



JPA's New Connect Program — Supporting the Adults Who Work with Kids

Helping children who are struggling with gun violence in their neighborhoods and other forms of trauma requires adults build trauma-informed skills and interventions. JPA's Connect program supports the adults who care for kids.

You've seen the headlines—Chicago's children are surrounded with violence. But that's just the tip of the iceberg—Chicago children must also contend with many other traumatic and adverse experiences such as poverty, homelessness, addiction, abuse, neglect and more. Trauma can be understood as an experience that exceeds our resources for coping and whose effect can impact our lives long after a traumatic event(s). The needs these children bring into the classroom are complex.

A TYPICAL CLASS OF **30** INCLUDES*:

6
students who
are victims
of abuse

6
students
who do
NOT speak
English

1 student who is homeless

6 students who are
NOT being raised by
their biological parents

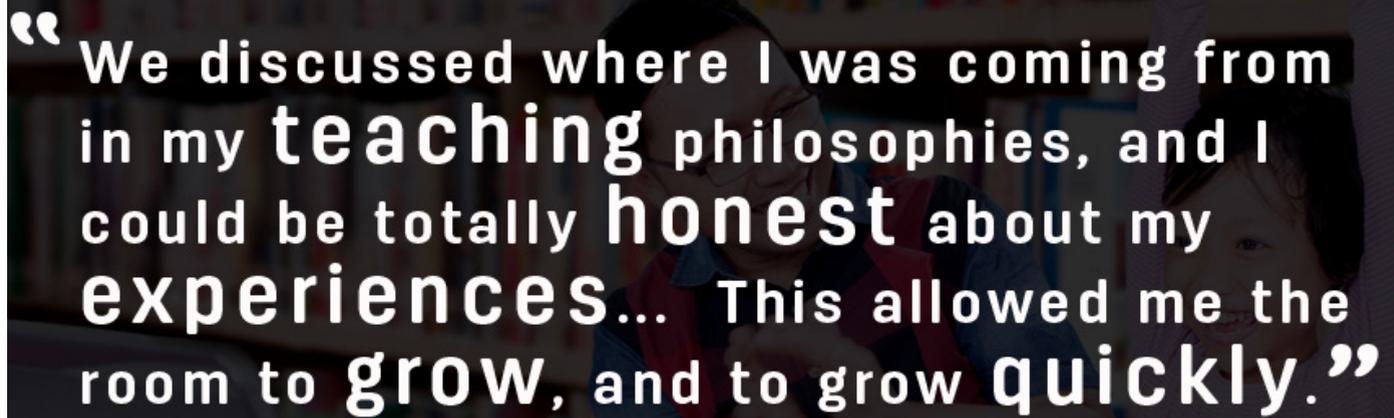
7 students
who live in
poverty



11 students of color

* based on current U.S. demographics

While JPA responds with a variety of therapeutic and social-emotional services, many children can be helped by the devoted adults already in their lives. Meet Connect, JPA's professional development and consultation program for educators and other adults who work with children. Connect is about opening up new perspectives on children's social-emotional needs. The program includes multiple formats: professional development workshops, individual or group consultation sessions, classroom observations, training and materials. The result is that adults are able to address not just behavioral symptoms but the underlying causes that interfere with learning, functioning and feeling well.



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One Teacher’s Connect Experience

Cheryl Young is a second-grade teacher at LEARN Campbell, an elementary school in Chicago’s Garfield Park neighborhood. Ms. Young had already been putting extra effort into her work when she learned that JPA was bringing Connect to her school. “I wanted as much support as I could get!” she says. “At first I was hesitant to have an outsider come in, but once I began to work with JPA, it was clear that I could ask as many questions as I wanted and that Michele was there to listen and to not judge... We discussed where I was coming from in my teaching philosophies, and I could be totally honest about my experiences with my students. This allowed me the room to grow, and to grow quickly.”

“This kind of growth is not easy,” Ms. Lansing says. “It can be very challenging to reflect on educating children whose needs go so far beyond the academic—deep into the heart of social-emotional learning. Teachers have to be open to a paradigm shift, to being challenged to adjust some aspects of their teaching philosophies.”

Ms. Young described the benefits she has experienced and how she no longer has to raise her voice in class. “I have a voice at the end of my week, which is priceless. And I work with students according to their unique needs. I’ve learned different discipline philosophies. Knowing I have Connect is the most reassuring part of my day...[Michele] helps me learn lasting skills to engage my kids more, to keep my tone of voice low and be positive with my kids. I now give my kids five positives for every negative. JPA has literally changed my teaching philosophy for the better!”

Principals, deans and teachers who have used Connect report that the program has:

- Helped reduce teacher burnout and turnover
- Helped educators employ calm and supportive responses to children with behavior problems, including new de-escalation techniques
- Strengthened educators’ ability to be firm and clear with children without being harsh
- Provided positive, enjoyable relational intervention strategies for children needing special attention
- Enhanced use of developmentally-oriented play to promote social-emotional learning
- Made teacher-parent interactions more constructive by promoting positive, non-blaming attitudes toward parents

It’s true that far too many kids face tough circumstances in their young lives. But they do better when the adults know how to help. Connect enables adults to build trusting and positive relationships with children in the classroom, the playground, and at home. That’s good news for kids — and for the grown-ups.