

Students clean graffiti from  
a schoolyard fence



# Parent-to-Parent Guide

## *Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools*

*Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline*



**POWER-PAC**

Elementary Justice Committee  
Fall 2012

**A COFI PROJECT**

# Parent-to-Parent



“The revolving door of punishment—suspensions, expulsions, arrests—puts our children on the streets, and on the road to gangs and prison. This is the crisis of the school-to-prison pipeline.”

–Lynn Morton, parent



“The big idea of *restorative justice* is that students can and should learn to understand why their misbehavior is wrong and be allowed the opportunity to ‘make it right’.”

–Nelida Torres, parent

“*Because of the changes in the discipline code, now parents can help schools create alternatives to kicking children out, or making criminals out of them.*”

–Ruby Murphy, grandparent



# > Stop the school-to-prison pipeline

Dear Friends,

For too many of our children, “school discipline” has meant getting suspended or expelled—starting as young as *kindergarten*—being arrested, *even in grade school*—and ending up on the streets or in jail—without an education.

We are Chicago Public School parents, from many different neighborhoods and backgrounds, raising kids of all ages. We work together in POWER-PAC, and built our “**Elementary Justice Campaign: Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline**” because we’ve felt at times that school discipline works against—not with—our children and families.

## A better approach to student discipline: *restorative justice* in Chicago Public Schools

It took us three years, but in 2007, parents and community groups won new policies for discipline in Chicago Public Schools. Instead of the rigid and arbitrary rules of “zero tolerance” there is a new philosophy of **restorative justice** in the **Student Code of Conduct**.

Now, schools, parents, and communities can organize school based programs such as Peace Circles, Peer Juries, community service, and more as alternatives to suspension, expulsion or arrest.

**Restorative justice emphasizes teaching the student who misbehaved and offering that student a chance to “repair the harm” that he or she caused.**

We know from our own families that the chance to learn from mistakes—and fix the damage that has been done—is how we build trust and community. Restorative justice in schools teaches children to understand the impact of their behavior and take responsibility.

Parents have to be involved, and take the initiative in local schools. But we also need to know our rights, and understand the system! Part of this guide is sharing what we believe is important to know when your son or daughter is suspended, expelled, or otherwise punished in a way that you think is unfair or inappropriate.

Finally—we want to inspire parents across the city to work together to make sure that these new policies and practices are put into place. Let’s prevent misbehavior and resolve conflicts before violence or other bad things happen to more of our children.

Parents and grandparents working together helps build a new non-violent culture in our families, schools and communities. We’ve seen it happen, and we invite you to join us in our campaign to protect our children and see them ALL succeed!



### **The Parents of POWER-PAC**

Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew—Policy Action Council  
Elementary Justice Committee



## Parent-to-Parent > Elementary Justice Campaign

"My child never had problems with other teachers, but, in sixth grade, this teacher made him feel like he was a bad kid and that he never did anything right. He began to believe it. In that one year, he went from being a really good student to an angry, disruptive kid."

"My foster daughter was suspended for cursing in Spanish; she doesn't even speak Spanish."

"My niece was suspended from kindergarten for 5 days for fighting in the lunchroom."

"My son was suspended for looking out the window."

"My 7th grade daughter was suspended 3 times for talking during lunch—they threatened to expel her."

**"Restorative justice is about getting power back to a community... When people who caused harm have conversation with those who were harmed, it brings restoration and healing to the community."**

—Lynn Morton, parent

### Parents launched the Elementary Justice Campaign because zero tolerance punishments like suspensions, expulsions, and arrests aren't working.

These punitive approaches are not making our schools any safer—they just discourage and criminalize our children—putting too many farther and farther behind:

"Nearly one in four black male students in Chicago Public Schools was suspended at least once last year, a rate that is twice as high as the district average... a near doubling of the number of suspended students over the past five years... the Coalition for Juvenile Justice... found that a student who is suspended just once is three times more likely to drop out of school."

—Catalyst Chicago cover story, June 2009



Southside Forum



POWER-PAC leaders talked with hundreds of parents across Chicago.



Parents organize to end the school-to-prison pipeline.

## POWER-PAC: Parents working together across Chicago

Our children attend Chicago Public Schools, and in 2003 we came together—African-American and Latino parents and grandparents—around shared experiences and concerns. Our schools have one of the highest rates of suspension in the nation, and African-American and Latino children are disproportionately affected by suspension, expulsion and arrest! Too many of us had experienced situations in which our children were disciplined harshly, in ways that didn't make sense to us. *How are our children supposed to learn if they are suspended and sent home?*

We spoke with hundreds of families at forums across the city. We heard horror stories of what was happening to our young children. 37% of the parents we surveyed had had a child suspended and more than 4 out of 5 families thought the suspension was not appropriate and not handled well.

We knew there had to be a better way, so we brought our concerns to public officials, juvenile justice advocates, lawyers, teachers, and policy people. We went in search of alternative approaches to school discipline and found some innovative ideas in Los Angeles and Minneapolis. And, we developed a set of recommendations for what needed to change in Chicago Public Schools.

### There is a better way!

We recommended the following changes in discipline policies in Chicago Public Schools. Some of them are already becoming reality, as you'll read in the next few pages. Some of them we are still working together to achieve, and someday they will be in place too, to help our children and grandchildren!

## POWER-PAC Recommendations

### 1 End out-of-school suspensions.

- Use out-of-school suspensions only as a last resort when a behavior is a serious threat to safety.

### 2 Reinstate recess and breaks in the school day.

- Work to expand the school day to allow for recess and more breaks.
- Increase the time kids spend in physical education classes.
- Ban silent lunches and assure that lunchrooms are well monitored.

### 3 Implement prevention programs.

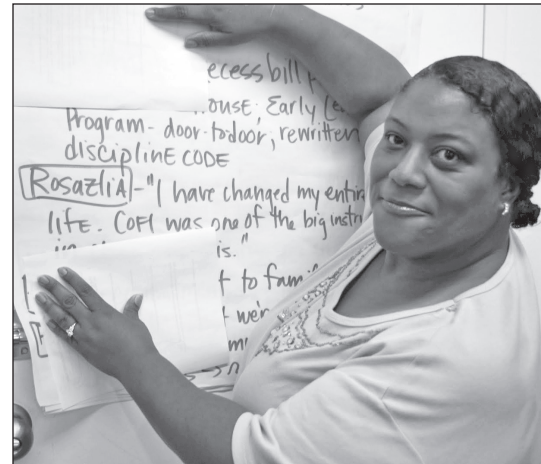
- Establish programs that bring restorative justice and violence prevention practices and skills into elementary and high schools.

### 4 Provide training on discipline policies.

- Develop a standard training and orientation program about discipline policies that is offered to parents, teachers and school administrators each school year.
- Always provide information to parents in a parent-friendly and straightforward format.

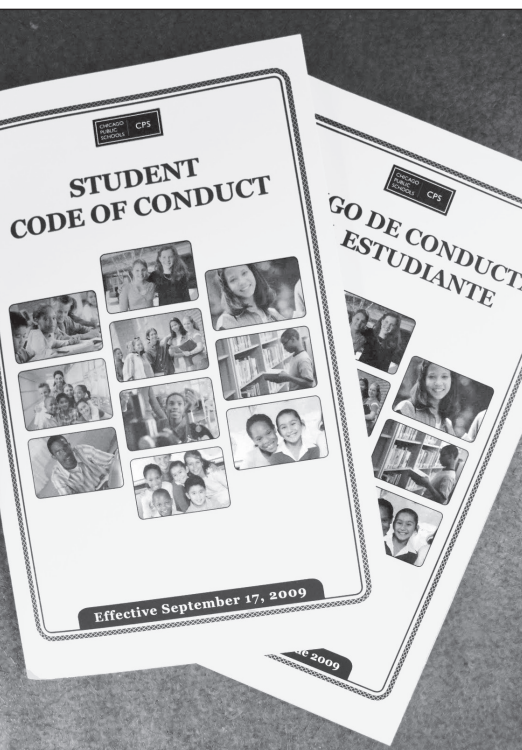
### 5 Parents need to be involved in oversight and accountability.

- Include parents at the city-wide level in setting and reviewing discipline policies, and at each school.
- Require that schools provide monthly reports on the number of suspensions and other disciplinary actions—available to the public.



Parents share their experiences and ideas and organize to have a voice in school policies.

## Parent-to-Parent > Parents won changes to discipline policies



Parents can read about school discipline policies, including new restorative justice options, in the CPS Student Code of Conduct.

It took three years of making our voices heard, but, in 2007, we won the support of CPS officials—notably Board President Michael Scott—who, along with the CPS Law Department and our community allies, worked with us to rewrite the Chicago school discipline code!

The new Chicago **Student Code of Conduct** replaces the rigid and arbitrary rules of zero tolerance with a new philosophy known as “**restorative justice**”.

“The Board encourages principals and administrators to adopt and implement restorative justice philosophies and practices as additional tools to address student misconduct.”

—CPS Student Code of Conduct 2011-12

Restorative justice teaches children ways to handle conflict without violence. It’s a way to build better and safer schools *right now*—and to create hope and change in our neighborhoods. It might look different across communities, settings, or situations, but there are key ideas.

### Key ideas of restorative justice

- Bring together all involved, including the offender and, if appropriate, the victim.
- Recognize that the student who committed the offense did harm to the school and community.
- Offer the student a chance for to “repair the harm” caused. For example, if a student vandalizes the bathroom wall, then he or she should clean it off and repaint. Or if a student stole money, he or she should repay the victim.
- Find a way to welcome the student who did the harm back into the community—it does no one any good for the children to be out on the streets.
- Balance the needs of the community, the victim and the offender by involving the community in figuring out how to repair the damage done.



POWER-PAC meets with then CPS President, Michael Scott, to hammer out changes in the Student Code of Conduct.





Parents from across Chicago worked together to shape policy recommendations, and get the ear of school leaders. POWER-PAC joined forces with community allies to win changes in discipline policies.

## Changes in the revised Student Code of Conduct

### Restorative justice options instead of suspension

Now, schools, parents, and communities have options to organize school-based restorative justice programs, such as Peace Circles, Peer Juries, community service, and more.

These options can be used instead of suspensions—for certain offenses categorized as Groups 1–4. These offenses cover a wide range of student misbehavior, including *swearing, disrupting the class, excessive tardiness, forgery, fighting, vandalism, theft (under \$150)*, and others.

### Schools don't *have to* call police for minor offenses

Schools no longer *must* call police for many misbehaviors. In the Student Code of Conduct, there are inappropriate behaviors that are marked with a double asterisk (\*\*). This means the school has the flexibility to call—or not call—police.

Too many schools are so short on resources that they fall back on calling the police to respond to behaviors that they *can* deal with internally.

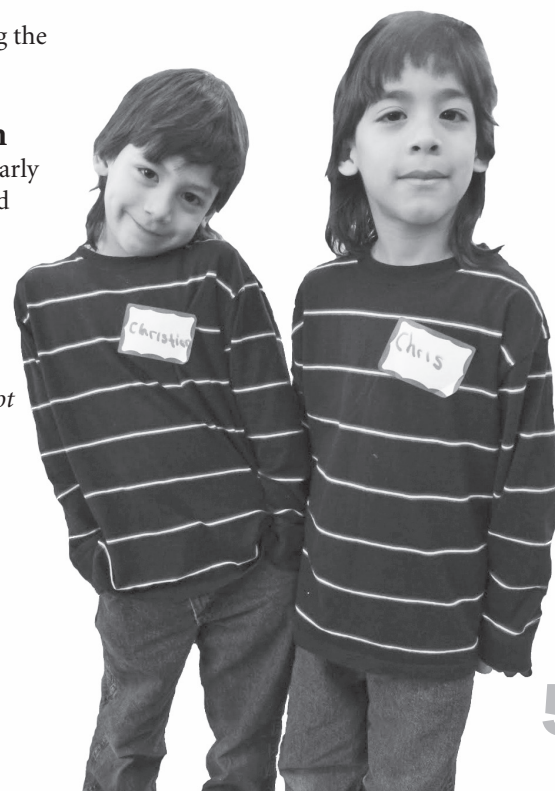
### Common sense policies for preschool and kindergarten

When we fought for changes in the Student Code of Conduct, we particularly wanted to protect our youngest children from being punished unfairly and being suspended from school!

We won changes:

- The Student Code of Conduct does not apply to preschoolers and kindergarteners. If these little ones misbehave, schools and teachers are instructed to respond to with constructive consequences. Schools *cannot* suspend or expel preschool or kindergarten students.

The Elementary Justice Campaign aims to keep children safe and in school.



### School programs that use restorative justice

Maybe you have heard of programs like *peer juries*, *peace centers* or *circles*, and *community service*. You might hear other phrases like *group conferencing*, *victim impact panels* or *victim-offender mediation*. These are restorative justice programs, and can be part of school discipline.

**Peace Circles** are a structured way for people to talk from the heart—and really listen to each other. Circles can help a group to get to the root of what is going on, build respect, and resolve conflicts. The use of peacemaking circles is based, in part, on circle rituals common to traditional Native American and African communities.

Circles can be facilitated by a trained parent, school staff person or community agency. They bring together the victim, the offender and other interested or affected community members to create a safe space to reach an understanding of the event, to find ways to heal for everyone involved, and to prevent future problems.

Usually, a healing plan incorporates commitments by the school, community, and family to work with and support the offender, along with the offender committing to work to make things right.

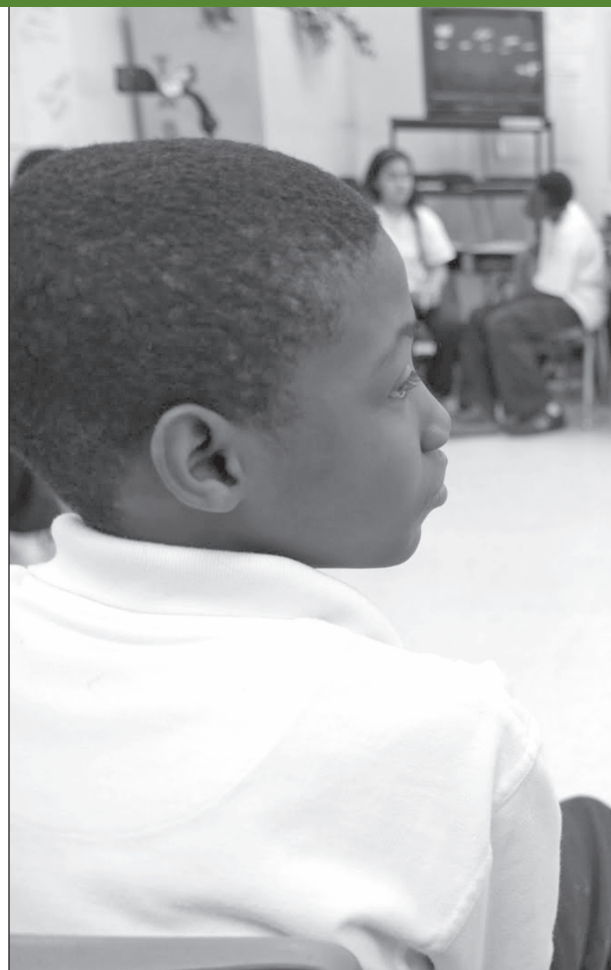
**Peer Juries** are a way for students to hold each other accountable, and decide how to make things right. The students themselves are trained in restorative justice practice and serve as a jury for their peers.

Peer Juries most commonly are used with middle and high school students, although children as young as 5th grade have been part of peer juries to address misbehaviors in elementary schools.

The Peer Jury experience becomes a learning opportunity for both jury members and other students involved. Jury training and support within a school setting is usually provided by a faculty advisor, or sometimes an outside community agency.

**Community Service** includes a range of volunteer or service activities that students can do to give back to the community, and “pay back” for the harm caused. The activity can serve the school, or the larger community.

Service can teach the children values of caring and help them feel that they are a contributing member of the community. The children on the front cover of this Guide provide an example of students cleaning graffiti off of the school yard wall as a way of serving their school community.



A daily “circle of power and respect” is a centerpiece of Marquette Elementary’s new discipline strategy. Already, suspensions are down.

**“When children are suspended or expelled, they often are put out on the streets—in more danger than whatever trouble they were into at school. Alternatives to suspension can be about teaching our children responsibility, and de-escalating the trouble.”**

—Felipa Mena, parent

Peer Juries are one way to apply restorative justice. In the 2008-09 school year, 2,000 suspensions were averted in Chicago Public Schools using this program. Here are some of the fifty students from five schools trained as peer jurors by the organization Alternatives, Inc.





UNCAGED PHOTOGRAPHY, RONNIE WACHTER

### **Peace Circle: the sixth-graders and the teacher**

At an elementary school on Chicago's west side, a group of sixth grade girls were acting up in class. They talked back to the teacher. They laughed and made faces while she was talking. The teacher was frustrated and could not believe how the girls were treating her. Despite numerous referrals for disciplinary action, the behavior kept up.

At one point, the girls got referred to the Peace Center where Peacemakers—parents trained as circle keepers—had a suggestion: "Why not hold a Peace Circle with the girls and teacher together?" The teacher agreed.

In the Peace Circle, the teacher told her story—how she grew up on the west side, too, and she talked deeply with the girls about what motivated her love of teaching. At the same time, the girls were able to calmly communicate their concerns about what was happening in the classroom. The teacher understood and agreed with some of their complaints. By the end of the session, the relationship between the girls and teacher was changed completely. They had built trust. They felt that they really knew each other and had learned to respect one another. And the problems in the classroom went away.

### **Peace Circle: the high-school student and the security guard**

At one southside Chicago high school that is using a restorative justice approach, a young man came in late to school one day and exchanged words with the security guard. He yelled and she hollered back, and it escalated from there. Soon, the principal heard the yelling, and asked them to sit in a Peace Circle.

At first, the security guard refused, saying the student had threatened her. She thought he should be suspended or arrested for talking that way to her. But, after some convincing, both agreed to participate.

In the Peace Circle, it came out that this young man was having problems at home—his mother had been arrested, and he was caring for his younger siblings. He was late to school because of all that he was dealing with at home, and he was mad and frustrated with himself for letting it all overwhelm him. The security guard was angry too. She felt disrespected. But as she listened, she came to empathize with his situation. She even offered to spend time with the boy to help support him.

By the end of the Peace Circle, the two agreed to speak more respectfully to one another, and to spend time together. The student was not suspended or arrested. Instead, he had found someone to listen to him and to be there for him, and both parties involved had learned a lesson about themselves and about each other.



Students can talk and listen in the Gale Academy Peace Room.

### The new Student Code of Conduct—not ‘one size fits all’

We worked to make sure that schools have the flexibility to deal with discipline issues in their own building. The new Code lets schools take into consideration things like the age of the child, their previous record, or the particular circumstances. Schools have to use their best judgment.

Many times, two schools in the same neighborhood are interpreting the rules very differently—leading to drastically different suspension and arrest rates.

“While these troubled students are away from school, they lose more ground in an educational system that already has proved difficult for them. Without an education, they are more likely to break the law, with increasingly serious ramifications, or become victims of violence.”

—Chicago Tribune,  
January 25, 2010

### What do you do when—despite the restorative justice alternatives available—your school still chooses a punishment like suspension or expulsion?

“When POWER-PAC conducted its forums with parents from across the city, we found that in more than 2 out of 3 suspensions, the parents had not been notified appropriately. Many times they had instead heard about the suspension from their child, from another parent, or only learned of it after the fact.” —POWER-PAC Forum Report

### Educate yourself and know that you and your child have a right to:

- > Be notified if your child is in trouble at school
- > Answer the charges—your child must be allowed to tell his or her side of the story
- > Appeal the punishment. Be aware that a *suspension* will proceed even while your appeal is being reviewed. However, if the punishment is an *expulsion referral*, your child has the right to stay in school until a final decision is made, and you have the right to have an attorney at the expulsion hearing.

If your child is in expulsion proceedings, for legal information you can contact:  
Northwestern University - Children and Family Justice Center  
357 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611  
Phone (312) 503-8576, TDD (312) 503-4472  
[www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc](http://www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc)

If you have concerns, find out who at your school is in charge of discipline (sometimes there is a disciplinarian, sometimes it is the Assistant Principal) and then be sure they follow the right steps as set in the Student Code of Conduct. Once the school makes the decision about the punishment, or makes a referral for expulsion, **you have a right to appeal:**

- > If you do not agree with the decision,
- > If you think the school chose a consequence that is too harsh,
- > If you think the offense was not categorized correctly,
- > If you think the child was wrongly accused.

#### How to appeal the decision

- > First, ask the Principal to review the discipline decision.
- > Second, if you are not satisfied with the Principal’s response, you can write a letter requesting an appeal. You can appeal the disciplinary action to the Network Chief of Schools, or if your child attends a charter, contract, or performance schools, send your letter to the Director of School Support of the Office of New Schools. Put it in writing! A simple letter like this will work:



**“Too many parents get the message that their children are not welcome in schools, but it is really hard to find an alternative once your kid is out. Hold your ground. You can fight for their right to stay in school.”**

—Gloria Harris, parent  
(grandmother of 18!)

Mr. or Ms. Network Chief of Schools  
Chicago Public Schools—Network Office  
(Contact CPS or your school for the  
name and address of the Network Office.)

October 5, 2012

Dear Network Chief of Schools,

My name is Mary Smith (your name) and I am writing to appeal the 5-day suspension (fill in the exact days of the suspension or note if it is an expulsion referral) given on April 1, 2010 (fill in the date) to my child, Joey Smith (put your child's name).

I don't agree with this consequence and am asking you to please review the disciplinary action taken.

Please contact me with your response. You can contact me at 1234 West Center Street, home phone 773-123-4567, cell phone 312-123-4567 or email address Marys@gmail.com (fill in address, home and cell phone, and email address if you have one).

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Mary Smith  
**Mary Smith**  
(print and sign your name)



**“The Austin Peace Center is a much needed program in this building and I can see improvements in the grades, attitude, and behavior of my two students who are a part of the program.”**

—Melissa Moody-Shumaker,  
5th/6th grade teacher

**“When we asked one young lady why she responded more respectfully to the Peacemakers than to other adults in her life, including the school staff, she said ‘The people at the Peace Center treat me like I’m a human.’”**

—Laurella Scaggs, parent and  
peacemaker at Brunson School



Peacemakers and POWER-PAC leaders, Laurella Scaggs, Felipa Mena and Catherine Jones

### Success at Brunson School in Austin

When POWER-PAC parents launched the Elementary Justice Campaign in 2005, Brunson Specialty School in Chicago’s Westside Austin community had had more than 300 out-of-school suspensions in one year—out of a school of 900 kindergarten through 5th graders.

Parents secured funding from the Cook County Juvenile Division of the State’s Attorney’s office for the first **Peace Center**, an afterschool program at Brunson to test a **restorative justice** approach.

The program proved successful beyond the parents’ dreams. An evaluation through an examination of grade reports, teacher check-ins, and attendance records found that 80% of the participating students showed improvements academically and the teachers reported significant changes in their behavior and attitude.



At the Austin Peace Center

**“Every school should have a Peace Center.”**

—Marietta Morton,  
parent and peacemaker  
at Brunson School

### Peace Centers expand

All run by parents, the Peace Centers have expanded to three sites: two elementary schools and a high school. In total, the program has provided intensive restorative justice programming and conflict resolutions skills to over 250 eight- to eighteen-year-olds—in lieu of suspension or punitive consequence. Dozens of parents have been trained as “peacemakers” and circle keepers. They facilitate weekly groups with students who are referred by teachers, parents or themselves—based on a concern about the student’s behavior or a belief that the student is at-risk of serious trouble at school or in the community. Peacemakers mentor the children who learn de-escalation and conflict resolution skills that can be utilized at home, at school, and on the streets.





**“Restorative justice gives students opportunities to express themselves and to talk about why they did what they did, and to learn from it. We provide an alternative to suspension or detention and now the number of suspensions is on its way down. In the circles, the students get to know each other at a deeper level. Considering how many areas feed into our school now, it is so important that we build respect across different neighborhoods or backgrounds.”**

–Felipa Mena, parent and peacemaker at Wells High School



Parents and grandparents are getting involved in so many ways! You, too, can make a difference. Participate in your local school, and work with other parents and the school staff to make restorative justice come to life.



## The Peace Center at Wells High School

The Wells High School Peace Center started in 2010. It provides programming during the student’s lunch hours with peace circles led by trained parent peacemakers.

It was started by Felipa Mena who knows first hand what is at stake; her son was killed the summer before the Peace Center opened—one of seven young men lost to street violence in just one night. She and the other parent peacemakers have graduated over 80 students over the three years of the program.

**“Just this week, we worked with one young lady who was thinking about dropping out of high school. She really just needed someone to listen. When I was coming up, I didn’t have anyone listening to me. I am so happy that I can be there for these young people today.”**

– Ruby Murphy, parent and peacemaker at Wells High School

## Parent-to-Parent > Help make it happen!

**“Getting restorative justice adopted by Chicago Public Schools is a big success. Parents organized to change the rules on how schools discipline children, but parents also have to take things into their own hands and organize programs in local schools.”**

–Catherine Jones, parent



Catherine Jones and Governor Quinn

**Parents are the key to making restorative justice a reality in Chicago schools!**

### **Parents have to work together to make restorative justice happen in Chicago schools!**

*Regular everyday parents have made a difference! You can too!* Here are some things we’ve learned working together in POWER-PAC, and in the Elementary Justice Campaign.

- 1 Educate yourself** and collect information about how restorative justice works. Look at the resources you have within reach and take trainings on restorative justice.
- 2 Talk with more parents** about your goal. Build a supportive team, or group of parents and grandparents, to accomplish this goal.
- 3 Identify your allies** at your school and in your community. Many teachers are interested in moving in this direction, and many administrators know about restorative justice from trainings offered by CPS. Police can also be allies—they do not want to be called for every little thing at the school. Churches, community groups, business people, and many others may want to help to make a less violent and more peaceful environment in the school and community.
- 4 Bring your ideas** to the school administration and your Local School Council. You may want to offer to work with them to bring funds to the school to support this work.
- 5 Keep at it!** Remember, to really change the school culture will take time, everyone working together, and training to bring the circle-keeping, mediation, and conflict resolution skills to your school’s community. *Good luck!*



Celebrating the power of parents!



## > Dedication, acknowledgments, and resources for parents

*We dedicate this guide to the memory of the late Chicago Public School President Michael Scott who worked tirelessly by our side to see changes made in Chicago's school discipline code.*

We appreciate the great work and partnership of the advocacy groups listed below, and others including the Chicago Department of Families and Support Services, the Chicago Police Department, the Chicago Public School Law Department, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Cook County Juvenile Court, the Cook County States Attorney's Juvenile Division, and the Southwest Youth Collaborative.

We are grateful to the many individuals and foundations who have been so generous in supporting our work.

Special thanks to the Steans Family Foundation for funding and supporting the creation of this guide and the development of workshops to help parents to take control of restorative change in their schools.

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### Resources

#### **Alternatives, Inc.**

4730 N. Sheridan Road  
Chicago, IL 60640  
Phone: 773-506-7474  
[www.alternativesyouth.org](http://www.alternativesyouth.org)  
Provides training on restorative justice and supports peer juries in CPS high schools.

#### **Blocks Together**

3453 W. North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647  
Phone: 773-276-2194  
[www.blockstogether.org](http://www.blockstogether.org)  
Organizes youth and residents in the West Humboldt Park to push for alternatives to punitive discipline in schools.

#### **Chicago Area Project**

55 E. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604  
Phone: 312-663-3574  
[www.chicagoareaproject.org](http://www.chicagoareaproject.org)  
Provide juvenile justice diversion program and consulting on restorative justice.

#### **Community Justice for Youth Institute**

10 W. 35th Street, Room 9C4-1  
Chicago, IL 60616  
Phone: 312-842-4687  
TTY: 312-842-4727  
[www.communityjustice4youth.org](http://www.communityjustice4youth.org)  
Provides trainings on restorative justice, including Circle Keeper training, and runs Community Panels for Youth, a juvenile justice court diversion program.

#### **Equip for Equality - Legal Advocacy Program**

20 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60602  
Phone: (312) 341-0022  
Toll free (800) 537-2632  
TTY (800) 610-2779  
[www.equipforequality.org](http://www.equipforequality.org)  
Provides advocacy and information for students with special needs in expulsion cases.

#### **Northwestern School of Law Children and Family Justice Center**

Bluhm Legal Clinic  
357 E. Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60611  
Phone: 312-503-8576  
TTY: 312-503-4472  
[www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc](http://www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc)  
Provides advocacy and information for students in expulsion cases.

#### **Project NIA**

1530 W. Morse Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60626  
[www.project-nia.org](http://www.project-nia.org)  
Phone: 773-392-5165  
Provides restorative justice training and consulting.

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## Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew - Policy Action Council (POWER-PAC)

is a cross-cultural, citywide membership organization of low-income parents. Our mission is to build a strong voice for low-income, immigrant and working families by uniting parents across race and community around issues of importance to families.

We run Peace Centers at three Chicago schools, and provide parent-to-parent workshops on restorative justice. This is part of POWER-PAC's **Elementary Justice Campaign**, to change school discipline policies that have had such a negative impact, particularly on children of color.

We work on other issues, too. Our **Early Learning Campaign** aims to get more low-income children

of color enrolled in quality early education and preschool. We work to break through the barriers that exist for too many families by addressing both policy and practical issues.

**Recess for All!** is our campaign to restore recess in Chicago elementary schools. Children are healthier, happier, better students when they have recess!



### POWER-PAC

Parents Organized to Win, Educate and  
Renew - Policy Action Council

A COFI Project

**Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)**'s mission is to strengthen the power and voice of low-income and working families at all levels of civic life—from local institutions and communities to the city and state policy arenas.

Founded in 1995, COFI is driven by a deep commitment to social justice, and grounded in the time-tested principles, strategies, accomplishments, and approaches of community organizing. COFI's model of Family Focused Organizing provides intensive and systematic leadership development, and ongoing organizing expertise.

We organize low-income parents of color (mostly mothers and grandmothers) who, in turn, have built local and citywide organizations that are fighting for change around issues affecting families, and attracting attention nationally to their innovative policy solutions and organizing steps.

COFI helps to build family-supportive communities by developing parents' capacities to lead—to improve their lives, strengthen their families and better their communities.



### COFI Community Organizing and Family Issues

1436 W. Randolph Street, 4th floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60607

312 226-5141

[www.cofionline.org](http://www.cofionline.org)