



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

July 24, 2017

Press Statement by

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Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

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**Children with
Special Needs,
need Parents
with Special
Skills!**

Like many cities around the nation, the District of Columbia has a long history of excluding some children from its public schools. This exclusion has happened both as a function of unjust laws (pre-*Brown v. Board of Education*), and less formally, through unwritten policies and practices that resulted in the unequal treatment of students. This is especially true for students of color and student with disabilities.

AJE was created in 1996 as a community-based initiative designed to empower, motivate, and educate parents about the laws that govern special education. Through education AJE sought to address the grave injustices and denial of basic special education services to students and to make the public aware of the judicial consequences that results from educational institutions' negligence and inappropriate classification of students with special needs. Over the years AJE has grown, in our scope of work and ability to meet the needs of our families to ensure that all children receive access to appropriate education and health services.

We are disappointed and disheartened that despite local and federal laws in place to protect the rights of students to attend school, some D.C. public schools have chosen to execute practices and/or policies that unfairly exclude some students from school without due process of law.

Empowerment is at the core of AJE's mission. We aim to equip and empower parents with the knowledge, tools and skills necessary to advocate for the needs of their children and to be full partners with schools in helping their children realize their full educational potential. There can be no true partnership if parents cannot trust that schools are following their own rules and procedures, specifically those codified in D.C.'s local regulations and federal law.

We encourage all stakeholders, especially those with oversight and governance responsibility, to consider how some schools could illegally exclude students from school without any apparent consequences from their supervisors, regulators and governing authorities.

We call on school leaders and elected officials across the city to take an affirmative stance against wrongful exclusionary policies and practices and work to ensure all students are in school every day receiving the supports and services they need to be prepared for success in college, career and life.