

PARENT PEACE CENTER MODEL

A "HOW TO
GUIDE"



COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND FAMILY ISSUES

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BACKGROUND & HISTORY



Who is COFI?

Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), founded in 1995, is a Chicago-based grassroots force that builds the power and voice of low-income and working families at all levels of civic life. It is a center and a resource for Family Focused Organizing, leadership development, and community building focused on the well-being of children, youth, and families. Through our intensive and systematic leadership development and organizing process, parents develop skills, confidence, and the organized power to win improvements in schools, communities, and public policies. For more information, visit www.cofionline.org.



Who is POWER-PAC Illinois?

Parents Organized to Win Educate and Renew – Policy Action Council (POWER-PAC) Illinois is a cross-cultural, statewide membership organization of COFI-trained parents whose mission is to build the voice and power of low-income, immigrant and working families by uniting parents across race and community around issues of importance to children and families. For more information, visit <https://cofionline.org/the-work/power-pac-il/>



POWER-PAC's

Elementary Justice Campaign



2003 High Rates of Suspension & Expulsions. POWER-PAC leaders' children and families were being suspended and expelled for normal child-like behaviors. At the time, Brunson Specialty School, an elementary school of 900 kindergarten to 5th grade students, had over 300 suspensions a year.



2004 Elementary Justice Campaign Launched. In 2004, POWER-PAC Launches City-wide Campaign to Stop the School to Prison Pipeline.

Talking About the Problem. POWER-PAC parent leaders presented their recommendations to the Chicago Public School Board.

Working with School District. Then School Board President, Michael Scott, committed to support the parents around their goal to lessen the dependence on exclusionary discipline and agreed to fund parent-led research.



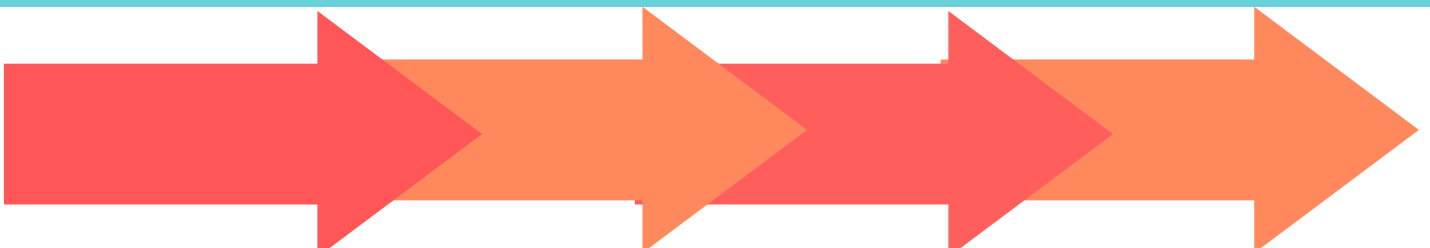
2005 Finding An Alternative. POWER-PAC held 3 community forums and traveled to Minneapolis and Los Angeles to learn about restorative justice and peacekeeping efforts in elementary schools there.

Launch of First Parent Peace Center. POWER-PAC leaders tailored staff-led peace centers to create and launch their Parent Peace Center Model at Brunson Elementary School.

Since then, more than half a million dollars have supported parent-led restorative justice programs in schools.



2007 Policy Change. POWER-PAC won a major rewrite of the Chicago Student Code of Conduct to remove “Zero Tolerance” language and replace it with a philosophy of “restorative justice” with alternative options to using overly punitive discipline. Schools were no longer required to call police on students for minor infractions and preschool and kindergartners were excluded from out-of school suspensions.



Parent Peace Center Model

Who?

Peace Keepers trained in restorative justice, with the support of the WHOLE school community

What?

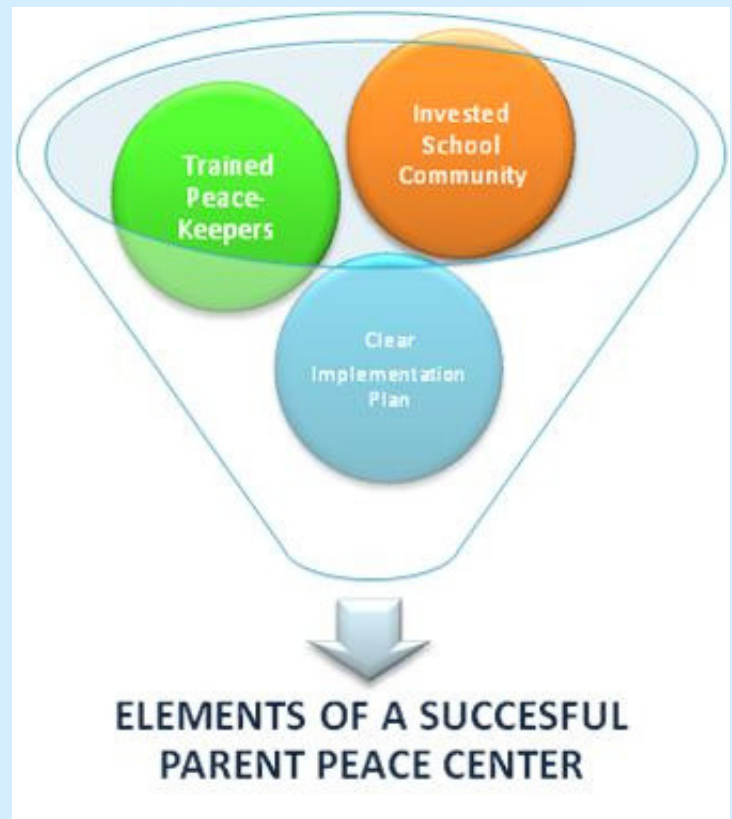
Peace keepers use restorative justice practices such as 1 on 1 talks, Peace Circles, & Family Conferencing to LISTEN TO, GUIDE, HOLD ACCOUNTABLE, & REPAIR RELATIONSHIP HARM.

Why?

The Peace Center serves as an alternative to punitive discipline. The Peace Keepers support students, help students resolve conflict in peaceful ways, and contribute to the creation of a safe and supportive school culture for everyone!

Intervention. Peace-keepers are called on by school staff to respond to incidents or behavior, conflict, and relationships that have been harmed between students or adults and students. All persons involved come together to talk about how they were harmed, and come up with a plan for how to repair the harm. Peace-keepers follow-up with students to support and ensure follow-through.

Prevention. Restorative Justice should also be used as a prevention practice, and as a support to all students. Peace-keepers can support teachers' use of Restorative Justice to strengthen relationships in classroom. It is important to promote students' access to the Peace Center, as needed for additional support.



Parent Peace Center Model

When?

Schools and Peace-makers decide on designated time - it may be offered during school and/or after school.

Where?

Peace Centers work best when operating in the school, preferably in a safe & private room, that is designed by and for the students.

Why?

Why Parents & Community Members as Peace Keepers?

- They are part of the community, they often know family and community context & background
- Students may feel more comfortable with adults who are not school authority figures
- Teachers can practice Restorative Justice in classrooms, but often have less capacity to run a Peace Center



Implementation Timeline

This timeline is meant as a guide. They are numbered to help create a flow, but this process is intended to be adapted to your situation, reordered, lengthened, and in many cases, certain steps will overlap. Use this timeline in a way that makes sense to you.

Preparing the Foundation

1. ASSESSING RESOURCES

- Assess resources
- Sample Budget
- Suggestions for Raising Funds

2. DISTRICT BUY-IN & GREENLIGHT

- Preparing for a meeting with School District
- Identify potential school(s)

3. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP BUY-IN & GREEN LIGHT

- Obtain green-light and school leadership buy-in (including but not limited to school administration, parent, teacher and community decision-making bodies i.e. Local School Councils, PTA's, staff at school in charge of discipline and counseling)

Parent Peace Center

5. BUILDING YOUR PARENT TEAM (6 months)

- Parent Leadership Training Series
- COFI's Self, Family, & Team workshops
- Team building goals to support/compliment Peace Center Implementation

4. SET-UP & IMPLEMENTATION OF PARENT PEACE CENTER (1-2 months)

- Project Scheduling with school administration and stakeholders
- Focused Peace Keeper hiring and training of parents (2 months)
- Implementation Set-up (concurrent 2 months)

6. FOSTERING WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY BUY-IN & TRAINING (Ongoing)

- Wide stakeholder Introduction to Basic Key Ideas of Restorative Justice and the Peace Center Model for:
 - Teachers
 - Parents and Community
 - Students

A Note About Restorative Justice and Circle Keeper Training

Providing comprehensive Restorative Justice and Circle Keeper Training to a team of parent leaders is a critical piece of implementation that must not be overlooked or rushed. The capacity of the Peace Keeping team will be directly related to the quality of training that they receive. Not only should Peace Keepers receive training on the principles of Restorative Justice but learning the skills and techniques involved with keeping a circle are what will set them apart from other well meaning adults. Research well respected and qualified trainers and Restorative Justice practitioners and allow the time and space for learning among your parent leaders!

1. Assess Resources

Think through your current and potential assets by considering the following elements needed to implement a Peace Center:

1. Parent commitment
2. Allies within the School
3. Relationships (allies and neutral parties) with school district & local governments.
4. Your Argument - gather data from schools and anecdotes from parents
5. Funds and Potential Resources

Determine if the school is a good fit:

1. A Strong Parent base
2. Trust Between Parents & School
3. Alignment with School Vision, Goals & Direction
4. Administrative and Structural Capacity

Who are our allies?

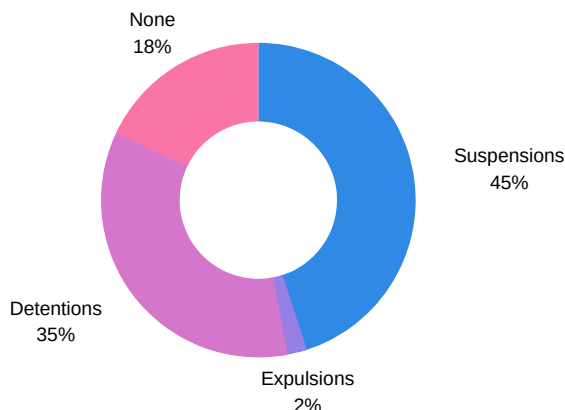
Assessing elements of fit will help you determine the strength of your relationships in the school and allow you to answer the following questions:

- Is the principal able to make this a priority?
- Are (some) teachers aware of the need?
- Is there trust between parents and staff?

If yes, you have strong allies within the school!

Data & Anecdotes

Do you have data on Exclusionary practices and any measures that RJ practices would impact?



Do we have relationships with clout?

Think of relationships that you have and will need to form in your local structure, among district, school board, and government representatives.

Rely on parent-connections! Do not assume that parents do not have connections or are not able to form these important relationships!

Start wherever you are to develop relationships & prepare for obtain district buy-in and school buy-in.

Raising Funds

- **Apply for Funds.** Foundations and local governments often offer grants to address community issues. The Peace Center can be considered a violence prevention effort.
- **Partner with local school district/schools.** They are often looking for innovative, sustainable, community-led solutions.
- **Organize.** Mobilize the community to assess local needs (high suspensions, expulsions, arrests and other punitive discipline rates). Then highlight need and offer Parent Peace Center as an effective alternative.

2. School District Buy-In & Greenlight

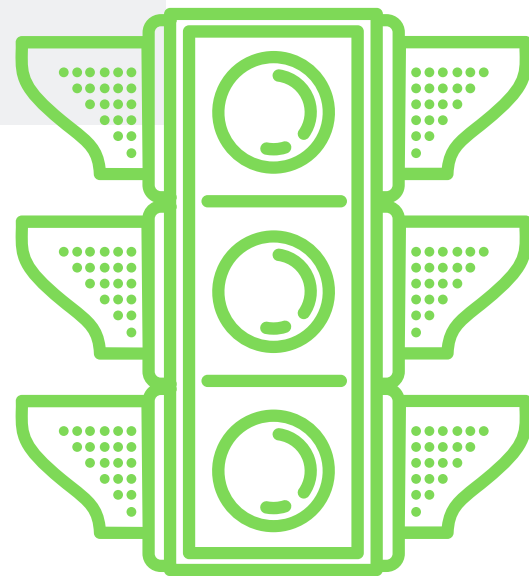
One of the first steps is to talk to your school district. In preparing for the meeting, it is helpful to think through your goals for the meeting, and what materials you need to accomplish them. Your goals for the meeting will vary, depending on how many resources you already have. Use the list below as a guide.

What are my goals for the meeting?

- Build relationship with School District
- Highlight the need to improve school discipline and support
- Introduce the Peace Center Model as an alternative to punitive discipline and as a resource for strengthening student support and school culture.
- Funding
- Commitment to partner with us on operating a peace center(s)
- Other: _____

What materials do I need to bring?

- Information on your organization and the work you carry out
- Data and testimonies that speaks to punitive discipline and impact it has on students and families
- Peace Center Model Pull-Out (Page 5)
- Information on resources needed and budget
- A short list of schools that are the best fit for partnering to open a Peace Center
- Other: _____



3. School Stakeholder Leadership Buy-In & Greenlight

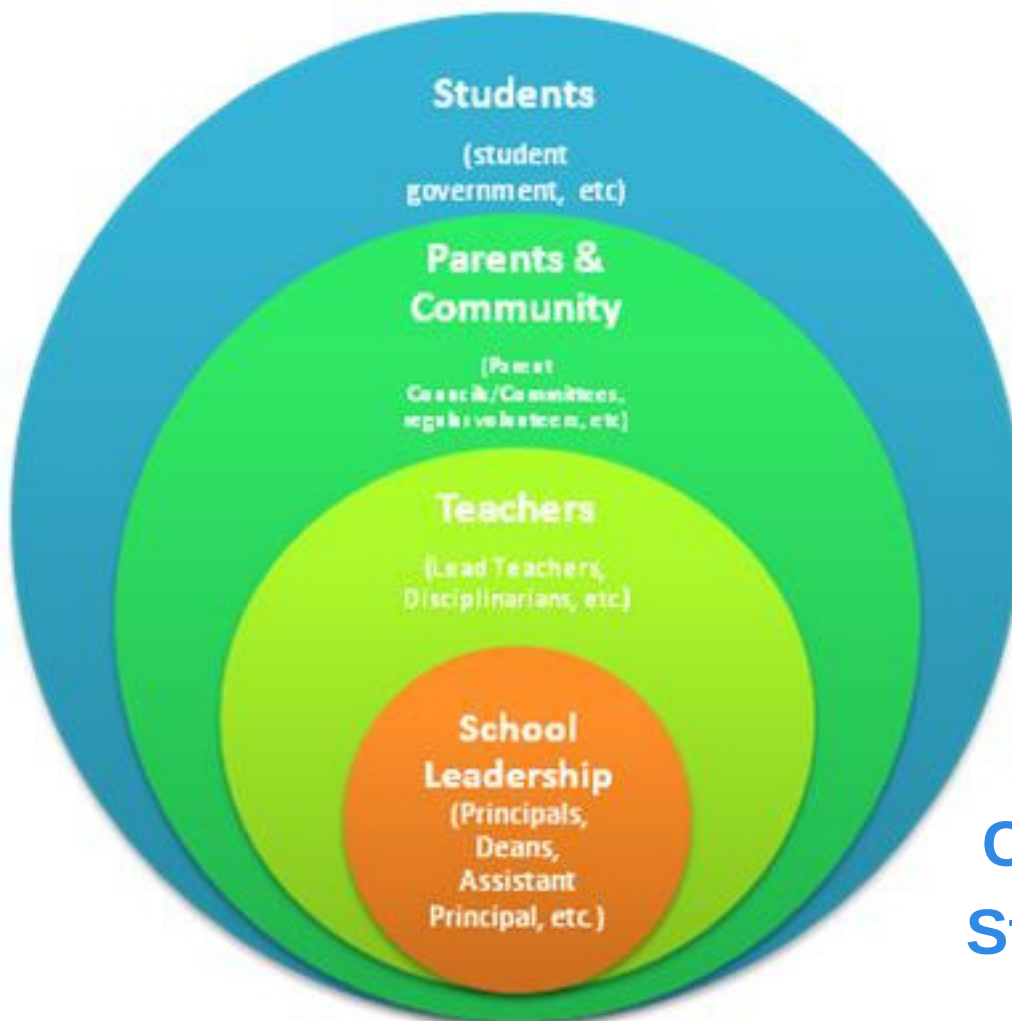
Once you have the resources needed and the green light from the School District it is important that the whole school community where the Peace Center will operate out of, is on board. To increase the effectiveness of a Peace Center, it is recommended you engage and include all school leadership before launching the Peace Center.

Set up meetings or ask to give presentations to as many stakeholder leadership bodies

Presentations should include:

- Introduction to your organization and work
- Information on the peace center model (including a short summary on the practice of Restorative Justice)
- Information to back up the effectiveness of the model
- An outline of commitment and expectations from stakeholders involved
- A listening ear
- Willingness to answer questions

There are some leadership bodies that include all or most stakeholders such as: Parent-Teacher Associations, Local School Councils, etc.



**School
Community
Stakeholders**

4. Building the Parent Leadership Team

It is important to have a team of parent leaders from the school go through a leadership development training.

Peace-keepers will most likely come from this group. Although not everyone will go on to become a peace keeper, this group will be knowledgeable on the practice, will support the model, and provide accountability with the school. (Read further for what accountability looks like)

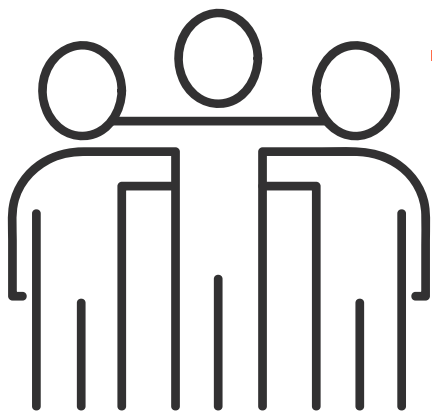
We offer COFI's Family, Focused Organizing Model as a tried and true parent leadership development process

Phase 1: Self, Family, & Team

Family Focused Organizing begins with the individual. Parents assess their needs, establish goals and begin to work toward achieving those goals. In the Self, Family & Team phase of the Family Focused Organizing model, parents attend an orientation session and six two-hour workshops.

The curriculum covers:

- Personal visioning
- Self-assessment and goal setting
- Building a web of support
- Overcoming obstacles and developing an action plan
- Family goal setting
- Team goal setting



Team Building

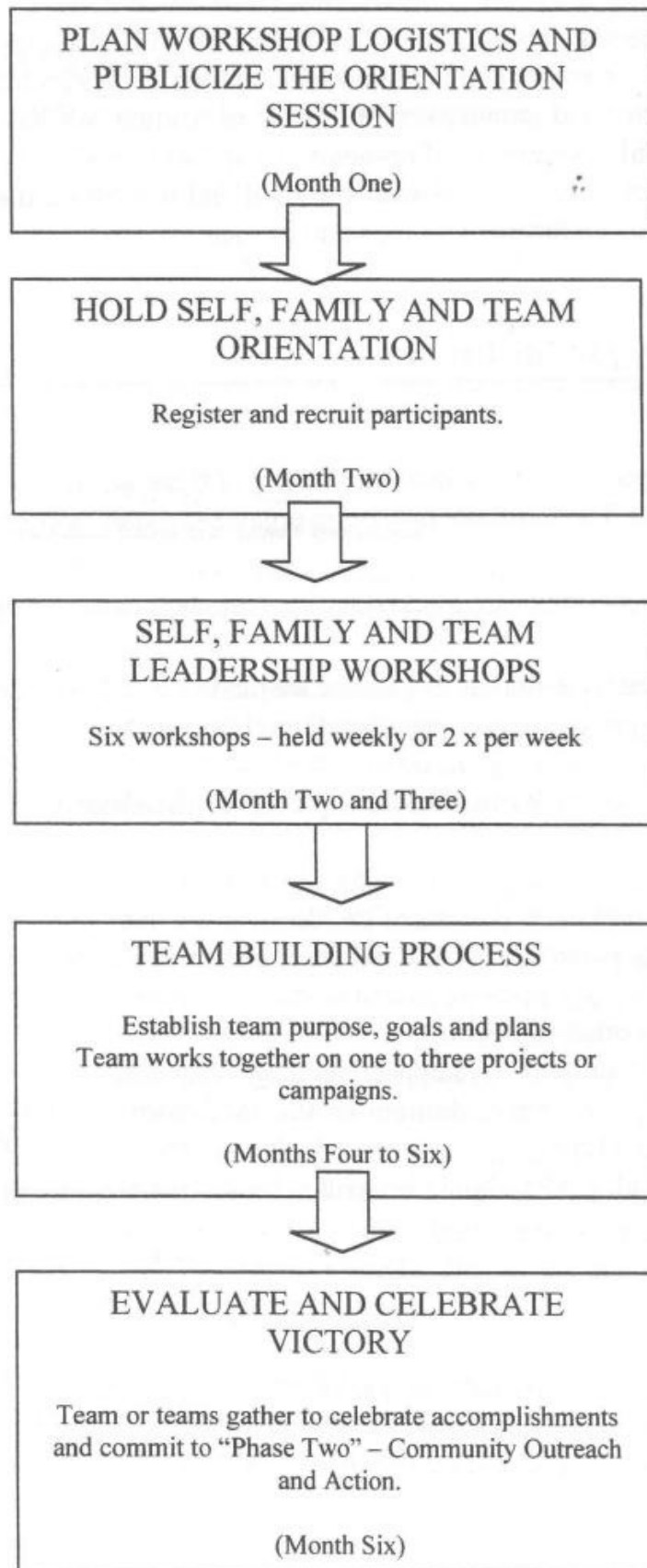
See diagram on page #. It demonstrates COFI's tested process for developing a team; includes generalized timescales.

Coming together around a common goal is necessary in any situation where people wish to make change. After enabling parents to become leaders and set goals for themselves, COFI teaches leaders Team Building. The team building process can take between 10 weeks and several months, and includes the following 9 elements:

- Defining team purpose
- Creating ground rules and team rituals
- Establishing a meeting format
- Planning action
- Implementing campaign or project plans
- Holding one another accountable
- Resolving conflict
- Evaluating the work
- Winning victories and celebrating accomplishments

Building a Parent Leadership Team:

Self, Family & Team/Team Building Phase One (Six Months)



5. Set-up & Implementation of the Parent Peace Center

Define the Implementation Process

- **Meet the School Staff who will be a part of the core Peace Center Team!**
- **Ask about the current discipline process! Don't aim to completely disrupt the flow!**
- **Think about how the Peace Center can act to intervene and to prevent harm.**

Questions to Consider:

Within the school staff, who should be a part of the core Peace Center Team?
Consider: Principal, Dean, Student Support Staff (Counselor, Psychologist, Social Worker), Parent Liaisons

How can we foster a restorative culture with small but efficient shifts in the disciplinary process?

How can we minimize the burden of additional paperwork needed from teachers and staff for the Peace Center?

In what ways will the Peace Center serve the school community?
Consider: How can this peaceful space serve staff and/or parents?

How can it be integrated into the current discipline processes?

Within the school schedule, when can Peace Keepers interact with students most effectively?
Consider: lunch periods; before / after school; free periods

5. Set-up & Implementation of the Parent Peace Center

Set-Up Process

1 Meet with Principal & Student Support Staff to Develop the Process

Ideally, this will not be your first introduction to any of these key players! Nonetheless, anyone who has a major role in the discipline process should be in attendance! Involve one or more of the Peace Keepers!

Goals:

- understand current disciplinary process
- identify Peace Keeping roles to intervene and prevent escalation within the typical process
- align Paperwork process

3 Set-Up & Decorate the Space

The Peace Keepers have the opportunity to make the space their own!

Goals:

- create a safe space for students
- use decorations to cater to multiple uses of the Peace Center (consider space for group circles, one-on-one chats, & solo reflection)

2 Meet with Peace Keepers for an Orientation to the Process

Use this time to receive input about the process and also to inspire! Remind them of their vision and engage in team-building activities!

Goals:

- introduce Paperwork process
- explain pathways to intervene and prevent
- train on specific tools and materials that will aid implementation (i.e. Circle centerpieces)

4 Check-in Regularly with Peace Center Team

Plan for weekly check-ins with Peace Keepers both as a team as well as individually. These meetings will vary in length and may lead to coordinating regular full team meetings.

Goals:

- track integration of Peace Center process into current school processes
- identify allies & opposition in the school
- determine changes needed to overcome challenges

General Implementation Process

Student Incident -
Removed for Discipline

Staff Refers Student -
Completes **Referral Form**

Student Attends - Fills
Out **Daily Form**

Peace Keepers
Track Progress
- **Internal Notes**

Returns to Community -
Plans to follow up
with Peace Keepers

You will find examples of
all paperwork in the
appendices

The process of serving students should be customized to the school. However, there are core components that should minimally be included in the process:

- **Rererral Forms** to track reasons for coming to the Peace Center
- **Daily attendance** to account for student participation in the Peace Center
- **Internal Notes** for Peace Keepers to plan service and follow up plans appropriately.

Budget Considerations

Integrating
Professional
Development
Training

9 Any other
considerations?
include a Sample
budget??

Tools,
Materials
& Decoration

Parent & Staff
Trainings

Depending on your process, how integrated other school staff are, what space and resources are already available, your attention may be needed on some or all of the budget considerations included here

6. Fostering Wider School Community Buy-In



**Introduce the Peace Center to the wider school community!
Consider the following examples:**

- Announce opening in school newsletters
- Add a blurb & images of Peace Keepers to the school website
- Send a Letter home to all parents
- Incorporate Restorative Justice practices into Professional Development
- Offer events that allow community members to experience restorative justice
- Report card pick-up days & Parent-Teacher Conferences are great opportunities for families to be engaged

Be creative!
These are great opportunities for Peace-Keepers to lead the Peace Center introduction efforts and for other informed parents to support.



It is important to continue to engage ALL stakeholders - staff, parents, community members - in understanding the Peace Center Model, Restorative Justice practices, and how this practice impacts them and the school.



Tip sheet

- Don't forget to Appreciate & Celebrate
- When you have met with stakeholders, remember to be grateful of their time, no matter the outcome
- *Remain confident! Be a bulldozer!*
Change takes time AND persistence
- Show appreciation to your parents and your allies
- Continue to foster community among your parents and allies. Remind them they are not fighting alone.
- Get it done! Celebrate successes along the way!
- Celebrate with students who have made progress and staff who have provided support

