

The Pilsen Education Plan

A roadmap for improving educational opportunities in the Pilsen neighborhood



ACCESS

COLLABORATION

SUPPORT

Pilsen Community

Pilsen is one of Chicago's oldest neighborhoods, with buildings dating back to the late 1850s. Irish and German immigrants were the first to settle here, followed by Czechs, who named the neighborhood after their hometown capital of Pilsen in West Bohemia. Though the Czechs moved on, the name remained as new waves of immigrants arrived.

By the 1950s, Mexicans began arriving in Pilsen in large numbers. Through the economic hardships of the 70s and 80s and the arrival of wealthier newcomers in the 90s and 2000s, the neighborhood has worked hard to maintain its Mexican identity. Today, Pilsen is a showplace of Mexican life and culture. Each fall neighborhood artists organize a weekend of open studios; colorful murals draw tourists year-round; and The National Museum of Mexican Art showcases Mexican and Mexican-American artists and offers substantial youth arts programs.

Pilsen is also well known for its history of organizing to better the lives of neighborhood residents. In 1877, labor activists fought the Battle of 16th and Halsted to support workers' right to organize; a century later residents celebrated the opening of Benito Juárez High School, a hard-fought win for education in the community. Another great victory came in 1995, with the opening of the Arturo Velasquez Technical Institute, a branch of the City Colleges of Chicago.

In 2005, the Pilsen Planning Committee was convened by four leading neighborhood-based organizations: The Resurrection Project, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, Eighteenth Street Development Corporation and Alivio Medical Center. The committee grew to include Alderman Daniel Solis and 17 local agencies and developed a comprehensive Quality-of-Life Plan for neighborhood development.

VISION

The Pilsen Education Task Force envisions Pilsen as a community of choice, where education is a life-long process that leads to success.

Pilsen parents will enjoy a wealth of high-quality educational options for their children. Older youth and adults will select from post-secondary training and degree programs that strengthen their career prospects and quality of life. Through local collaboration, Pilsen's education options will serve as a national model for community-based, lifelong learning.

CORE VALUES

- > Strong parent involvement
- > High-quality academic and enrichment programs
- > Collaboration regarding education among all community stakeholders
- > Celebration of Pilsen's rich Mexican cultural identity while being culturally responsive to all residents

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Pilsen is a close-knit community with many strong community organizations. Its schools, churches and parks are heavily used by local residents.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Instituto Del Progreso Latino
2. Mujeres Latinas En Accion
3. Pilsen Little Village Community Mental Health Center
4. Gads Hill
5. El Valor
6. Centro Familiar Guadalupeño
7. The Resurrection Project
8. Latinos Progresando
9. Pilsen "Together" Chamber of Commerce

10. Pilsen Neighbors Community Council
11. El Hogar del Niño
12. San Jose Obrero
13. United Merchants of Pilsen
14. Pilsen Alliance
15. Casa Atzlan
16. Spanish Coalition for Housing
17. Eighteenth Street Development Corporation
18. Pros Arts Studio
19. Alivio Medical Center
20. Rauner Family YMCA
21. West Side Technical Institute

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. Finkle E.S.
2. Pickard E.S.
3. De La Cruz M.S.
4. Ruiz E.S.
5. Whittier E.S.
6. Orozco M.S.
7. Bartolome de Las Casas Charter E.S.
8. Cooper E.S.
9. Pilsen Academy E.S.
10. Juarez H.S.
11. Perez E.S.
12. Jungman E.S.
13. Walsh E.S.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- A. St. Ann
- B. St. Paul
- C. Cristo Rey Jesuit H.S.
- D. St. Pius
- E. St. Procopius

CHURCHES

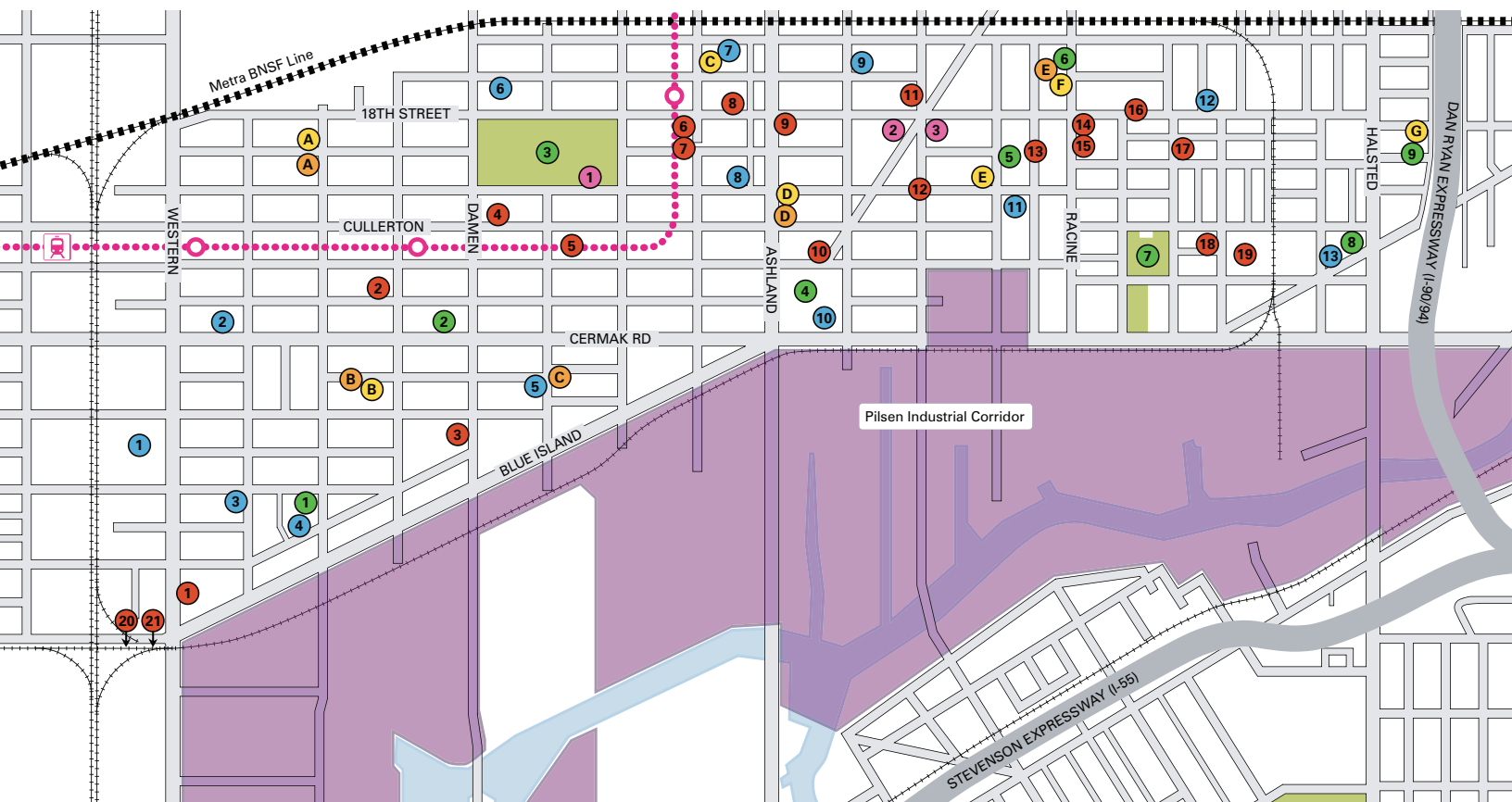
- A. St. Ann
- B. St. Paul
- C. St. Adalbert
- D. St. Pius V
- E. Holy Trinity
- F. St. Procopius
- G. Providence of God Church

PARKS & RECREATION

1. Playlot at Ruiz E.S.
2. Barrett Park
3. Harrison Park
4. Fields at Juarez H.S.
5. Throop Playlot
6. Playlot at St. Procopius
7. Dvorak Park
8. Playlot at Walsh E.S.
9. Playlot at Providence of God

CULTURAL FACILITIES

1. Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum
2. Yolocalli Youth Museum/Radio Arte
3. Rudy Lozano Public Library



The asset map is from the 2006 Pilsen Quality-of-Life Plan.

Goals

In 2006, a group of Pilsen elementary school principals came together to discuss ways to strengthen education in the neighborhood. Since then, this “Principals Table” has grown to include Pilsen educational leaders from preschool through high school, colleges and universities, community-based organizations and government. Now we are known as the Pilsen Education Task Force (PETF), and we meet monthly to address the community’s educational needs.

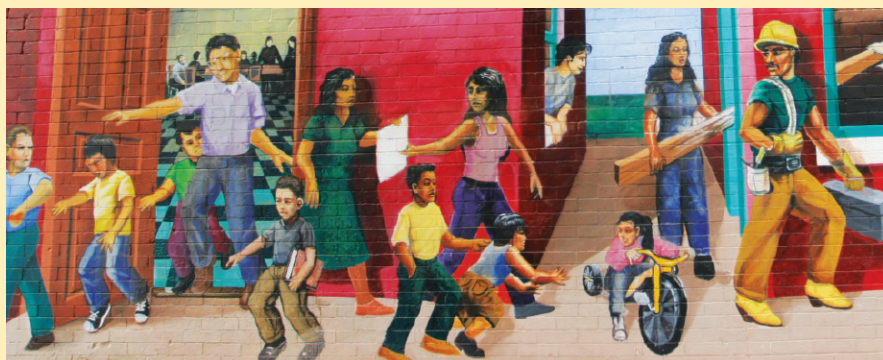
GOAL 1:

ACCESS

Pilsen is a community of choice where families have a wide variety of quality educational options for both their children and themselves, without barriers of language, culture, expense or other issues. Pilsen educational institutions focus on increasing graduation rates and post-secondary attainment.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- > All residents will have access to comprehensive information about neighborhood educational and enrichment opportunities.
- > Pilsen families will be able to choose from a variety of K–12 schooling options, including alternative paths to a high school diploma.
- > Families will be able to access educational options without the barriers of language, immigration status or other factors related to public policy.
- > Pilsen students of all ages will engage in programs that focus on post-secondary recruitment, retention and completion.
- > Annual increases in the graduation rate of at least 5 percent in middle and high school grades are achieved.
- > Pilsen adults will have access to education that meets their needs.



GOAL 2:

SUPPORT

The social, emotional, academic and creative needs of all Pilsen students are met through widely available programs and services that support mental, physical and socio-emotional wellness and the arts. All education institutions in the community are safe, resource-rich, state-of-the-art facilities where parents are actively engaged in the educational life of their children.



We envision Pilsen as a community of choice, where education is a life-long process that leads to success. As a first step to bring this vision to life, we are creating a resource network to serve as a “one-stop-shop” for all Pilsen families to gather information about local education and enrichment opportunities. For the long term, we have developed this comprehensive, five-year strategic plan to achieve our goals for education in Pilsen and hold ourselves accountable to the tasks this vision requires.

Our core values are: strong parental involvement, high-quality academic and enrichment programs, collaboration among all members of the community and celebration of our rich Mexican cultural identity while being culturally responsive to all in our neighborhood.

Our plan identifies three focused goals and lays out precise outcomes that will be required to achieve them. These goals are:



DESIRED OUTCOMES

- > All K–12 students and families will have ready access to programs and services that support mental, physical and socio-emotional wellness.
- > Pilsen parents will engage in the educational life of their children.
- > Arts and culture are present and respected throughout the community — in schools, afterschool programs, and in homes.
- > All Pilsen students will attend safe, resource-rich, state-of-the-art educational facilities.

GOAL 3:

COLLABORATION

The Pilsen community is a model for the nation with regard to education and collaboration among organizations. We build and maintain a cohesive network of partnerships and alliances between schools, community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions. We evaluate our results and disseminate them broadly on behalf of the community.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- > All Pilsen schools, community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions will collaborate to create an accessible, cohesive network of partnerships and alliances.
- > The Pilsen Education Plan outcomes are evaluated and progress is reported to all stakeholders.

We intend to deliver the highest quality programs, services, activities and events that support students’ well-being. Those outcomes will be achieved through a variety of actions — ranging from community engagement and organization, advocacy, and other tactics — and through a variety of community partners. We are working together to provide Pilsen youth and families with the essentials they need to succeed.

Education Snapshot

As of 2010, census projections estimate Pilsen is home to about 17,139 children who are 17 years old or younger. The neighborhood houses a wealth of educational institutions, including:

NINE CHICAGO PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- > Irma C. Ruiz Elementary School
- > John A. Walsh Elementary School
- > John Greenleaf Whittier Elementary School
- > José Clemente Orozco Community Academy
- > Joseph Jungman Elementary School
- > Josiah Pickard Elementary School
- > Manuel Perez Elementary School
- > Peter Cooper Dual Language Academy
- > Pilsen Elementary Community Academy

ONE CHARTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- > Bartolomé de Las Casas (a campus of the UNO Charter Network)

FOUR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- > St. Ann School
- > St. Paul-Our Lady of Vilna School
- > St. Pius V School
- > St. Procopius School/Escuela San Procopio

FIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

- > Benito Juárez Community Academy (public)
- > Cristo Rey Jesuit High School (Catholic)
- > Instituto Health Sciences Career Academy (charter)
- > Jane Addams High School (alternative)
- > Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy (alternative)

ONE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- > Arturo Velasquez Institute (a division of Richard J. Daley College)



Education Highlights

The collaboration that has developed among Pilsen stakeholders regarding education is a major accomplishment. This collaboration sparked new approaches and initiatives that addressed educational issues particular to the Pilsen community.



For example, Pilsen parents identified a void in information available to Spanish-speaking families. Through the PETF, the Pilsen Education Summit was conceived. Now in its fourth year, this annual event brings together more than 400 parents from local schools to engage in a day of workshops and other educational opportunities about topics such as higher education, parent involvement, health and wellness, and much more. An information fair is held where more than 30 local agencies promote programs and services that support students and their families.

The taskforce has served as a voice for the community on recent education issues such as the need for expanded early childhood programs, advocacy for bilingual education, and restoration of State funding cuts that would greatly impact schools and local community organizations.

Additionally, existing programs and partnerships have expanded their reach in the schools and community, including health awareness initiatives with organizations such as Alivio Medical Center and CLOCC (Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children); parent and adult education programs have benefitted hundreds of families through the work of the CPS' Bilingual Parent Resource Center, Frida Kahlo Community Organization and National-Louis University; and art education opportunities have grown through collaborations with the National Museum of Mexican Art, Pros Arts Studio, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Lastly, local community agencies have continued to leverage resources for Pilsen that support education. Examples include the Elev8 program at Orozco Academy, which is based on a national middle school model for transforming the lives of urban youth. It is supported by The Resurrection Project, Alivio Medical Center and Chicago Public Schools. Scholarship opportunities are afforded to college-bound youth through the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council Fiesta Del Sol Scholarship program, which requires recipients to invest in Pilsen through community service. Future endeavors include TRP's development of a college dormitory known as La Casa which will house 150 area students and provide support services.

Education Challenges

According to 2010 census projections, half the Pilsen adults aged 25 or older have not earned a high school diploma. Only 11 percent of neighborhood residents aged 25 or older have completed a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Census projections show that half of Pilsen households earn an annual income of \$35,000 or less. According to 2009 state report card data, the nine neighborhood public elementary schools' rates of student poverty range between 87 and 98 percent, compared with the citywide average of 83 percent. Research shows students in poverty are more likely to struggle academically.

Student mobility is high across the neighborhood, which means students are moving from one school to another within the academic year. Research shows frequent school moves have a negative effect on students' academic achievement. According to state school report card data, in 2009 only one of the nine elementary schools had a mobility rate below 10 percent.



Actions

To accomplish the plan's goals, PETF has proposed a series of actions related to each of the outcomes listed below. Those actions will be completed in concert with community partners. They are:

GOAL

1

Pilsen is a community of choice with regard to education.

OUTCOME 1.1

All Pilsen residents can easily access comprehensive information regarding neighborhood educational and enrichment opportunities.

ACTIONS

- > Survey all organizations to identify education programs in resources in the community.
- > Ensure that all schools load education-related information on the Pilsen Portal (www.pilsenportal.org).
- > Distribute education-related information throughout Pilsen.
- > Research use of kiosks to promote education-related community activities.

OUTCOME 1.2

Pilsen families can choose from a wide variety of quality K–12 options, including alternative paths to a high school diploma.

ACTIONS

- > Identify and implement opportunities to expand bilingual/bicultural education.
- > Identify and implement methods to ensure that arts and culture are included in curricula and programs.
- > Identify and implement programs that promote critical and analytical thinking for students.

- > Create additional opportunities for at-risk students to earn diplomas through alternative education
- > Develop a writing plan for all Pilsen students.

OUTCOME 1.3

Families can access educational options without barriers due to language, immigration status, or other factors related to public policy.

ACTIONS

- > Advocate for comprehensive immigration reform.
- > Advocate for passage of the Dream Act.
- > Develop an education-related advocacy agenda for Pilsen, including establishing strong relationships with government officials.
- > Educate stakeholders on special education issues affecting Pilsen.
- > Educate stakeholders on bilingual education issues affecting Pilsen.

OUTCOME 1.4

Pilsen students of all ages engage in programs that focus on post-secondary recruitment, retention and completion.

ACTIONS

- > Expose all Pilsen K–12 students to institutions of higher learning.
- > Create a Pilsen-wide college fair to increase awareness of post-secondary options.
- > Conduct field trips to next level/higher educational institutions to foster early exposure to post-secondary opportunities.

- > Increase and support post-secondary strategies for students, including bridge programs, and create additional options for students to earn diplomas.
- > Expand college bridge programs for high school youth to earn college credit.
- > Inform parents about post-secondary/college enrollment processes.
- > Expand extension site opportunities from local post-secondary institutions.
- > Increase the number and availability of scholarships for undocumented students.
- > Improve participation in college prep and ACT test prep.
- > Increase FAFSA awareness and provide support for completing applications.
- > Emphasize trade and vocational school models as post-secondary education options.

OUTCOME 1.5

Increase the graduation rate by at least 5 percent in middle schools and high schools.

ACTIONS

- > Offer high quality educational programs in grades K–12 so that students will remain in Pilsen schools.
- > Create a plan for principals focusing on curriculum alignment and transitions so that students complete all stages of their education.

OUTCOME 1.6

Pilsen adults will have ready access to education that meets their needs.

ACTIONS

- > Establish education programs on parenting skills and child development.
- > Promote existing ESL programs and fund adult ESL programs.
- > Bring university and post-secondary programs to Pilsen that provide opportunities for adults to earn diplomas.
- > Offer ESL and GED classes in elementary schools.
- > Provide speakers and workshops to increase awareness about personal and professional growth.
- > Provide leadership development classes for parents.

GOAL 2 Meet the social, emotional, academic and creative needs of all Pilsen students.

OUTCOME 2.1

All K–12 students and families will have access to programs that support mental, physical and socio-emotional wellness.

ACTIONS

- > Expand K–12 nutrition and health education programs within schools and community organizations.
- > Offer better/healthier alternatives to the nutritional level of school meals.
- > Include character and efficacy education in the K–12 curriculum.
- > Provide clubs and enrichment activities for all students during and after school that will allow them to empower themselves.

OUTCOME 2.2

Pilsen parents will engage in the educational life of their children.

ACTIONS

- > Define parent involvement and specify expectation for parents regarding their students.
- > Conduct monthly parents' meetings to involve parents across all educational levels.

OUTCOME 2.3

Arts and culture are present and respected in schools, afterschool programs and in homes.

ACTION

- > Develop partnerships with community/external arts education organizations and educators to expand creative opportunities for students.

OUTCOME 2.4

All Pilsen students attend safe, spacious, state-of-the-art schools.

ACTIONS

- > Assess needs and identify resources to support safe schools.
- > Assess needs and identify resources for optimal facilities.
- > Investigate flexible funding and apply for grants under the auspices of PETF, with other organizations serving as fiscal agents.

GOAL**3**

Pilsen is a model for the nation regarding education and collaboration among organizations.

OUTCOME 3.1

All Pilsen schools, community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions will collaborate to create an accessible, cohesive network of partnerships and alliances.

ACTIONS

- > Raise the profile of PETF's role to assure strong community-wide participation.
- > Cultivate broad representation on PETF and identify all relevant stakeholders.
- > Identify PETF representatives and ensure that they are decision-makers and actively involved.
- > Develop and maintain relationships with community partners to create a collaborative group.
- > Improve communication among all institutions by identifying existing communication tools and using PETF as a clearing house.
- > Ensure that CPS, state, and Archdiocesan curricular standards are shared to promote continuity in educational results for Pilsen students.
- > Educate PETF non-education partners about learning standards for Pilsen students.

OUTCOME 3.2

The Pilsen Education Plan outcomes are evaluated and reported to all stakeholders.

ACTIONS

- > Monitor progress of goals and establish evaluation benchmarks.
- > Articulate and track education-related programs and participants.
- > Establish programs to track at regular intervals to identify successes and areas that need improvement.





FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE PILSEN EDUCATION PLAN

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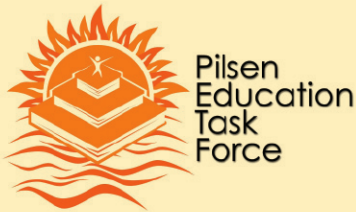
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"Camino al éxito: Education as a Lifelong Process"

The Pilsen Education Task Force (PETF) is a subcommittee of the Pilsen Planning Committee, a collaboration of the New Communities Program in Pilsen funded by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC/Chicago).

Copies of this plan are available on the Pilsen Portal at www.pilsenportal.org.

THE PILSEN EDUCATION PLAN WAS DEVELOPED UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF

Álvaro R. Obregón, NCP Director, The Resurrection Project; and the PETF Co-Chairs: Martha Monrroy, Principal, Cooper Dual Language Academy and Juan F. Soto, Executive Director, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council.

THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS WERE REPRESENTED AT THE 2009 PILSEN EDUCATION RETREAT WHERE THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED:

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

John A. Walsh Elementary School
José Clemente Orozco Community Academy
Josiah Pickard Elementary School
Manuel Perez Elementary School
Peter Cooper Dual Language Academy
St. Ann School
Benito Juárez Community Academy (public)
Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy (alternative)
Arturo Velasquez Institute (A Division of Richard J. Daley College)
DeVry University
National-Louis University
Chicago Public Schools:
Office of Language & Cultural Education
Area 9 Instructional Office

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Alivio Medical Center
Bilingual Parents Resource Center
Frida Kahlo Community Organization
Gads Hill Center
Instituto Del Progreso Latino
Latino Education Alliance
Latino Policy Forum
Pilsen Neighbors Community Council
Pros Arts Studio
The Resurrection Project

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