



**Venturing Outside the Box: Creating and
Sustaining
A True Learning Community through
Overnight Retreats**

Presenters:
Hasmig Minassian, Philip Halpern,
Ashley Daly

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
Berkeley, CA
2014

Venturing Outside the Box: Creating and Sustaining a True Learning Community through Overnight Retreats

Presenters: Ashley Daly, Philip Halpern, Hasmig Minassian

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
Berkeley, CA

Welcome to our session!! We are excited to share our experiences with you and hope to inspire you to take the concept of overnight retreats back to your teams.

Getting outside the classroom allows teachers and students to get to know each other in a different context. The opening activities are designed as ice-breakers so that participants can get to know each other better through fun and games. Everyone is encouraged to find out something about another person that they didn't know before.

The deeper, risk-taking activities allow students and teachers to see and hear that we have much more in common than we might think, and that most of us have stories to tell that no one can see. The strength, bravery, and perseverance of our peers and colleagues is sometimes heart-breaking, but also stunning and inspiring.

The trust and admiration that develops on retreats transfers into the classroom by helping to create a safer learning environment where students can take more academic risks, both in thinking and effort or motivation. Students who have previously had very little success in school, or have experienced trauma in their lives outside of school, have the highest affective filters. These students stand to benefit the most from the assurances of a truly safe learning environment.

Here are some things students have to say about the benefits of overnight retreats:

"...talking to Sergio late night on the beach. We talked about how finally we're not the only ones in our classes stuck in the same situation, that we face many of the same obstacles. As we talked I realized that in the future that's how life will feel. Our talk reminded me of the many talks my parents have with other grown-ups: about life and obstacles—but like them we spoke with joy and created this sense of unity."

"I want to bring back that warmth where everybody feels free and safe just having a good time...people talking to people they don't usually talk to, mixing it up on who they hang out with, and people acting themselves. I want to bring the cohesiveness of our class back into school."

In the pages that follow, you will find a timeline checklist, a sample agenda, and several of our favorite activities with detailed instructions for facilitators. All other necessary documents will be posted on the conference's web site. Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or feedback.

ashleydaly@berkeley.net

philhalpern@berkeley.net

hasmigminassian@berkeley.net

Timeline Check List for Organizing Overnight Retreats

Late August (first month of school):

- Contact retreat center for dates
- Gather paperwork for school board approval and submit
- Fill out transportation request for school buses
- Submit authorization for liability insurance
- Put on school's master calendar
- Advertise dates to families at Back to School Night (if possible)

Two months before:

- Sign contract with facility and pay deposit
- Send families a reminder email with a save the date and information about the price.

One month before:

- Create and hand out a "Retreat Info Packet" that has information for families, price, deadlines, and permission slip
- Gather students in planning meetings to discuss agenda
- Ask all staff who are attending to RSVP with exact time span of their attendance and remind them to get their subs!

Ongoing:

- Collect money and permission slips; Continue meeting with planning committee

3 weeks before:

- Have students create a snack list for retreat and designate 2 student/parent shopper volunteers.

2 weeks before:

- Confirm buses
- Make deadline for students to hand in permission slips and money
- Finalize agenda and supply list.
- Designate student/parent to shop for supplies

1 week before:

- Communicate final numbers of kids and staff to the retreat center
- Print out and go over retreat contract with students. Make sure they understand and sign.
- Once planning committee has finalized agenda, create home groups with final list of attendees
- Send out reminder email to staff

Week of:

- Collect retreat contracts
- Go over packing list with students
- Make arrangements for students who aren't coming (which class will they be in, etc.);
- Remind students where they are meeting you
- Verify with shoppers where to meet you to transfer food and supplies
- Photocopy agendas, make sure all supplies for activities are packed and prepped

Day of:

- Meet students at the bus on time; Check them in on a clipboard;
- Give final count to bus drivers and your administration before you leave
- Have a great time!!!

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
2014

CAS Sophomore Retreat 2013-Pt. Bonita YMCA

Monday November 4th

Time	Agenda Item
9-10:30	Arrive
11:00-11:30	Orientation by Staff, layout of land, home teams, ground rules, retreat agreements, LOST AND FOUND, no plastic water bottles. Need: List of Home groups Agenda written on board Color-coded group responsibilities Girls are in Farallon: 9,11,13 with staff in 7 Boys are in Golden Gate: 7,8,9,10,11 with staff in 6
11:30-12:00	(inside) Home Groups – Learn names, 3 syllable game Facilitator: Daly Group Games: Send me someone who (whole group). Supplies: List of “Send me....”
Settle in and Lunch: 12:00 – 12:45 (clean up – Minassian/Halpern)	
12:45-1:05	Activity #1: Appreciation Bags, explain and then everyone writes a minimum of 10. Facilitator: Katz Supplies: Paper bags, Sharpies, and index cards and pens, list of everyone in class including absent students, current teachers, and past teachers
1:10-1:40	Activity #2a: ½ group – bat and moth Location: Basketball Courts (Daly/Halpern/Katz) Activity #2b: Other 3 groups – in home groups, find your “spot” and do trust falls/secrets (Funny/serious), count to 10, shake your booty Location: You choose! (Minassian, Brewer, Ryen & Faith) Supplies: Bandanas (blindfolds), index cards, pens, list of game blurbs
1:45-2:00	Explanation of Activity Rotation/Demo Stuffed Animal Wedding
2:00-2:15	Activity #3a: Song Wars/Orange Toss Location: Basketball courts (Daly/Ryan&Faith, Katz/Minassian, Brewer/Halpern Supplies: list of themes, words (baby, water, party), plenty of

	oranges
2:15-2:30	Activity #3b: Hike to a view. Story time: "The Man with the Perfect Heart", The Goose Story, Quote by Rod MacIver, Heron Dance Location: Bluffs/view Supplies: Backpacking book, Typed up stories/quote(s)
2:30-2:45	Activity #3c: Stuffed Animal Wedding Location: Campfire Supplies: 2 stuffed animals, blindfolds, "just married" sign
2:45 – 3:00	Break (snacks, bathroom, appreciation bags, etc)
3:00-4:00	Sophomore Class Talk (adults just observe, kids discuss) WHAT CHANGES DO WE WANT TO SEE? HOW DO WE WANT TO BE DIFFERENT? WHAT DO WE NEED FROM EACH OTHER? (talk in dyads. Dyads make a four-some. Then whole group). Facilitator: Minassian (Sandberg) Supplies: Talking object, goals written on board, agreements
4:00	Discuss boundaries/expectations of trike walk and subsequent free time
4:00-4:45	Trike Walk Supplies: List of kids, list of questions
4:45-5:30	Free Time (an adult needs to know where you are the whole time) BOUNDARIES (without supervision): -Basketball courts/immediate grounds -Main room (board games, instruments) -Dorms With supervision: -Cliffs -Beach -Trails
5:30-5:35	Meeting about evening activities/group responsibilities
5:35-5:45	Pre-dinner responsibilities: Campfire-Brewer

	Stage Crew/main room pick-up – Daly/Minassian Sweep of the area - Halpern
5:45-6:00	Dorms – get ready for dinner and campfire (flashlight, layers)
Dinner 6:00-6:45 (clean up – Sandberg/Moran)	
6:45 – 7:45	Campfire/banana boats/s'mores, sing-a-long, tongue twisters Facilitator: Brewer NEED: Wood/Newspaper/Kindling/Matches Marshmallows, Chocolate Bars, Graham Crackers, Bananas, mini marshmallows, foil, chocolate chips, guitars, songbooks, lanterns
8:00 – 10:00	Artifact Share Facilitator: Moran
10:00	Invitation to night hike, rundown of tomorrow morning
10:00 – 11:00	Night Hike Facilitator: Brewer
11:30 – 12:00	Wind it down people...
12:00 MIDNIGHT	BEDTIME – all students and teachers in bed

Thursday November 8th

Time	Agenda Item
6:30	Optional sunrise hike and/or beach yoga Facilitator: Daly
Breakfast 8:00 – 8:45 (clean up – Brewer/Daly)	
8:45-9:15	Clean-Up Dorms and Pack up. Belongings neatly on bed
9:15-9:45	Home group activities: g'day bruce, human knot, zenmaster, in 5 years I will be...show a talent

9:50-10:15	Cross the line
10:15-10:25	Debrief Facilitator: Moran Need: Cross the Line Questions
10:30-10:40	Break (bathroom, appreciation bags)
10:45 – 11:30	Group Debrief with web of yarn – something you learned, something you loved Facilitator: Daly Supplies: Yarn, Scissors
11:30 – 11:50	Zone Defense Campus Clean-up (Start in home groups of 2, dismiss to dorms, meet back in main room for last appreciation bags and lunch/departure instructions)
12:00	Pick Up our bag lunches and Departure

Needs:

- Teachers responsible for their kids AT ALL TIMES,
- Talk about bed-checks after lights out, counting kids, etc.
- HOME GROUPS: Daly, Minassian, Brewer, Halpern, Katz/Sandberg, Ryen and Faith/Moran

Shopping List

Snacks:

- White String Cheese
- Corn chips
- Salsa
- Double Stuf Oreos
- Fruit: cuties, grapes, apples
- Red Vines
- Cheez-Its
- Trail Mix
- Brownie bites
- Chips (Mixed bags w/ original Lays, Fritos, Doritos, etc)
- Kettle Chips
- Pretzels
- Chex mix
- Luna bars or Z bars
- Hummus and Pita
- Veggie platter (mini tomatoes, celery, carrots)

- Nature Valley Granola Bars
 - Approx 20 oranges, the larger the better, (for a game)
 - Salami, cheese, crackers
 - Graham Crackers (one box)
 - Marshmallows (one bag)
 - Mini marshmallows (one bag)
 - Chocolate for S'mores
 - Chocolate chips (1 bag)
 - Bananas (approx. 30)
 - Party pack of candy
-
- Foil
 - Index Cards 2,100 of them (not kidding about this amount)
 - Black ink pens (enough for 100 ppl)
 - Ball of pretty colored yarn
 - Scissors
 - Box or bundle of firewood
 - Long stick matches

Bring Copies of: Packets for teachers (Lists of Home Groups/Agendas/Game and activity blurbs), Trike Trios, Send me someone who questions, Trike questions, Backpacking book/typed up stories, Cross the line Qs, Discussion Prompts, Perm Slips/Contracts
Sports Equipment, Stuffed Animals, "Just Married" Sign, Bandanas, Games/cards, musical instruments/speakers

Extra: sleeping bags, flashlights, water bottles, blankets/warm layers

To be used with Sample Day 1 Agenda

Home groups go to different places at your venue, preferably overlooking a pretty scene. The adult reads this story aloud to the students and discuss the meaning, the moral, and why it might be relevant to their lives.

The Man with the Perfect Heart

In a faraway land close by, there lived a people with a peculiar ability. This people carried their hearts in their hands! It was not uncommon to see people talking together showing one another their hearts.

As time went by one young man began to achieve some fame. “I have the most perfect heart!” he proclaimed. He proudly showed his heart to one and all. Truly it was a sight to see—magnificently shaped, hard, smooth, and flawless, glistening coolly in the sunlight. News spread quickly and crowds gathered wherever he went. His heart became the standard of perfection and people traveled farther and farther distances to view this wonder. And they would steal a glance at their own hearts, now clearly aware of its flaws, embarrassed to let anyone else see it.

One day, after the young man had shown his perfect heart and was putting it in an ornately decorated wooden box for safekeeping, an old man pushed his way through the crowd. He stepped up to the young man and said in a voice for all to hear: “I have a more perfect heart than yours.”

A sudden murmur ran through the throng, then a hushed silence. Every head craned forward, every eye watched intently as the old man brought forth his heart. The young man turned in astonishment. He looked at the old man, bent wrinkled with the passage of many years. Then he looked at the heart tenderly cradled in gnarled fingers and burst out with laughter. The crowd was not slow to join in.

“Senile old fool!” yelled one heckler; “This is your ‘perfect’ heart?” sneered another. For sitting on the palm of the old man’s hands was a heart as bruised, tattered, misshapen, scarred, and ugly as anyone could ever recall.

“My heart is more perfect than yours,” the old man repeated, looking the young man square in the eyes. The derision and laughter in the crowd died out as they pressed close to listen. Something in the serene way the old man spoke must have caught the young man’s attention for his expression changed. Puzzlement replaced the sneer.

“My heart is more perfect than yours,” the old man said once again, “because it is alive and life is not pretty. It has been used as hearts are meant to be. This scar was left by a parent’s anger. This bruise by the death of my wife. These scars by the pain of some dear friends. These places that do not quite fit were given to me by people I have met along the way and they carry a piece of my heart with them.

These tatters are from doing what my heart said was right and rubbing against a world that said it was foolish. These holes are from people I loved who did not love in return. But I still gave them a piece of my heart. This heart is like this because I have taken the risk to care. That is why my heart is more perfect than yours.”

The people in the crowd looked away as the old man finished speaking. They saw a tear run down the cheek of the young man as he sadly looked at the beautiful thing they had once thought was the perfect heart. He closed the wooden box’s lid on his heart and began to walk away, head bent towards the ground, shoulders slumped in dejection.

“Wait! I am not finished,” said the old man. The young man stopped and turned back. The old man stepped toward him. “Do not go without this,” he said and pressed a piece of his heart into the young man’s palm. The young man looked at it for a moment, then into the old man’s eyes. Then he opened his box and took out his heart. All the people watched as the young man tore a piece from his heart and handed it to the old man. He smiled and without another word turned and went.

The Goose Story

In the fall, when you see the geese heading south for the winter, flying along in V-formation, think about what science has learned about why they fly that way. As each bird flaps her wings, she creates uplift for the bird immediately following her. By flying in a V-formation, the whole flock can fly at least seventy-one percent farther than if each bird flew on her own. Perhaps people who share a common direction can get where they are going quicker and easier if they cooperate.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, he feels the resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of flying with the flock. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will work with others who are going the same way as we are.

When the lead goose gets tired, she rotates back in the wing and another goose flies on the point. It pays to take turns doing hard jobs for our group. The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Finally (get this), when a goose weakens or is wounded and falls out of formation, two geese fall out and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly or until he is dead, and then they set out on

their own or with another formation until they catch up with the group. If we had the sense of a goose we would stand by each other like that.

“The journey toward our beauty is a magnificent struggle. Achieving an integrity between what we believe and how we live is a challenge worthy of the gift of life. A thousand obstacles stand between our selves and the honoring of our truth. A thousand distractions. A thousand ego-generated delusions. The quality of our life depends on how we confront those obstacles. That is what Joseph Campbell described as the hero’s journey – the journey towards our greater self. That journey takes so much courage. That journey fascinates me. To dive down, find the beauty, nurture it and offer it to the world is magnificent. The more unique what you have to offer is, the more indifferent the world is likely to be for a long, long time. Staying with your beauty, your truth, your integrity is difficult, but out of these things comes meaning, and meaning is all-transcendent.”

--Rod MacIver, HERON DANCE

Discussion prompt: What would it mean for you to honor your truth? What is currently standing in your way?

Agenda for all CAS Sophomore Talk 3:00-4:00

Need:

- Assigned groups of dyads and then foursomes
- Agreements on the Board
- Objectives
- Prompts
- Sticky Pad Paper and PENS

Prompts:

(on the sticky paper)

What do you see that prevents the CAS Sophomore class from being a productive learning community?

What changes do we want to see in the CAS Sophomore Class?

What do we need from each other?

How, specifically will we make those changes?

(Discussion questions to get at answers to above questions)

Describe your ideal learning environment

List classmates you see contributing to a productive learning environment, and explain what they are doing specifically.

What are the specific ways you contribute to a positive learning environment, or take away from it?

What's your level of commitment to actually making a positive learning environment, scale of 1-5, explain?

Objectives:

I will understand my role/responsibility in the CAS Learning Community

I will learn how to make CAS a safer place and a better learning community

I will understand my peer's perspectives

Agreements:

One mic rule

Step up, step back

No personal digs

Assume positive intent

Suggestion for end or follow-up: Small group of kids write up a sophomore class contract that incorporates all of these ideas, kids discuss and sign when we are back in school and then measure how well they are doing in 4 weeks and again at the semester.

STAND AND DECLARE (Sophomore and/or Junior Retreat)

This activity addresses sensitive, personal issues and requires a safe environment and strong facilitation! This activity should be scheduled after other trust-building and community-building activities.

NOTE: This activity is sometimes called “Cross the Line” or “Step Into the Circle.” Participants can be lined up and asked to cross the line (take a step forward) when statements apply, or stand in a circle and asked to take a step into the circle. Participants should never be allowed to sit and just raise hands. It is very important for participants to physically move in response to a prompt because it requires more courage and is much less ambiguous.

Objectives/Purpose:

- To provide a structured and safe way for people to appreciate the diversity in a group.
- To make visible the similarities between people who may seem different on the surface.
- To allow participants to choose whether to acknowledge facets of their identities.
- To provide a respectful way of discussing sensitive issues.

Time: About 30 minutes including introduction. Another 15 or so for debrief.

Introduction for Participants:

Say something like the following to students: “We have been discussing the issue of identity. This activity will allow us to consider and learn some things about ourselves and others.”

Guidelines for Participants:

Read and/or explain these out loud to students just before the activity is to begin.

The following guidelines must be reviewed and agreed upon by all participants:

- It is crucial for everyone to watch and listen during this exercise. Everyone must be totally silent. This means no talking, commenting, snickering, giggling or asking questions. Anyone who violates this will be asked to leave because silence is important for trust.
- No one participating in this exercise is under any pressure to share anything they do not feel comfortable with. Everyone has the right to pass, although you are encouraged to be brave and honest. Everyone learns more if everyone is more honest.
- Everyone decides for him/her self whether they want to cross the line. No telling others to do so.
- The questions intentionally start off easy and get harder.
- Some of the statements in the exercise may have ambiguous meaning (e.g. some questions may ask about things which have happened “recently.” You what “recent” means...) Each person decides for him/ her self what the question means and stands or sits based on their own interpretation. In other words, YOU decide what it means and YOU decide whether or not you want to cross the line. Sorry, but no clarifying questions allowed.
- Confidentiality is a must. Everyone must agree that what we do in this room today stays in this room
- We will talk about this exercise AFTER we are finished.
- Are there any questions?

- If you feel you CANNOT follow these rules, please raise your hand now and you may leave until the activity is over.

Periodically throughout the activity, remind students to look around and see who is standing and who is not before sitting back down. Remind them to think about how it feels, and constantly remind them to be silent.

Statements:

Begin each prompt with, "Please stand (or cross the line, or step into the circle) if you..."

2. are not from California
3. are male
4. are female
5. are Christian
6. are Catholic
7. are Jewish
8. are Muslim
9. are Buddhist
10. believe in any other religion not already mentioned
11. are agnostic, atheist, or do not believe in any God or gods
12. are Asian or Asian American
13. are Black, African or African American
14. are Chicano, Latino or Hispanic
15. are Native American or American Indian
16. are White, Caucasian or European American
16. are of mixed racial or ethnic heritage
17. feel you know very little about your cultural heritage

18. would describe your family as blue collar, working class or poor
19. would describe your family as middle class
20. would describe your family as upper class or rich
21. are the only child in your family
22. have high self-esteem
23. have had serious thoughts of dropping out of school
24. generally feel you get the best grades you are capable of getting
25. feel attractive
26. have birth parents that are divorced
26. have birth parents that were never married
27. believe your parents should be divorced
28. are a parent
29. do not get along with one or both of your parents
30. have laughed at yourself recently
31. have a close friend or family member in jail or prison
32. have a close friend or family member who has been harassed by the police
33. have yourself been harassed by the police
34. have been arrested
35. have had a close friend or family member die as the result of violence
36. have a close friend or family member who is gay, lesbian or bisexual
37. have experienced the effects of alcoholism in your family
38. suspect that one of your peers abuses alcohol or drugs
39. have a close friend or family member that has experienced child abuse
40. have a close friend or family member that has been sexually abused or assaulted

41. have a close friend or family member that has seriously thought of suicide
42. have a close friend or family member that has committed suicide
43. are currently supporting yourself financially
44. do not live with either of your birth parents
45. live in neighborhood you do not consider safe
46. have been called derogatory names based on your ethnicity
47. have been put down or made to feel ashamed because of your ethnicity, culture or religion
48. have been called a failure or been told you can't succeed by a parent, teacher or other authority figure
49. have been teased or put down because of the size or shape of your body or parts of your body
50. have been teased or put down for being too smart or for getting good grades
51. have ever dieted or exercised to change to size or shape of your body
52. feel you are often misunderstood
53. believe that love is a crucial part of your life
54. believe money is the most important element in one's life
55. were raised to believe that being tough is more important than being caring
56. have saved someone's life
57. have had your life saved by someone else
58. feel you will live a short life
59. have carried a weapon with the intent to use it in the past
60. have been threatened with a weapon in the past
61. have a close friend or family member who is HIV positive
62. have a close friend or family member who has died of AIDS
63. believe that one or both of your parents is/are racist, sexist or homophobic

64. want to be happy in life

Debrief:

Tell everyone to relax and thank them for their participation and honesty. Remind them that if any issues were raised for them for which they feel they would like some help or more information, they can come and see you for referrals. Be aware that this activity may open up issues for students, and facilitators must be able to help students get support if they need or want it.

Ask students:

-- Why did we do this?

To think about the experiences which have shaped our lives

To see similarities among people who are different on the surface

-- What did it feel like to do this exercise?

-- How did it feel to be the only one standing? the only one not standing?

-- How did it feel to not be able to explain your answer to the group? Does anyone want to explain one of your responses now?

-- Were you surprised by anything you saw?

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
2014

Trike Walk (Sophomore, Junior, and Senior retreat activity)

Students are pre-assigned to a group of three within their home groups. Again, we balance for all elements of diversity, most importantly the shy/social combos and kids who don't know one another very well. They take a walk within established boundaries and take this list of questions with them. They are not to attach themselves to other groups as this is really about small groups of kids getting to know each other.

Questions for your TRIKE Walk

1. What's your favorite Dr. Seuss book?
2. If you could live in any home on a television series, what would it be?
3. What's the longest you've gone without sleep?
4. What's your favorite Michael Jackson or Lil Wayne song?
5. Who's your favorite Muppet?
6. What's the habit you're proudest of breaking?
7. What's your favorite Web site?
8. What's your favorite school supply?
9. Who's your favorite TV reality show star?
10. What was your most recent trip of more than 50 miles?
11. What's the best bargain you've ever found at a garage sale or thrift store?
12. Where were you on September 11, 2001?
13. What's your favorite tree?
14. What's the most interesting book you've read?
15. What do you order when you eat Chinese food?
16. What's the best costume you've ever worn?
17. What's your least favorite word?
18. If you had to be named after one of the 50 states, which would it be?
19. Who's your favorite Tele Tubby?
20. Describe something that's happened to you for which you have no explanation.
21. If you could travel anywhere in Africa, where would it be?
22. What did you have for lunch yesterday?
23. Where do you go for advice?
24. Which do you use more often, the dictionary or the thesaurus?
25. Have you ever been snorkeling? Scuba diving?
26. Have you ever been stung by a bee?
27. What's the sickest you've ever been?

28. What's your favorite form of exercise?
29. Who is on your IPOD's "Most Played" list?
30. What did you do for your 13th birthday?
31. Are you afraid of heights?
32. Have you ever taken dance lessons?
33. What's your favorite newspaper?
34. What's your favorite musical?
35. What's the most memorable class you've ever taken?
36. What's your favorite knock-knock joke?
37. What's your favorite commercial?
38. If you could go to Disney World with any celebrity alive today, who would it be?
39. Do you prefer baths or showers?
40. Does your chewing gum lose its flavor on the bedpost overnight?
41. What's your favorite breakfast food?
42. Who's your favorite game show host?
43. If you could have a super power, what would it be?
44. Name five songs to which you know all the lyrics. (Better yet, sing them.)
45. What's your favorite infomercial?
46. What's the longest you've ever waited in line?

Level 2 Questions (Daly - Soph Retreat 11/2013)

1. Where in the world would you like to most visit and why?
2. What is your position in your family (oldest, middle, youngest, only child)? What would you like to change about it?
3. What's something you do regularly that you really like?
4. What's something that you do regularly that you really dislike?
5. If you could have any superpower what would it be?
6. What is your immediate reaction on the street when someone asks you for money?
7. What's been your biggest challenge in the last 2 years? How do you think you handled it? What did you do?
8. Who is most inspiring to you and why?
9. As a small child, who was your best friend?
10. What is the best team or group you ever belonged to and why?
11. Name a skill you would like to learn before you die and tell why.
12. Are you close to your family? Why or why not?
13. What is something you are particularly proud of?

14. What is one of your favorite memories from childhood?
15. When was the last time you did something for the first time?
16. What have you recently learned from another person?
17. What's one of the scariest things that's ever happened to you?
18. What is one thing you wish you could change about yourself?
19. Who has most helped you in your life?
20. What is the most beautiful sight you've ever seen?
21. How do your beliefs/values differ from those of your parents?
22. What trait or characteristic do you have that you would like to pass to your children someday?
23. What is your favorite time of day?
24. How do you relax?
25. If you could change 2 things about the way you were brought up, what would they be?
26. Amongst your friends or family, what subject is bound to start an argument?
27. What do you like about being the gender you are?
28. What do you dislike about being the gender you are?
29. Who is the "tower of strength" when you have a crisis in your family?
30. What are you most afraid of? Why?
31. Whom do you most depend on? Why?
32. Choose your favorite relative or best friend. Why do you like them?
33. What's one of the funniest experiences you've had in your life?
34. What is your most prized possession?
35. What is the gift you will never forget?
36. Who's the best teacher you've ever had and why?
37. Do you want to have children someday? Why/why not?
38. Which of the following restrictions would you better tolerate: leaving the country permanently or never leaving the state in which you now live?
39. If you knew that for any one thing you chose to try, you would have everything you needed, all obstacles would be overcome, and you would not fail, what would it be?
40. As you grow older, what is your most serious concern?

Artifact Share (Sophomore and Junior Retreats): Evening Activity

This activity is the centerpiece of the retreat and students must be asked in advance to prepare for it . They are asked to bring a significant artifact from their lives that has special meaning for them.

When:

This activity usually takes place after dinner on the first day. Students have been told in advance to bring an artifact that says or shows something really important about them. Adult participants should bring an artifact to share as well.

Why:

The purpose of the Artifact Share is to allow everyone to reveal or share something about themselves that most of group does not know.

How:

Everyone sits in a circle, with no one sitting in front of or behind anyone else. Everyone must be able to see everyone else.

Introduction by facilitator, *say the following out loud to students:*

- This activity requires active listening
- If anyone needs to leave (for bathroom, etc) please do so quietly and respectfully
- Silence all electronic devices and absolutely no side conversations or questions for the speaker
- No clapping after speakers (silent supportive hand signals are ok, e.g., “jazz hands” or “twinkles”)
- If anyone forgot to bring an artifact, you can still participate by describing what you would have brought and what it means to you
- A reminder about teachers as mandated reporters (intent to harm self or others, current harm being done to you by another including physical, emotional, sexual)
- Tell your story, but also be aware of air time (60 participants x 2 minutes each = 2 hours!)
- Confidentiality

The facilitator then asks for a volunteer to go first (or the facilitator can be first, and probably should be for the sophomore retreat in order to model depth and length) and move around the circle from the first speaker. Everyone is asked to describe what they brought, and why it is important to them. Participants are allowed to pass, but the facilitator comes back to them at the end to see if they have changed their minds. Adults can set the tone by choosing something personal and deep.

Closing by facilitator:

- Check to make sure those who passed have not changed their minds
- Thank everyone for their courage and honesty
- Encourage everyone to continue the conversations, offer support, give hugs, etc. throughout the retreat
- Now time for the night hike!

Optional addition: You can bring a skein of yarn that is passed around the circle as each speaker tells his/her story. Each speaker wraps the yarn around his/her wrist a few times while talking and then passes it to the next person. After the activity is done, the yarn represents the “connectedness” or “web of connection” that binds everyone together. Participants then cut the yard and turn to a neighbor who ties the ends together. This yarn bracelet is a reminder of the activity and the community.

Sophomores may or may not take risks and share personal stories since they are sometimes gauging the safety of the room/community. Juniors who have participated as sophomores will take much greater risks.

That said, this activity has often created a need for direct follow up with students, either immediately that night, or upon return to school, and has sometimes led to CPS reports. In recent years our guidance counselor accompanies us on retreats and helps if immediate intervention is needed. In the past we had occasions where we returned with a shortlist of students who needed a counselor check-in. The community of students and teachers formed through the activity helped support kids who had shared intense experiences throughout the retreat.

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
2014

Appreciations and Apologies (Senior Retreat): Evening Activity

When:

This activity usually takes place after dinner on the first day. It takes the place of the Artifact Share from previous years.

Why say the following out loud:

The purpose of the Appreciations and Apologies is to take advantage of the opportunity to say something you have been meaning to say to someone you don't normally get the chance to say it to. In other words, NOT your boyfriend/girlfriend or best friend. While it is great to thank them for "always being there for me," you have opportunities to say that every day, and the point of this activity is to take advantage of the chance to reach out to someone else.

(Students have been asked in advance to think about whom they might pick and what they might say.)

How:

Everyone sits in a circle, with no one sitting in front of or behind anyone else. Everyone must be able to see everyone else.

Introduction by facilitator say the following out loud:

- This activity requires active listening
- If anyone needs to leave (for bathroom, etc) please do so quietly and respectfully
- Silence all electronic devices and absolutely no side conversations or questions for the speaker
- No clapping after speakers (silent supportive hand signals are ok, e.g., "jazz hands" or "twinkles")
- A reminder about teachers as mandated reporters (intent to harm self or others, current harm being done to you by another including physical, emotional, sexual)
- Pick either an appreciation or an apology and be aware of airtime (60 participants x 2 minutes each = 2 hours!)
- Choose this time to issue an apology only if it is sincere, relevant and appropriate for the public format. If it doesn't meet the criteria, choose an appreciation instead. (For example, a 5th grade playground fight is probably not relevant, unless it has had lasting consequences for your relationship.)
- Reminder to NOT pick your bf/gf or bffl
- Confidentiality

The facilitator then asks for a volunteer to go first (or the facilitator can be first) and move around the circle from the first speaker. Participants are allowed to pass, but the facilitator comes back to them at the end to see if they have changed their minds. Adults can set the tone by choosing something personal and deep.

Closing by facilitator:

- Check to make sure those who passed have not changed their minds
- Thank everyone for their courage and honesty
- Encourage everyone to continue the conversations and make individual appreciations and apologies throughout the retreat

- Now time for the night hike!

This activity has often created a need for direct follow up with students, either immediately that night, or upon return to school, and has sometimes led to CPS reports. In recent years our guidance counselor accompanies us on retreats and helps if immediate intervention is needed. In the past we had occasions where we returned with a shortlist of students who needed a counselor check-in. The community of students and teachers formed through the activity helped support kids who had shared intense experiences throughout the retreat.

Communication Arts and Sciences
Berkeley High School
2014