



# ENRICHING OUR IMPACT



## WESTERN JUSTICE CENTER 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

Facilitated by Envision Consulting



July 2020

Dear Friends,

We are living through perilous times and a dual pandemic that strikes at the foundational health of our nation -- physically, socially, and morally. For those of us who are struggling with the weight of these injustices, perhaps the answer to the question "Will things ever change?" lies with each of us.

That is why I am excited to share WJC's new Strategic Plan with you. We are proud of what it represents -- a return to our dispute resolution roots, a bold new chapter in our history, and an affirmation of our commitment to equity, justice, and opportunity.

We are grateful to our board, staff, educators, youth mediators, community partners, and funders for the last 15 months of intensive listening conversations, research, and visioning work. Their insights about the impact of conflict resolution education and the barriers to its wide scale adoption have shaped our vision of what is possible -- and so desperately needed -- right now.

In the next four years, WJC will train and mobilize 1,000 students, educators and volunteers, empowering them with the conflict resolution skills they need to transform schools and communities for more than 15,000 youth in our region.

We will also embark on a unique effort to transform an entire school district by using the power of conflict resolution education and by studying its impact on student attendance, academic performance, social emotional learning, and leadership development, as well as local policing and criminal justice diversion practices. (See pg. 18 for more details).

In short, we are building an evidence-based, equity-centered model for change. We hope you will take time to read the Plan, especially our sections on:

- Why our work matters (pgs. 4-5 and 10)
- How we can overcome barriers to impact (pgs. 7-9)
- Why we are building a model for change (pgs. 13-18)
- How we are advancing equity at WJC (pgs. 6, 19, 23, and 32)
- How we are diversifying our base of support (pgs. 20, 22)

There is a bridge between the pain we are feeling in this moment and the resolution that we hope to achieve in the future. That bridge is the community we can build together. We hope you'll join us.

Elissa D. Barrett, Esq.  
WJC Executive Director

Craig de Recat, Esq.  
WJC Board President



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Justice Center (WJC) was founded in 1987 by a group of judges, lawyers, and civic leaders led by the Honorable Dorothy W. Nelson, senior judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. WJC's founding members sought out innovative ways to handle conflict and by supporting the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques in and beyond the court system. Their aim was for WJC to serve as a thought leader, convener, and capacity builder in the field of conflict resolution education.

Conflict resolution education and practices are like preventative health care – an investment we make in our collective well-being that prevents problems from becoming acute and helps address them when they do. Conflict resolution education empowers people to resolve differences constructively; manage the expression of their emotions; de-escalate potentially explosive situations without violence; and, create opportunities for reconciliation. Conflict resolution practices like peer mediation and restorative circles create neutral space where empathy and collaborative problem solving can flourish.

In recent decades, WJC has created a range of programs designed to reduce violence threatening students in school and community settings. These activities include: running and supporting peer mediation programs throughout the Greater Los Angeles Area, teaching conflict resolution skills to young parents through First 5 LA, facilitating community forums with local law enforcement, convening a Youth Mediation Summit for the City of Los Angeles, and creating School Tools, an interactive online resource for conflict resolution education geared toward grades 4-12.

In 2020, WJC enters a transformational new chapter of our history in which we will build on our roots in conflict resolution. We commit to advancing the use of restorative practices in our schools and to empowering youth to become agents of change in our communities. Through that work, we commit to addressing the disparate impact that traditional school disciplinary methods have on students of color; the increasing propensity of youth to respond to bullying, bias, and neglect by harming themselves or others; and, the negative impact of these combined ills on long-term behavioral and mental health outcomes. We make this decision with respect and humility for our place in a larger movement that is striving to move our society away from destructive methods of punishment and toward constructive investments in youth and community development.

WJC is energized by this new direction and dedicated to successful implementation of this strategic plan through which we build on our founders' vision: That conflict resolution education can play a critical role in the creation of a more just and peaceful society.

The following elements summarize key decisions made during the strategic planning process:

## WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

Our society is increasingly divided and divisive. For decades, we have employed retributive policies in our schools and communities that have failed to yield justice, equity, or safety. Each time we choose to punish and remove people whose behavior we find aberrant, disruptive, or disquieting, we pay the price of lost human potential and of lost opportunities for healing, growth, and transformation.

We start paying that price early in life. We pay it in lost learning time, decreased academic performance, higher dropout rates, and lost earning capacity. We pay the price when traditional school discipline and policing practices land disparately on students of color. We pay it when young people direct the pain of verbal and physical abuse inward (anxiety, depression, suicide) or outward (bullying, hate incidents, homicides) with increasingly devastating consequences. And, we pay it when young people enter adulthood ill-equipped to navigate the stresses of modern life.

That is why WJC's work to support, study, and expand the impact of conflict resolution education and practices in our schools and communities is critical. Schools that consistently invest in conflict resolution practices see reduced suspensions and expulsions; decreased classroom disruption; reduced absenteeism; improved socio-emotional learning; and, even improved academic performance. With effective conflict resolution education and the support of trained adults, a small group of empowered young people can transform the dynamics of an entire school or community. What they learn about how to listen to each other and engage in difficult conversations about complex social issues can change the course of their lives. These transformative effects are far reaching, because students with increased agency and confidence use what they learn to shape their families, communities, and futures.



## WHAT WE WILL DO

Over the next four years, WJC will train and mobilize 1,000 students, educators, and volunteers with the conflict resolution skills they need to transform school culture and climate for more than 15,000 youth by building conflict resolution leadership teams at 30 schools across the Greater Los Angeles Area. We will continue to improve and enhance our conflict resolution education programs by adding opportunities for civic engagement and leadership development for youth and by adding curriculum responsive to the issues of our time for youth and adults. We will launch a first-of-its-kind in the nation five-year pilot project to study the impact of conflict resolution education on an entire school district. And, we will share what we learn in all these efforts in order to catalyze changes in how our region and state approach student discipline and engagement.

## WHO WE WILL SERVE

WJC believes that the road to a more just and equitable society starts with youth and the culture around conflict we create in our schools. In addition to supporting local schools with existing peer mediation programs that anchor our field, we will expand equitable access to conflict resolution education and restorative practices by focusing on: (1) schools where the prevalence of multi-generational poverty and structural inequities lead to higher levels of trauma, and familial and/or communal dysfunction; and (2) schools where a mix of students from a diverse set of backgrounds (socio-economic, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and abilities) frequently leads to increased interpersonal and intergroup conflict. Together, these two types of schools represent a cross-section of socio-economic, racial, and ethnic communities in our region that, when unified, will have the power to make the kind of change that efforts in our field have heretofore failed to achieve.



## HOW WE WILL OPERATE

We will strive for excellence in the design, execution, study, and improvement of our conflict resolution education programs. We will look for opportunities to expand the impact of our work through collaboration with community partners, data collection, storytelling, and the use of digital platforms. We will use principles of equity and inclusion to guide how we recruit people for our staff, programs, and organizational leadership. We will combine the connections and energy of our organizational leadership (Board of Directors, Program Advisory Council, Leadership Council), with the demonstrated impact of our work to diversify and expand support for our efforts. We will leverage and sustain the use of the WJC Campus to advance our mission and programs. And, we will develop and maintain an operational infrastructure to maximize the efficient use of our resources and plan for the future.



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## Vision, Mission, and Core Values

The guiding principles of WJC – our Vision, Mission, and Core Values – reflect our aspirations for the future and the unique perspectives we bring to the field of conflict resolution. They center us, guide us, and allow us to respond proactively to changing circumstances and opportunities.

## VISION

WJC envisions a world in which communities are healed, united, and transformed through conflict resolution education and practices rooted in equity, justice, and opportunity.

## MISSION

WJC empowers people to strengthen their communities by growing the conflict resolution skills and capacity of youth, educators, schools, and community partners.

## CORE VALUES

**Empathy:** We listen with open hearts and minds, willing to be moved to action.

**Empowerment:** We believe in and support the power of people acting individually and collectively to shape their lives and communities.

**Equity:** We dedicate ourselves to fair treatment, opportunity and advancement for all, because every person deserves the chance to pursue their innate human potential.

**Inclusion:** We actively seek out, embrace, and elevate the perspectives and life experience of people of diverse backgrounds.

**Impact:** We hold ourselves accountable for making a difference, and we do it with integrity.



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION

## Benefits and Barriers

"[M]ediation's greatest value lies in its potential not only to find solutions to people's problems but to change people themselves for the better in the very midst of conflict." - Bush & Fogel

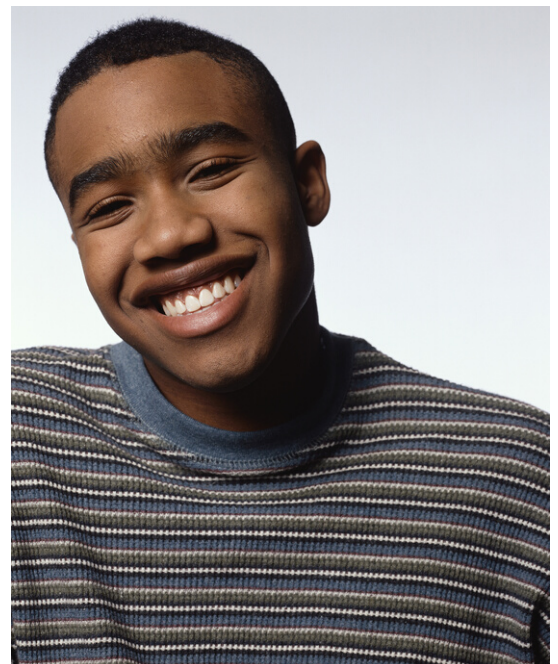
In the Executive Summary, we laid out the case for why WJC's work to support, study, and expand the use of conflict resolution education and practices with youth matters.

Now we ask: What if we taught young people how to navigate conflict constructively so they could avoid being removed from the classroom or campus? What if we empowered students to de-escalate explosive situations without violence and without the involvement of campus police? What if students had the skills, support and adult buy-in needed to drive transformative change in their school culture and climate? What if the skills they honed on campus became a gateway to opportunities for community-wide leadership or career advancement?

## BENEFITS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION

Conflict resolution education and practices are like preventative health care – an investment we make in our collective well-being that prevents problems from becoming acute and helps address them when they do. As with public health, they also achieve their full effect when deployed equitably and on a systemic level.

The power and impact of conflict resolution practices, such as peer mediation and restorative circles, are well documented. (See appendix.) These practices create neutral space where empathy and collaborative problem solving can flourish. They foster Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and empower students to transform their school culture and climate. They are even regarded as critical interventions for addressing widespread racial injustice and educational inequity.





Restorative circles bring together those who instigated a conflict, those who were impacted by it, and the wider community affected by the conflict to dialogue voluntarily and as equals. Restorative circles create a culture of respect that teaches students to honor the dignity and experiences of their fellows while learning how to become proactive self-advocates. Restorative circles can even shift adult attitudes from a punitive philosophy to one grounded in principles of restoration.

Peer mediation affords students a private confidential setting to resolve their conflict, led by a trained peer. For participants, it reduces removals from classrooms for behavioral citations, physical aggression and altercations (before and after mediation), suspensions, and expulsions, while improving communication skills and academic performance. For mediators, it creates greater empathy for others and increased connection to school; improves academic performance in English Language Arts; contributes to a more peaceful home life; and, increases social and emotional competency. Teachers report that strong peer mediation programs increase their trust in the administration, students and parents, and contribute to an overall positive school climate.

## **BARRIERS TO WIDESPREAD ADOPTION**

The questions WJC asked during this stage of the strategic planning process were: If conflict resolution education and practices are so effective, why are they not used more widely? What are the barriers to their widespread adoption? What is needed to overcome them?

To answer this question, we talked with student peer mediators and their faculty advisors. We listened to teachers on special assignment with expertise in restorative justice, anti-bullying, and social and emotional learning. We heard from district and county-level administrators in charge of child welfare and attendance. We spoke with and researched organizations working to shift resources away from youth incarceration and toward investment in diversion and youth development services.

Here is what we learned.



### **Leadership Matters**

Conflict resolution and restorative practices fail unless they are supported by leaders at the school and district level, including those with child welfare, discipline and attendance portfolios. Success depends on leaders to support peer mediation program and restorative circle faculty advisors with professional development, auxiliary pay, and certification opportunities, and to make sure instruction time, mediation space, and case referrals systems are available. Effective leaders also elevate restorative efforts by tracking and reporting outcomes to district, school board, and parent-teacher organization leaders, which helps them to overcome resistance to non-punitive methods of discipline.



## **People & Partnerships Matter**

Conflict resolution and restorative practices fail when they rely on a single individual at a school. Schools with team-based approaches have more student participation, better outcomes, and more longevity. The strongest teams include classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators led by an early adopter or champion with the support of non-profit partners, particularly those using retired professional volunteers. Teams also help to create accountability and shared responsibility, foster continuous learning, reduce burnout, and support continuity during faculty transitions.



## **Resources & Equity Matter**

Schools with conflict resolution programs that survive boom/bust school funding cycles are in predominantly wealthier communities. In structurally under-resourced communities with higher numbers of students facing multiple traumas like homelessness, single parent households, high rates of incarceration, gang violence, drug addiction, investments in restorative practices are made after litigation or through coordinated philanthropic responses to racial injustice and then later eliminated by budget cuts. The greatest shift in culture occurs when government and philanthropy support a dedicated network of participating schools and non-profits.



## **Youth Empowerment & Recognition Matter**

Schools with the strongest conflict resolution programs make student empowerment a priority. They give student leaders a role in selecting the next class of peer mediators, support elective classes in social justice and conflict resolution, and facilitate student-led, school-wide initiatives, such as anti-bullying days and voter registration drives. They also elevate mediators' profile on campus with special gear or videos highlighting their achievements, and they send students to WJC's Peer Mediation Invitational. The missing piece is leadership opportunities for students in civic engagement and professional development that would put mediation on par with programs like Model UN or Speech and Debate.



## PROGRAM MODEL

### Opportunities, Assets, and Innovations

Having identified benefits and barriers, WJC next asked: What new conditions and/or opportunities make this moment ripe for conflict resolution and restorative practices? What assets does WJC bring to the table? What innovations can we implement with existing and modestly expanded resources?

## IN EVERY CRISIS THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES

**Post-Pandemic Recovery:** Psychologists predict that it may take years for students to recover from the impacts of pandemic-related traumas, such as increased exposure to domestic violence; increased alcohol and drug use; loss of access to food, housing, and other essentials; family separation; loss of learning time due to the digital divide; prolonged social isolation from peers; increased cyber-bullying and bias incidents; and, increased feelings of grief, loss, anxiety, and depression. WJC has a key role to play in preparing schools for these social and emotional impacts given the effectiveness of restorative practices in helping to channel “acting out,” social aggression, and other behavioral issues.

**Investments in Youth Development:** Before the pandemic hit, LA County was already in the midst of a multi-year campaign to shift government funding away from youth incarceration and into pre-diversion, diversion, post-incarceration, and general youth development services. As that effort accelerates and is further spurred by social protests against systemic racism, WJC has a key role to play in deploying conflict resolution as a critical pre-diversion intervention strategy. In addition, WJC’s unique legal, business, and civic connections present us with a chance to create jobs and leadership experiences for advanced student mediators that could serve as bridges to higher education, civic engagement, and economic opportunity.

**Data Driven Funding and Policy:** New state accountability standards have added data collection requirements for “social and emotional learning” and “school culture and climate” to prior reporting requirements around academic achievement, attendance, and disciplinary outcomes. These reporting requirements are driving investments in information systems and professional development at the local level, which can be leveraged to demonstrate the impact of conflict resolution programs and practices. WJC has a key role to play in collecting data that could be used to increase resources for, and equitable access to, those programs and practices.

# WHAT WJC BRINGS TO THE TABLE

**Competence:** WJC is one of the oldest conflict resolution education organizations in Southern California, born out of the wisdom of judicial leaders who pioneered the federal court system's embrace of alternative dispute resolution. Our program team has more than 30 plus years of combined experience implementing in student peer-to-peer conflict resolution programs on school campuses and through after school programs. They are backed by a Program Advisory Council whose members have in-depth field expertise in peer, cross-cultural, and community-police mediation; restorative justice; anti-bias and anti-bullying training; trauma-informed counseling; criminal justice reform; and curriculum development.

WJC's core programs are some of the most well regarded in our region and beyond.



**ABCs of Conflict** is a 30-hour training for educators, counselors and mediators in conflict resolution education basics (theory and practice); how to create and sustain a peer mediation program at your school; how to address implicit bias, bullying, and inter-group conflict; and how to use restorative justice practices. Graduates are eligible for a salary point (LAUSD only at the current time) or teacher certification extension credit.



**School Tools** is an online resource for conflict resolution education accessed by more than 30,000 users annually from more than 180 countries worldwide. Using a combination of facilitation guides, lesson plans, handouts, and interactive videos, School Tools provides practical materials for educators, parents, and youth to engage with conflict resolution generally or for the purposes of running a peer mediation program.



**Peer Mediation Invitational (PMI)** is a multi-day gathering of peer mediators from around the Greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area that gives students and their faculty advisors opportunities to enhance their conflict resolution skills; connect with peers throughout the region; and meet legal, business, and civic leaders. PMI is held at the Ninth Circuit courthouse in Pasadena. It is a particularly transformational experience for students who have never left their immediate neighborhoods or whose only exposure to the judiciary has come through criminal, dependency, eviction, or family court proceedings.



From left to right: Hon. Terry J. Hatter Jr., Max Factor III, Hon. Dorothy W. Nelson, WJC Executive Director Elissa Barrett, Hon. Barry Russell

**Connections:** Through our Board of Directors and Leadership Council, WJC has a unique set of connections to the legal community through the judiciary, law firms, corporate counsel offices, commercial arbitration firms, and solo/group mediation practices. We also have strong connections to top regional civic, business, and labor leadership that is unparalleled in our field. And, WJC has a base of more than 300 program alumni – educators, counselors, administrators, and mediators – trained to implement youth-focused conflict resolution programs and practices, many of whom have advanced to positions of leadership in their school districts and communities.



**Campus:** WJC manages and sustains a four-building Campus in Pasadena adjacent to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Three buildings serve as home for more than a dozen non-profit organizations, many of which focus on youth development, welfare, and education. The fourth building serves as WJC's headquarters and as a nationally recognized, highly inclusive, small-to-mid sized event rental venue. While requiring substantial resources to run, the Campus also generates critical cash flow for WJC's programs and connects us to our local community.

## INVITATION TO INNOVATE

Based on the particular challenges and opportunities of this moment and the assets that WJC brings to the table, here are the innovations we will pursue.

**Empowering Youth:** We all need goals to strive for; yet, student mediators have few options for recognition outside their schools, and no known options for translating their peer mediation experience into opportunities for community leadership, access to college, or career advancement. To fill that gap, WJC will serve as the engine for an annual cycle of youth learning and leadership development.



The cycle will start in the fall with a regional event that gives new and returning student mediators a chance to acquire basic conflict resolution skills and to meet their peers from other schools. The cycle will continue with a more in-depth, multi-week conflict resolution training program that WJC staff and volunteers will deliver directly on school campuses and/or virtually.

In the spring, students with intermediate skills will be invited to attend the Peer Mediation Invitational (PMI) where they will participate in mock mediations, have a chance to dialogue with judicial, legal, civic business, and community leaders, and explore advanced conflict resolution and restorative justice topics suggested, selected, and led by the students themselves. Using our digital platforms, WJC will highlight student achievements, including any school-wide engagement projects student mediators lead.

In the summer, students will have a chance to apply for paid internships with civic, legal, business, and community leaders. Internships will be reserved for students from socio-economic groups without independent access to such opportunities. Interns will be supported by WJC staff and volunteers, as well as their peers, with space to reflect on what they are learning and experiencing. Interns will also be able to join the planning team and lead discussions at PMI the following spring.



**Building a Community of Practice:** Even though there are dedicated conflict resolution champions in our schools, many of them lack in-school team or leadership support for their efforts. They also lack a communal space where they can continue to advance their skills and share their challenges, innovations, and ideas. Without that network, data collection and other efforts needed to drive changes in funding and policy are also impeded. To fill that gap, WJC will serve as the engine for an annual cycle of adult learning and leadership development.

The learning cycle will start in the summer with ABCs of Conflict. WJC will recruit cohort-based teams from schools that want to start new conflict resolution programs or sustain existing ones. Teams may include a mix of conflict resolution program faculty advisors, school administrators, counselors, and staff involved in school reporting related data collection, as well as district staff, parents, school board members, community school initiative coordinators, and after school program providers. Local probation officers and/or campus police might be included as well.

During the school year, WJC will work with these teams to deliver conflict resolution training to students. We will also provide mentoring on how to start or expand peer mediation programs and the use of other restorative practices, collect data on conflict resolution outcomes, and engage students in WJC's youth learning and leadership development cycle. At the end of the school year, teams will join our program alumni network giving them access to continuing education and support. We will collaborate with alumni in order to elevate their accomplishments, share collective impact data, enhance conflict resolution education curricula, and harness innovative ideas and solutions.



**Bringing the Boomers on Board:** Even before the pandemic, school age children from under-served communities faced widening inequalities and diminishing opportunities. People entering retirement represent a relatively untapped and growing resource for meeting this crisis. Many have also lived through decades of struggle for racial and economic justice in our country, giving them a unique and rich perspective to share with the next generation. Consequently, WJC will create a volunteer program that trains retired teachers, counselors, school administrators, judges, lawyers, mediators, and other qualified individuals to provide conflict resolution education to students. Their efforts will be supported by WJC staff, fellows, and interns.



**Leveraging Data:** Pioneering work in the field of educational equity and youth justice has shown us how effective the marshalling of data can be in driving government and philanthropic funding priorities. Conflict resolution advocates have found it particularly difficult to collect data that demonstrates the impact of their work; but now, many school districts have data systems they use to meet state accountability standard reporting requirements. To determine how those systems could be used to track and report data for conflict resolution related outcomes, WJC will enter into a multi-year pilot project with Azusa Unified School District and will share results from the project with influential decision-makers at the regional and state level. Azusa will be included in all of our youth and adult learning and leadership development efforts. 14



# THE PATH TO 2023

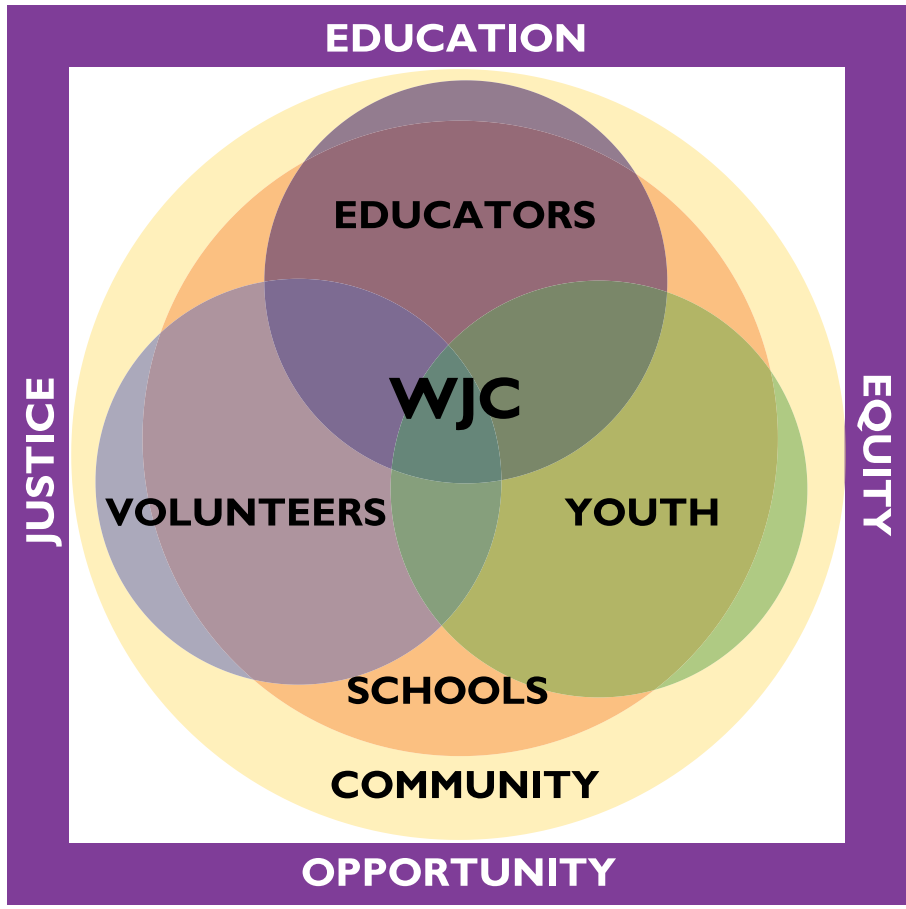
## Goals, Milestones, and Metrics

Having determined which innovations are most strategic for WJC to pursue, we asked ourselves: What ambitious, but achievable goals can we set? What would success look like in 2023, and how would we measure it? What major milestones would we need to hit along the way?

### GOAL I: IMPLEMENTING OUR NEW PROGRAM MODEL

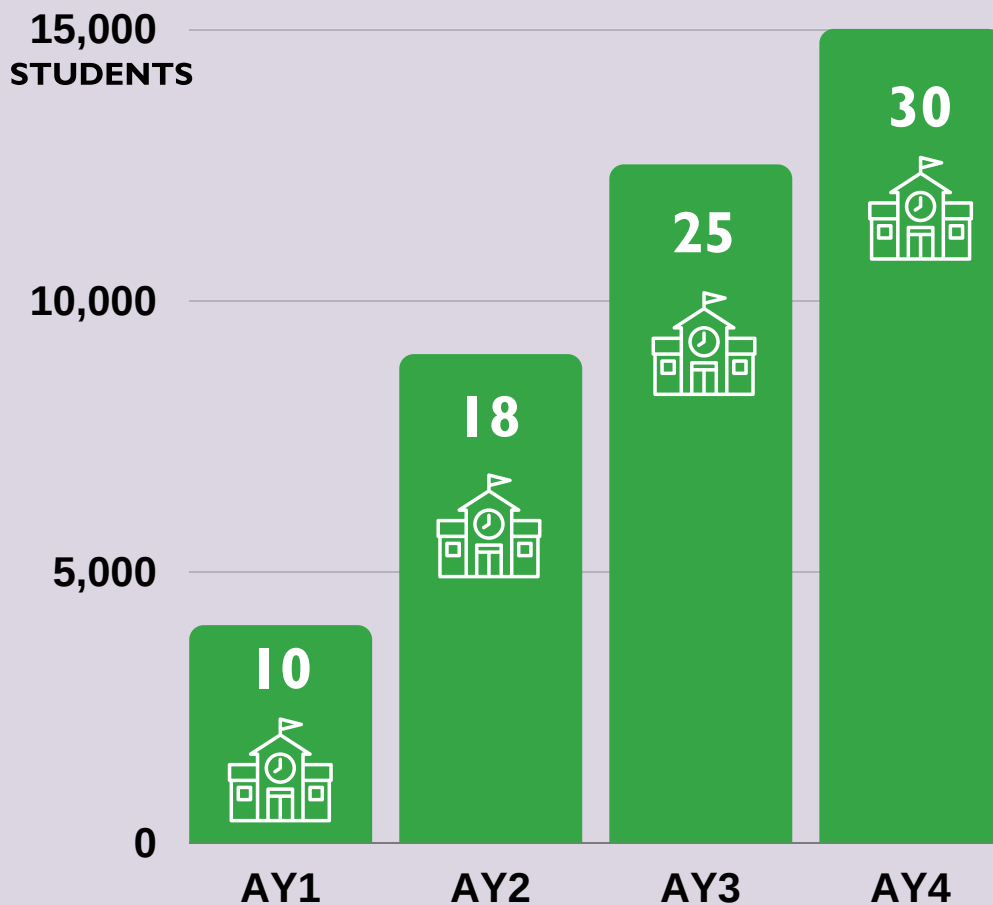
Over the next four years, WJC will train and mobilize 1,000 students, educators, and volunteers with the skills to transform school and community environments for more than 15,000 youth in our region. These numbers represent the metrics we will produce through our new program model.

This graphic shows how WJC's new program model will weave together the efforts of educators, volunteers, student mediators, school student populations, and local communities all striving toward a similar goal -- advancing restorative justice. It also shows how youth will be empowered to make change and influence behavior within and beyond the boundaries of their schools.





# SCHOOL PARTICIPATION



The above graphic explains how WJC will work toward our 4-year goal of 30 participating schools. Each year, we will focus on growth, retention, and sustainability. Recruitment will be based on the criteria described in *Who We Will Serve* (pg. 5) and *Invitation to Innovate* (pg. 13-14).

In Academic Year 2020-2021 (AY1), we will recruit 10 schools for participation in our programs. Two to three of those school will come from Azusa Unified School District (AUSD). Another 7-8 will come from local schools with existing conflict resolution programs that are being negatively affected by pandemic-related budget cuts and/or were struggling before the onset of Covid-19.

In AY2 (2021-2022), we will retain 80-100% of AY1 schools and add another 8-10 local schools, including 2-3 from AUSD. We will start to expand beyond schools with existing conflict resolution programs to schools that have wanted to launch such programs but have not yet succeeded. We will also start to build relationships with Continuation, Public Service and Criminal Justice Pathways, which are connected with the juvenile justice system, law enforcement, and the courts.

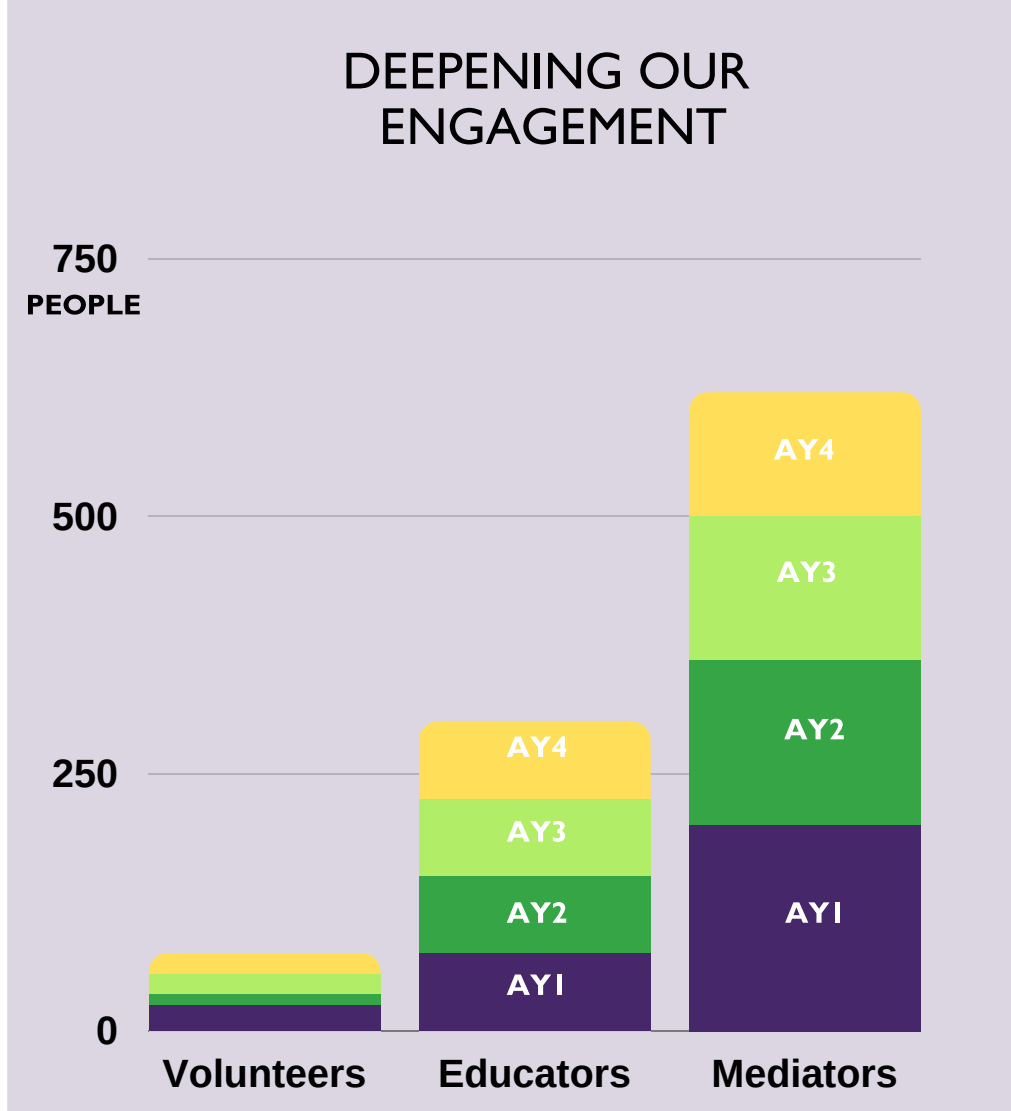
In AY3 (2022-2023), we will retain 80-100% of AY1 and AY2 schools and add another 8-10 local schools, including 2-3 from AUSD. We will continue to seek out schools that have wanted to launch conflict resolution programs but not yet succeeded in doing so. And, we will add Continuation, Public Service and Criminal Justice Pathways schools to our group of participating schools.

In AY4 (2023-2024), we will retain 80-100% of AY 1-3 schools and add another 8-10 local schools, including 2-3 from AUSD. We will continue our recruitment strategy from AY 1-3 and begin to evaluate plans for the future.

This graphic explains how we will build toward our 4-year goal of engaging 1,000 educators, volunteers, and students.

In each year and in each participating school, we will train at least 20 student mediators, who collectively will conduct 60 mediations with 2-3 participants per dispute and will affect climate and culture for 500 students overall.

For example: With 10 participating schools in AY1, we will train 200 mediators, who will conduct 600 mediations involving 1,200 students and whose work will affect 5,000 students overall. In each year, the total numbers involved will increase and will involve a mixture of new and returning student mediators.



In each year, we will also train 100 adults who will include educators and retired professionals trained through ABCs of Conflict; people who volunteer at our fall and spring regional mediation events; and student fellows, interns, and work study program participants working with WJC staff. Each year will contain a mixture of new and returning participants who will join the 300-plus people currently in our program alumni network.

## ADDITIONAL BENCHMARKS WORTH NOTING

- In AY1, we will launch the Azusa Pilot Project, Summer Jobs Program, ABCs of Conflict (cohort-based model), and retired professionals volunteer program. We will add more structured mentoring and advanced social conflict topics to our spring youth mediator summit.
- In AY2, we will launch our fall regional mediation training event.
- In AY3-4, we will focus on growth, retention, and sustainability.
- Throughout AY1-AY4, we will seek the guidance of our Program Advisory Council and the input of our program participants and alumni in order to continuously improve our in-person and digital training curricula, recruiting and data collection criteria, program evaluation methods, and community partnership objectives.



## PILOT PROJECT: AZUSA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

In 2019, WJC and AUSD started to plan a five-year pilot project to study the impact of conflict resolution education on an entire school district. Azusa is a community that has fought to overcome multi-generational poverty and gang violence. It is a diverse community with 64% of its 49,000 residents identifying as Hispanic and more than 30% as immigrants. Recently, an influx of refugees fleeing violence in Central America has caused tensions with longer term residents in the community.

WJC and AUSD launched Phase One of the pilot in 2019-2020 by integrating an AUSD team, which included an assistant principal from Foothill Middle School (student population, 500), into ABCs of Conflict. In the fall of 2019, Foothill started AUSD's first peer mediation program, training a dozen 8th grade students as mediators. They conducted 30+ mediations involving 75+ students. The impact on Foothill's 500 students was immediate: physical altercations during lunch and recess dropped to zero.

Phase Two will launch in the fall of 2020 and conclude in the spring of 2025. It will start with 2-3 AUSD schools and expand each year until at least 75% of AUSD schools are using conflict resolution and restorative practices. In each year, the non-participating schools will serve as a control group. AUSD school teams will join our program alumni network as they graduate, and AUSD students will participate in all of our fall, spring, and summer youth learning and leadership development offerings.

During Phase Two, WJC and AUSD will collect qualitative and quantitative data using the AERIES Student Information System and the process AUSD follows for its annual School Accountability Report Card (SARC), which includes measurements for SEL and "school culture and climate." We will seek to secure University of California Curriculum Integration accreditation for WJC's conflict resolution education training program. As feasible, we will integrate AUSD's district-wide after school program partner, Think Together, and other community partners.

WJC and AUSD will work with a major research university to conduct an effective program evaluation process throughout Phase Two. WJC will share what it learns during Phase Two to enhance its work with participating schools outside of Azusa and with our program alumni. WJC will seek to share what we learn through the pilot in order to catalyze changes in how our region and state approach student discipline and youth empowerment in our schools.

## GOAL 2: STRENGTHENING OUR LEADERSHIP

In order to realize our ambitious goals by 2023, WJC must diversify and expand our base of support. That starts with our Board of Directors and other volunteer leadership bodies.

To strengthen and diversify that leadership, we will:

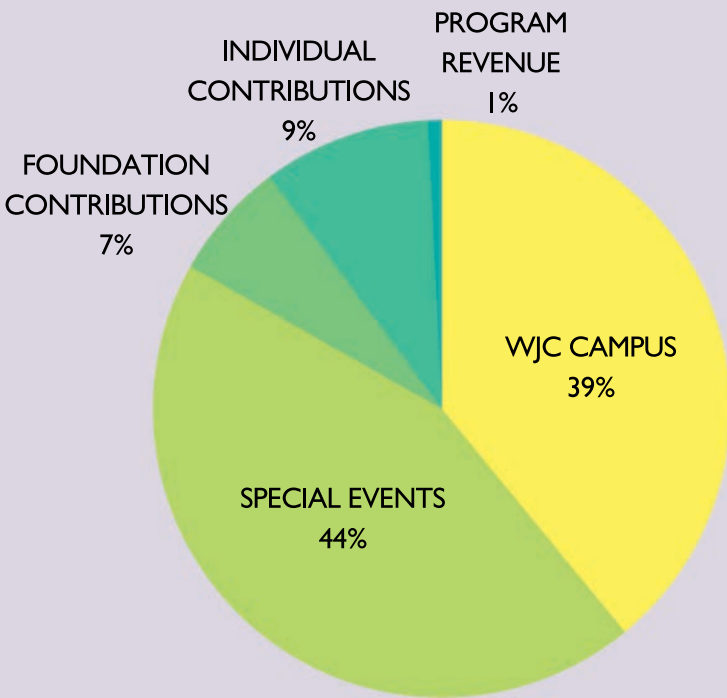
- Implement a board recruitment strategy that prioritizes equity, inclusion, and diversity in personal backgrounds, professional backgrounds, and social and professional networks. Use the Gala Committee, Program Advisory Council, and other organizational leadership opportunities to cultivate candidates and explore their ability to actively support WJC's Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Programs.
- Update our By-Laws to provide for a 40-person maximum Board of Directors with a composition of 60-70% General Members (significant give/get capacity); 10-20% Community Members (subject matter experts); and, 10-20% Judicial Members (federal and state courts).
- Clarify the give / get / engage requirements and terms for each Board membership category.
- Foster an active Board culture by developing a leadership pipeline for the Executive Committee; creating clear mandates and annual objectives for all Board committees; evaluating board performance annually; and, providing more opportunities for Board members to engage directly with our programs.
- Transform our current Advisory Board into a Leadership Council that sustains and nourishes the connection between WJC and key stakeholders, such as former Board members.



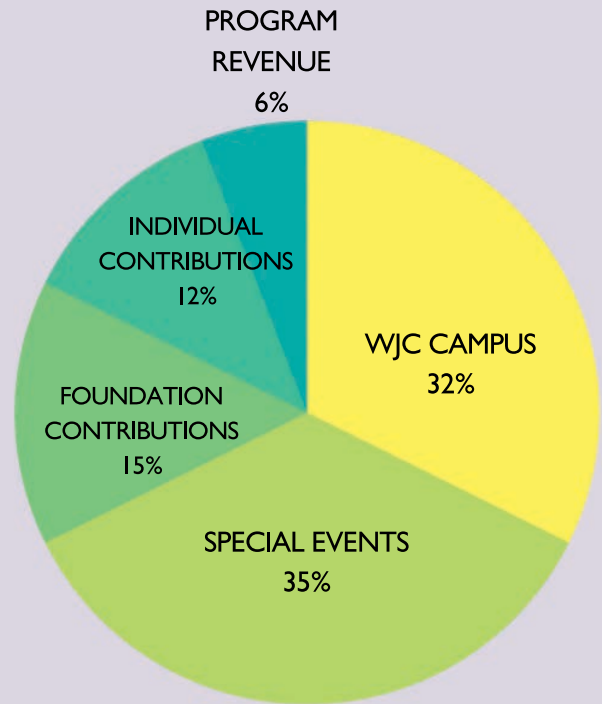
# GOAL 3: DIVERSIFYING AND EXPANDING OUR REVENUE

Another key element in achieving our goals by 2023 is the implementation of a fundraising plan that will allow us to diversify and expand our revenue model. Currently, WJC relies mainly on our Campus and annual fundraising gala for more than 80% of our annual \$1.3M budget. By 2023, we aim to reduce our reliance on those two funding streams by increasing the percentages of support from individuals, institutions, and program revenue, and by increasing our overall budget to \$1.6M. Our Board of Directors and Leadership Council will play a critical role in helping us identify, cultivate, and steward a range of supporters.

### 2020 REVENUE MODEL



### 2023 REVENUE MODEL



To reach our 2023 fundraising goals, we will combine our fundraising plan with a renewed emphasis on community engagement and communications in order to excite, activate, and expand our support.

Our fundraising plan will contain four main elements: individual donors, institutional donors, community engagement events, and communications. (Details available on request.)



## GOAL 4: CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE AND FINANCES

Reaching our program goals by 2023 will require us to maintain an operational infrastructure that will help us to use our resources most effectively, retain talent, and plan for the future.

To support our team and ensure their success, we will:

- Provide competitive compensation and benefit packages that include an annual cost of living increase and that allow us to retain talented staff while operating within our means. Invest in our team by dedicating resources for professional development and training.
- Foster a culture that rewards teamwork, creativity, collegiality, mutual respect, and constructive candor. Make time for exploration and learning, individually and collectively. Reward intelligent risk-taking and innovation.
- Support professional and personal growth through the development and evaluation of individual and team-based annual performance plans. Maintain clear and regularly updated employment policies and procedures.
- Expand staff capacity by recruiting students from a variety of fields to serve as interns, externs, post-graduate fellows, and work-study program participants.

To effectively manage our financial resources, we will:

- Follow best practices for the regular review of monthly financials, construction of annual budgets, annual audit, annual tax filings, maintenance of accounts payable, tracking of restricted funding, coding of expenses, and other finance-related functions.
- Work with the highest quality professionals within our price range for accounting, audit, IT, and investment portfolio management services, the latter being appropriate for designated donor funds, including through our endowment.
- Follow best practices for the use of our cloud-based systems, including Bloomerang, Xero, Gusto, Bill.com, Box, Microsoft Office, Google Drive, Zoom, and Gather, among others.
- Develop an independent cash reserve that can sustain WJC operations for at least 3 months. Be militant in the management of our expenses to ensure that we direct the maximum possible dollars toward our programs.



## GOAL 5: SUSTAINING OUR CAMPUS

WJC is unique in that we have two main sets of programs. One advances our primary mission. The other provides space for non-profits that make the WJC Campus their home. That Campus consists of four historic buildings located at 55, 65, 75, and 85 S. Grand Avenue in Pasadena, adjacent to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Our tenants occupy Buildings 65, 75, and 85. WJC occupies Building 55, known locally as The Maxwell House and used regularly as an event rental venue.

To ensure that WJC is able to sustain our Campus, we will:

- Fill all vacancies and move tenants into multi-year leases with annual rent increases. Raise and set aside funds needed to address deferred repairs. And, form a board task force to explore alternative leasing options that would allow WJC to maintain the Campus more efficiently. Implement the most feasible option.
- Sustain the reputation of the Maxwell House as a premiere small wedding rental venue. Invest in necessary upgrades. Return wedding revenues to pre-pandemic levels and grow beyond that target by 10-20%. Leverage relationships with partner vendors to secure program-related in-kind donations. Expand weekday rentals to include corporate gatherings and film/TV shoots. Add donor recognition elements for the endowment campaign.
- Upgrade WJC HQ office space to facilitate collaborative teamwork and accommodate volunteers. Transform under-utilized meeting space into the Neutral Ground Learning Lab, a state-of-the-art, multi-functional, creative space for WJC participating schools and community partners. Make repairs needed to weatherize and improve the building's energy efficiency.



# DEFINITION

## APPENDIX Glossary of Terms

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION** includes a wide range of training techniques and methodologies, such as restorative practices, social and emotional learning, peer mediation, and the exploration of how bias, discrimination, bullying, trauma, and other factors can drive conflict. More broadly, conflict resolution refers to methods and processes that facilitate the constructive ending of incidents or cycles of conflict, retribution, and revenge through collective, collaborative negotiation.

Conflict resolution education empowers people to analyze conflict, become aware of and manage their emotions, explore how our personal experiences and perspectives contribute to conflict, learn how to develop strategies for constructively resolving conflicts, and develop the communication and negotiation skills to resolve conflict. It also invites us to explore how systems around power and identity influence or drive conflict.

Our conception of conflict resolution is influenced by the seminal work of Professors Robert A. Baruch Bush and Joseph P. Folger, [The Promise of Mediation: The Transformative Approach to Conflict](#) (pub. 1994, rev. 2004). For more information, see [Beyond Intractability](#). We are also influenced by those who have incorporated the study of non-violence into their teachings around conflict, confrontation, and social change. See [Strive Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story](#), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1958); [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#), Paulo Freire (1968); and, [How to Survive A Plague: The Inside Story of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS](#), David France (2012).

**RESTORATIVE CIRCLES** are a versatile practice “that can be used proactively to development relationships and build community, or reactively to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts, and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum, and equality. [They are an alternative to group structures] that often rely on hierarchy, win-lose positioning, and argument.” For more information, see [Defining Restorative Circles](#).

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE** is a system of criminal justice that focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with the victim and the community at large. It is a theory of justice that emphasizes repair over punishment. For more information, see [Segregation, Violence, and Restorative Justice: Restoring Our Communities](#), 50 J. Marshall L. Rev. 487 (2017); and [Discipline in California Schools: Legal Requirements and Positive School Environments](#) (ACLU Educational Equity and Racial Justice Project).

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)** is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” SEL includes five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. For more information, see [What is SEL?](#)





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## APPENDIX

# Strategic Planning Process

WJC followed a customized strategic planning process facilitated by Envision Consulting.

The process began in April 2019 and concluded in June 2020. It included:

1. Meetings with the WJC Board Strategic Planning Committee; facilitation of a two-day retreat with WJC staff; four half-day meetings with WJC staff; two half-day WJC Board retreats; and discussion of strategic planning at a combined eight Board Executive Committee and general Board meetings, culminating with presentation of the full strategic plan for Board approval. These meetings, retreats, and discussions delved into vision, mission, core values, theory of change, organizational goals and strategies, board governance and development, and financial resources needed for implementation, as well as design of new program models and metrics.
2. A written survey of the Board of Directors, staff, and other key stakeholders was used to construct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threat), and to gather input on vision, mission, core values, and strategic priorities for use with WJC Board and staff.
3. Landscape research and analysis based on:
  - a. Conversations with WJC funders and other leaders in philanthropy.
  - b. Focus groups with peer mediation program faculty advisors and students at elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties.
  - c. Focus groups and conversations with students, teachers, district leaders, and school board members in the Azusa Unified School District.
  - d. Conversations with leadership staff in government, including for example the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Superior Court, County Human Relations Commission, and Office of Education, as well as the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office.

e. Conversations with mediation experts working in schools, communities, courts, and commercial arbitration, including for example WJC Founder Judge Dorothy W. Nelson of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Richard Chernick, former WJC Board member and Manager of International Commercial Arbitration at JAMS, and Southern California Mediation Association (SCMA) past president Jason Harper.

f. Conversations with non-profit organizations working in conflict resolution education and related areas such as anti-racism, educational equity, human relations, restorative justice, and youth justice, including Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution (APADR), Advancement Project California, California Conference for Equity and Justice (CCEJ), Centinela Youth Services (CYS), Institute for Non-Violence Los Angeles (INVLA), Kids Managing Conflict (KMC), Learning Rights Law Center, Liberty Hill Foundation Youth Justice Initiative, Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP), Loyola Law School Center for Conflict Resolution, Loyola Marymount University Center for Conflict Resolution, and Public Council.

g. Review of programs and materials produced by other non-profit organizations working in the aforementioned areas including for example ACLU Educational Equity & Racial Justice Division, Alliance for Children's Rights, Association for Conflict Resolution (ARC), Justice LA Coalition, National Association of Peer Program Professionals (NAPPP) Online Peer Mediation Platform, Peace Education Foundation, Public Counsel, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and the Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative.

4. Review of resources produced by academic institutions, field experts, and journalists covering a wide variety of related topics. A sampling of those resources includes:

a. Articles addressing political divisions and divisiveness in American society, such as [A Divided America](#), The Associated Press; [Why Has America Become So Divided?](#) Psychology Today, Sept. 5, 2018; [Hostile Political Climate Ensnaring U.S. Schools](#), National Education Association Today, April 18, 2019; [Ten Years of School Shootings](#), CNN, 2019; and [More American Young People Are Dying by Suicide and Homicide, CDC Reports](#), CBS News, Oct. 17, 2019.

b. Articles addressing the impact of Covid-19 on school age children, such as [Uncertainty and Loss: The Impact of Covid-19 on Student Mental Health](#), The State News, April 16, 2020; and [Supporting Children's Mental Health During Covid-19 School Closures](#), New England Journal of Medicine Watch, May 8, 2020; and [The Fight for Youth Justice Accelerates Amid Covid-19](#), Liberty Hill Foundation, May 8, 2020.

c. Articles addressing the potential impact of inter-generational collaboration and learning, such as [Let's Make this Crisis the \(Grand\)mother of Invention](#), The Chronicle of Philanthropy, May 20, 2020.

d. Articles addressing the benefits of conflict resolution education and restorative practices in school settings, such as:

i. A school-based prevention program for reducing violence among urban adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30(4), 451–463.

ii. Mediators and Mentors: Partners in Conflict Resolution and Peace Education. *Journal of Peace Education*, 2(2), 183–193.

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v. Graves, K. N., Frabutt, J. M., & Vigliano, D. (2007). Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills to Middle and High School Students Through Interactive Drama and Role Play, *Journal of School Violence*, 6(4), 57–79.

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ix. Tschannen-Moran, M. (2001). The effects of a state-wide conflict management initiative in schools. *American Secondary Education*, 29(3), 2–32.

x. Educational Opportunity Project, Stanford University, 2020.

xi. School Discipline and Disparate Impact, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2011.



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