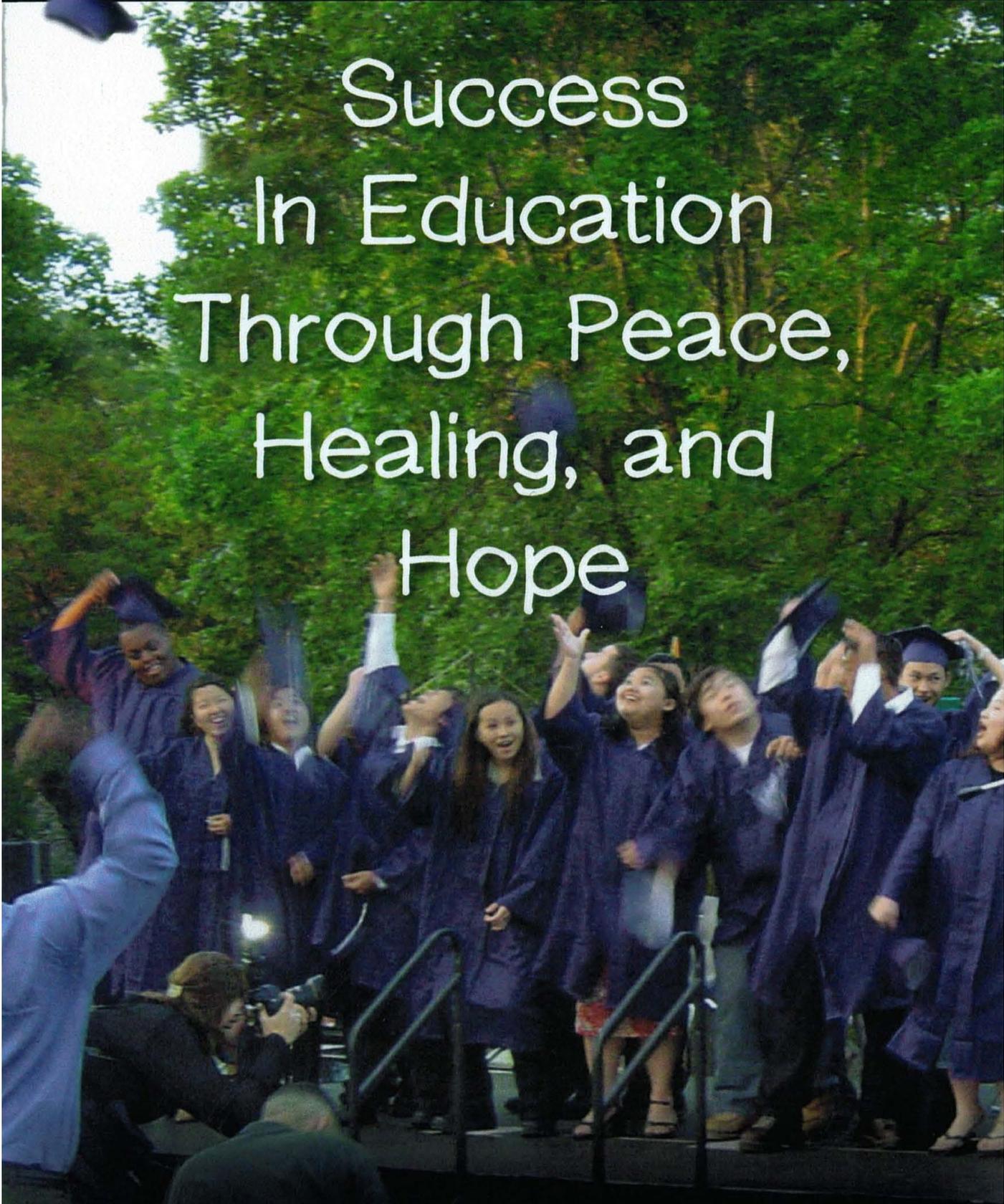


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A group of graduates in blue gowns and caps are celebrating on a stage. They are raising their caps and cheering. In the foreground, a photographer is crouching and taking a picture of the graduates. The background is filled with green trees.

# Success In Education Through Peace, Healing, and Hope

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Founder of Community of Peace Academy

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*Growing Communities for Peace*, a conflict resolution program for young children, was also adopted in our first year. Having been developed locally by Julie Peterson and Rebecca Janke, this program contained many of the elements we had proposed for our charter school. Teachers were taught how to conduct daily Peace Circles. The program introduced the use of Talking Sticks. To ensure that each person would be heard, the Talking Stick was passed around the circle. When you held the stick, you had the floor and others were taught to listen respectfully. Each room would have a Peace Table where children would go to settle conflicts. A Peace Maker Puppet was used to teach conflict resolution skills. This program proved helpful and was especially effective for the primary grades. However, it soon became apparent that for our older students, more was needed.

Research led us to Heartsprings, Inc. (now PeacePartners, Inc.), and the **PeaceBuilders** program. Dr. Dennis Enbry had developed this program in Tucson, Arizona, for students in grades K–6, and in 2000, it was expanded to include grades 7 and 8. The **PeaceBuilders** program is research based and focuses upon a set of conflict prevention principles. These principles are taught and practiced throughout the school and are included in the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge, which is recited daily in each classroom:

*I am a **PeaceBuilder**.  
I pledge to Praise People,  
To Give Up Putdowns,  
To Seek Wise People,  
To Notice and Speak Up About Hurts I Have Caused,  
To Right Wrongs,  
And to Help Others.  
I will build peace at home, at school  
and in my community each day.*

In her junior year at Community of Peace Academy, Keonna Brown wrote the following essay, describing how the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge has influenced her life:

*The **PeaceBuilders** Pledge was taught to me when I started first grade in 1995. Back then, it was just a part of the day, like gym or lunch, nothing to really make a big deal about. Now, not only is it still part of the day, but it is also a piece of my life. Even with all the violence going on in the world around me, I can still wake up each day with a smile. Not because I am pleased with what's going on, but because I know that this is just another day for me to make a difference.*

*Going to Community of Peace Academy, I have learned that there really are peaceful ways of solving problems. I have also learned that these ways are more efficient and more effective. Once I really started to understand the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge, I also started to understand myself. Ever since I decided to live peacefully, I became less stressed out, my grades turned around and I became a lot happier.*

*Peace builders are similar to the domino effect. When one person decides to either stand up for his or herself, or even for someone else, it inspires others to do the same. Or if they decide not to make fun of someone, others will follow. Peace builders are the ones making the differences every day. They are the heroes.*

*There is nothing like living peacefully. It's a sort of a feeling that you get when everything is going wrong, yet you don't panic, because you know everything will be ok. It's the power of the peace builder.*



The Community of Peace Academy Code of Caring Behaviors, referenced in chapter 8, and the principles set forth in the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge have become the foundation of the discipline policies and procedures at the grade school. Following violations, K–8 students are invited to reflect upon the Code of Caring Behaviors and the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge and to tell which parts they forgot and what

they might do differently in the future. In this way these documents have become part of our common language and are deeply imbedded in the school culture beginning in kindergarten and continuing through the end of high school.

Each August, at a staff retreat held on the first staff day of the school year, the entire K–12 staff is invited to sign the **PeaceBuilders** School Commitment Pledge, thus pledging their individual support to uphold the principles of this program. All staff members are also invited to complete a **PeaceBuilder** Wise Person form. These forms, which are displayed in the hallway outside the business office, include a picture and interesting information introducing each Wise Person to the students, and to all community members.

Students and staff are taught and encouraged to write meaningful Praise Notes to others, expressing praise for specific qualities of character or kindnesses. Putdowns are discouraged and are no longer a part of the prevailing culture of Community of Peace Academy. Both students and staff can often be heard reminding one another with a smile, “That was a putdown,” or, “You are not being a peace builder.” During home visits, families are given a copy of the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge to post on their refrigerator, and parents often report that students use **PeaceBuilders** language at home, just as they do at school. In 2005, **PeacePartners, Inc.**, named Community of Peace Academy one of eight Model **PeaceBuilders** Sites (out of six hundred **PeaceBuilders** Schools).

In our third year, one of our teachers heard of the *Responsive Classroom* program from a colleague who was teaching sixth grade in a traditional public school nearby. She went to visit, was sincerely impressed by what she observed, and attended a week of training to learn Responsive Classroom techniques. Her enthusiasm for this excellent program was contagious, and soon our seventh-grade teacher also chose to attend the training. As more teachers began to request Responsive Classroom training, it was decided that we would bring the trainers to Community of Peace