



## HANDY HINTS FOR LTPM COORDINATORS

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I read once that there are three rules to life: kindness, kindness, kindness. I think this is true because kindness begets kindness. However, I am well aware there are many things that can upset us. When we are upset we may not feel like being kind. Feeling angry with unfairness; being hurt or abused by others; being in conflict . . . the list is endless.

## PEER MEDIATION SERVICE: HELPING SPREAD KINDNESS



When I think about the Peer Mediation Service and what it gives students, I think ultimately it helps them be kind to one another. It gives an opportunity for students to become more personally aware of themselves, to gain understanding of those around them and learn self-control.

It grows stronger relationships and gives students skills to resolve differences. It helps students feel connected and have a stronger sense of belonging. It gives students a sense of purpose, an agency in making a positive difference to their world, whether it's their school, family, or community. This ultimately creates a safer, more respectful environment.

When Christina Barruel (Head of Peace Education for the Peace Foundation) asked me to write this article on "Handy Hints for LtPM Coordinators at Secondary Schools", I immediately thought 'every school needs to create their own service in their own way'. You cannot compare one school to another. Each school has its own cultural differences, its own needs, its own strengths.



# STRENGTHENING THE PM SERVICE

We have had Peer Mediation Services at MRCS for 30 years. It has taken time, dedication, team work and perseverance for it to become a successful part of the cultural tapestry of our school. The following are some main reflections of what I think helped set up and strengthen the Peer Mediation Service at MRCS:

## CLEAR VISION

Our vision has been to train as many students as possible in these important conflict resolution and effective communication skills. The aim is to create a political platform where students can be 'Ambassadors of Social Justice' standing up for respect, equity, peace, kindness and inclusion of all. This includes providing a confidential peer mediation service.



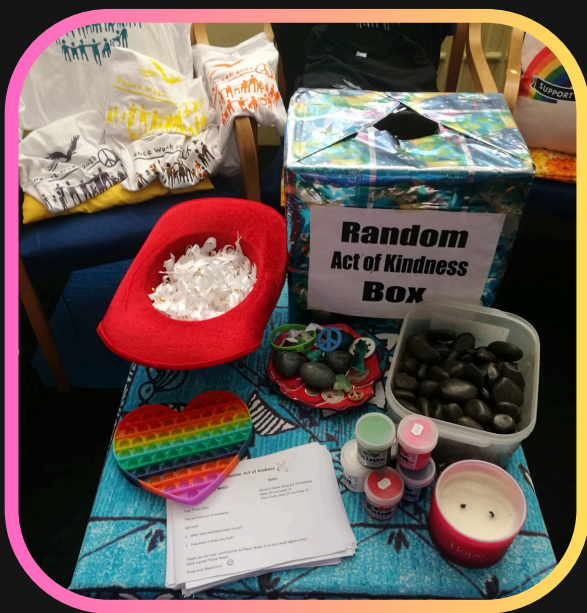
## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

We give Mediators as much training as possible in social justice issues as well as advanced mediation skills. This is so their prejudices can be challenged to enable them to be self aware and more understanding of others.

We have had up to 200 trained Mediators at any one time, which is approximately 10% of the school. They have the opportunity to work at the grass roots level of the school supporting students to get help when needed. This spreads the word of mediation. For example, I remember a student applying to be a Mediator saying they had always wanted to be a Mediator since Year 9 when a Year 13 Mediator helped them when they were bullied.

## TRAIN DURING SCHOOL HOURS

It is important to train students within school hours so that every student gets an opportunity to train. This is about providing a non-hierarchical, equitable service. The Mediation service is a core school learning opportunity that is fully supported by our Senior Management Team.



## YOUTH PEACE WEEK

Every August, we have a major Peace Week (promoted every year by the Peace Foundation) where the students organise a wide range of activities at school. These include Peace assembly presentations, Peace T-shirts, Peace Banners, White Ribbons, Peace Quote competitions, Random Acts of Kindness, Face & Rock Painting, and an 'Embracing Diversity & Anti Violence Stall day' where many agencies come in and share important information to students. We also have a Peace March around our Mt Roskill Community on the Friday of that week.







## SELECTING PEER MEDIATORS

When selecting Mediators, I make sure all ethnicities and genders are represented within the team. I head hunt students and encourage them to apply. It is important for the Mediation Service to reflect the student body and who the students can relate to and trust. I have heard on a number of occasions from Advanced Mediators that the thing they love is that “anyone” can be a Mediator; there is no hierarchy. They can apply in Year 11 and 12 at our school.

## BE VISIBLE!

We have a Mediation Banner hanging outside Student Services. We create posters, pamphlets, and assembly presentations. We take lots of photos of events like Peace Week and have a Peer Mediation photo board. If you have time, it is really effective for Mediators to go into Year 9 classes and facilitate a lesson on ‘peaceful conflict resolution’.



## BUDGET

We have a budget to pay for badges, training with the Peace Foundation and other agencies, Peace Week activities, Peace Symposium and administration costs.

### PRIZE GIVING

Its important to acknowledge the mediators with ‘Peer Mediators of the Year’ awards at the end of the years Prize giving..

Remember this has been developed over a 30 year period!

Everything starts somewhere. Better to start than to do nothing at all



I think Mediation skills are very important if we are serious about addressing the pervasive violence in our society. I want students to be ‘Ambassadors of Social Justice’, standing up against bullying in the school community and standing FOR respect and fairness for all. This means a Mediation Service is more than having confidential mediations behind closed doors. It is about being part of a large social justice movement within the school, where people and diversity is appreciated and valued, and injustice addressed.

These are some ideas of how to set up or strengthen your LtPM Service but please remember that you and your students are the experts on your school, so develop a Peer Mediation Service that fits with your vision for your school and your schools’ needs