



## Summer 2019 Newsletter

### Dear Friends and Supporters,

It's hard to believe that we are already gearing up for a new school year. So, while summer is still in full swing, I'm writing to give you a snapshot of JPA's work for the past school year and to send greetings on behalf of all of us at JPA.

I'm proud to share a few highlights from our work with children in individual therapy:

- JPA's school-based model enabled children to attend 2,891 individual sessions of therapy or 90% of their planned sessions during the school year. On average, children benefited from 14 individual therapy sessions during the school year with many who started therapy in the fall receiving 20 or more. This number is significantly higher than children who attend most community clinics.
- Overall, 59% of students in individual therapy showed substantial improvement in their feelings and functioning as rated by teachers, with gains in areas like social peer skills, interactions with teachers, focus on schoolwork, and positive engagement with classroom activities. The ratings were even higher (67%) for younger children in grades K-3.
- This past year, JPA began to track and report on the mood (sad, depressed, and worried) of the children we serve in individual therapy. 70% of all children showed substantial improvement in their mood, while 86% of younger children improved.



As you know, we support children affected by trauma and toxic stress so they can feel and function better in class, at home, and in our community. Our recent survey shows that 82% of the children we see have experienced risk factors for maltreatment such as

domestic violence, substance abuse in the home, criminal behavior in the family, and even a relative or friend who has been killed. Almost two thirds of the children we serve (62%) have severe needs resulting from poverty such as homelessness, housing instability, and periodic lack of food and clothing. While all of the children are exposed to community violence and live in underserved neighborhoods, thirty-eight percent have experienced four to nine of the 31 trauma adversities we track. With your help, our therapists provide children with a real chance to learn and build a solid foundation for success.



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Although it's not possible to take you into a therapy session, I can share with you actual comments from some of the children we serve.

- *"I jumped up a level in reading! I think it's because I can talk about my dad being in jail and how it makes me feel."*  
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Boy
- *"I know that I have this safe place to go to with [my therapist]. I was able to take my test and not think so much about my mom being in the hospital."*  
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Girl
- *"My brain always feels so crazy, it tells me to do things like run around the classroom. It doesn't feel that way when I'm with [my JPA therapist]. I think I do that because I feel worried sometimes, like what's going to happen now? I don't feel this way as much as I used to."*  
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Girl

We are also grateful for the incredible responses we receive from the principals and teachers in our partner schools. We know that supporting educators - helping them better help children affected by trauma - is a valuable way to enhance our mental health work with children. We were pleased to see that in our Annual Teacher Survey, 92% of teachers said JPA has had a positive impact on the entire school environment. Here are a few of their comments from the 2018-2019 Teacher Survey.

- *Ms. K. is a very kind and compassionate individual; she has passion and a heart of gold for those she serves; she takes time to listen and will go above and beyond to help others.*
- *Thank you for another successful year! It made a difference a very positive one too!*
- *It has been very helpful to have the clinical support of JPA at our school, we have high rates of trauma and stress that significantly impact our children and insufficient resources to meet their needs.*
- *JPA services are very much needed at our school, please continue to provide this valuable service, over the years I've noticed that our scholars really benefit from your hard work and dedication.*
- *One teacher's own experience with JPA is especially telling: AROUND 10 YEARS AGO, MY SON WAS HAVING TANTRUMS...in class. JPA has helped me raise a mature, respectable and honest black male; my son is 18 years old, graduated from ChiArts this spring and thanks for your support!*

In addition to supporting teachers with children in individual therapy, three years ago we launched a pilot called Connect to Kindergarten (C2K), which has now concluded. I'm delighted to share some of the outcomes with you. You'll see why we are excited to be bringing C2K to a new cohort of 10 new school partners in the coming year.



- C2K consultants (LCSWs) worked with 45 teachers in 26 classrooms across ten schools and provided over 1,647 hours of individual consultation.
- 90% of teachers told us that C2K has had a positive impact on their classroom environment.
- 84% noted that C2K had helped them feel more confident responding to children with challenging behaviors.
- 75% indicated consultations with JPA therapists has reduced their job-related stress and increased their job satisfaction.
- 72% said it has had a positive impact on their instruction time.

Significantly, results like these make it easier for schools to retain good teachers. They can teach more, reduce time spent on classroom management, and have better relationships with all their students. In fact, all students benefit from a more stable classroom.

As we prepare for the upcoming school year, C2K and 9th Gear are expanding. C2K, which began as Connect to Kindergarten, is now Connect to Kids, supporting teachers from PreK through 3rd grade. 9th Gear, originally a summer program for children going into high school, is reaching into 6th and 7th grades. Teachers have requested we bring its activities into the classroom to help children talk about difficult issues affecting them, including stress, making friends, bullying, racial and social justice issues, self-respect, and how to deal with many of the adversities they face. Although led by a JPA therapist, these sessions are largely student-driven, which supports greater long-term effectiveness. Most encouraging, 100% of 9th Gear alumni were promoted to 10th grade (a key indicator of future graduation), and many have asked us if they can return to be peer role models.



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As you can see, JPA's programs now offer a continuum of care that takes children in our partner schools from PreK-8th grade, positioning them for personal, social, and academic success now and in the future. More than anything, our therapeutic approach addresses the causes of poor behavior and outlook that arise from toxic stress, clearing the way for their success.

To ensure we hear from diverse stakeholders and community leaders, we've created a Principals' Advisory Council that meets monthly to discuss issues that arise at their schools and how JPA can help. These conversations increase our ability to better understand and meet schools' needs as well as get a more complete picture of their context. Our goals are collaboration with and service to our partner schools and neighborhoods.

**If you know of a principal who might like to join us, please let us know!**



Finally, our We Reach Out to Chicago's Kids (WeROCK) program brought corporate volunteers into our school partners' classrooms to help children with a fun project. They saw how energetic and eager the children are despite the adversities many of them face. You can see children smiling, drawing pictures of ideas they want to develop someday (Edible school supplies, anyone? A computer game for cats—Yeow Meow? Acorn smoothies for squirrels?), and experiencing a sense that their schools are good places to be. Teachers can provide the comfort and strength, as well as the academic content, needed for children to succeed. Our work, with your support, helps ensure they will be the kind of "protective factors" that change children's lives for the better.

Our school-based therapeutic services remain true to Jane Addams's spirit when she wrote:

*"America's future will be determined by the home and the school."*

We remind ourselves daily of what Frederick Douglass said:  
*"It is better to build strong children than to repair broken men."*

**Thank you again for joining us in this work. I wish you and yours all the best for a happy and joyful summer, and I look forward to working with you in the new school year. Please don't hesitate to call or write; we'd be happy to talk with you more about our commitment to children.**

**Sincerely,**  
**Karen G. Foley**  
President & CEO