am Art Installations-- created by each Pack



Student Showcase

A huge **Shout Out** to the following people who, along with the support of **all teachers and staff**, worked in special roles to help insure the success of this year's Peace and Diversity Celebration: **Yaquoi Moore, Kristina Davis, Andrea Villeda, Nadin Ahmed, Chrissy Visa, Stacey Billups, Christina Quesada, Michael Ensminger** and **LEAP led by Tricia Frazier and Divine Garland**.

Fairness Circle Training:

Fairness Circles are a protocol for conflict resolution. They are led by trained youth who are peers. They work to bring people together to seek understanding and begin a process of truth telling, repair, and healing. The "success of fairness circles depend on the good will of all participants. They are an invitation for people (youth + adults) to solve their own problems, issues, and/or misunderstandings. On **April 2 we held our first Fairness Circles Training**. The training was facilitated by [The Circle Keepers](#), a New York City based group of trained and empowered youth who are restorative justice practitioners, community organizing activists and socially conscious artists. 17 students have begun their training, with a follow-up training scheduled for May 2. If your child is newly interested, they can attend the May 2nd training during their lunch period, encourage them to let Ms. Joy know. We are super eager to start this peer led practice before the end of the school year, leaving us ready to confidently continue at the start of next year .

Peer-led restorative circles play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community, empathy, and connection within schools. We hold these as high values at MS447. Some of the benefits of Fairness Circles include:

1. Building Community and Fostering School Connectedness:

Restorative circles, facilitated by peers, help students connect with each other and feel a sense of belonging.

Students who feel connected to their facilitators experience more positive engagement with process.

Restorative circles provide a safe space for students to share their perspectives, experiences, and emotions, fostering empathy and understanding.

2. Enhancing Conflict Resolution Skills:

Facilitators guide others in identifying the impact of their actions and working collaboratively to find solutions.

Students learn to communicate effectively, listen actively, and take responsibility for their actions, leading to improved conflict resolution skills.

3. Empowering Student Voice and Ownership:

Restorative circles empower students to have a voice in their own learning, development, and the overall school environment.

Students feel more invested in the school community when they are actively involved in the restorative process.

Peer facilitators can help students take ownership of their actions, learn from mistakes, and make amends for their behavior.

4. Promoting a Culture of Accountability and Respect:

Restorative practices create a culture where everyone is accountable for their actions and responsible for creating a positive and respectful environment.

Students learn to understand the impact of their behavior on others and to take responsibility for their actions.

Restorative circles help build trust and strengthen relationships between students, staff, and the wider community.

5. Improved School Climate and Reduced Disciplinary Issues:

Restorative practices can contribute to a more positive school climate by addressing conflict constructively and building stronger relationships.

By reducing the need for suspensions and other disciplinary measures, restorative practices can help create a more inclusive and equitable school environment.

Restorative circles can help students feel safe, supported, and connected to their school community, leading to improved attendance and engagement.

Student Equity Team: Rummage Sale and Fundraiser for Justice

We need your gently used, clean, spring and summer clothes – the ones you’ve outgrown or fallen out of love with. Clean out your closets and bring your donations to school anytime before May 16. Donation boxes will be outside the main office and with Ms. Joy during morning entry.

CLOTHING COLLECTION

MS 447

Preferably spring or summer clothing

Pre-washed

Good condition; if you wouldn't wear it, don't donate it

Preferably sized

Majority clothing for kids and teens (but we will accept any size)

NO UNDERGARMENTS

Any occasion clothing!



There will be bins outside the main office, and at entry to drop off

Clothes

Update on RJ Book Discussion Group: For Grown-Ups at Home - now available, chapters 1-8

In the midst of the busy lives of families it has been challenging to gather enough interest to do a formal reading and discussion group. So, in lieu of a formal book discussion I will be including a few chapters at a time from **Talking Stick - Peacemaking as a Spiritual Path** in the RJ Scoop. While these are low quality images of the pages, I think that for those interested in learning more about the basics of keeping circle/holding council, restorative practices, and living restoratively, they can serve as a valuable resource. You can find the images [here](#). Currently the folder now holds chapters 1-8. I would also encourage those really interested in applying this work to your lives to purchase the book or reserve it from a library.

Talking Stick presents an opportunity to establish deeper connections with others. By learning to speak honestly and listen devoutly, we can overcome our culture's hierarchical and punitive approach to conflict and relate to each other in a sacred manner that is egalitarian, liberating, and transformational. The book explains how to apply this practice with large and small groups and on an interpersonal level. It focuses on deepening relationships, healing old wounds, and restoring harmony among people.