

Pitch In Impact Report

2019-2020 School Year | Semester 1



Dear Friends of the Wood Family Foundation's *Pitch In* program,

Happy 2020 and new decade! In the blink of an eye, half of the 2019-2020 school year is behind us, and I am honored to share our newest ***Pitch In* Impact Report to recap all that we have accomplished with your support.** In the pages below, we reflect on the past six months of growing, changing, and learning we've done with our 4th-8th grade students and 9th grade Alumni, all thanks to supporters like you.

You have graciously invested in *Pitch In*, and your kindness fuels our growing middle school work. This Impact Report is our way of thanking you - our strongest supporters - for your generosity, and bringing you “under the hood” to share snapshots, stories, and results from each of our **four *Pitch In* middle schools** in Humboldt Park and North Lawndale. With your continued support, we'll strategically pursue our ambitious plan to reach four Chicago neighborhoods (highlighted to the right) and **ten middle school communities within the next five years.** Together, we will redefine what a successful middle-to-high-school transition looks like in Chicago Public Schools, and guarantee that *all* students in our target neighborhoods have access to the high-quality education and support they deserve, no matter what their home zip code is.

As we move closer to the day when the 4th-8th grades in Chicago are the time of identity-building, exploration, and promise they should be for *all* students, I encourage you to come visit us - any time! - and experience *Pitch In* firsthand. Meet some of our nearly **150 amazing students** and their Mentors more personally, and hear about their middle school journeys thus far. **Your generosity makes *Pitch In*'s innovative work in the middle grades possible - so, thank you!**



Laura Muriello
Executive Director, Wood Family Foundation

4 Big Steps We've Taken to "Pitch In" this School Year

We've Expanded

In Fall 2019, we successfully launched *Pitch In* at **two more Chicago Public Schools**: Charles Sumner Math & Science Community Academy in the North Lawndale neighborhood and Bernhard Moos Elementary School in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Last school year, we reached 90 students from two Chicago schools, and thanks to partners like you, during the 2019-2020 school year, we've grown significantly: we are reaching nearly 150 students across four school communities, serving **nine cohorts of Pitch In students** ranging from 4th to 8th grade. Check out Page 8 to hear the more personal reflections of Principal Lauren DeGiulio of Moos Elementary about our collaboration thus far.

We've Hired Exceptional New Leadership



We welcomed Janene Ingram to the *Pitch In* team, our **founding Director of Program** who will lead *Pitch In* into our next chapter of impact in Chicago. Janene joins the team as a former middle school teacher at Spencer Math & Science Academy in the Austin neighborhood and program leader at two national nonprofits (OneGoal and Teach For America). She brings a wealth of coaching knowledge and strategic thinking expertise to the table. In her first months on the job, Janene is engaging in a listening tour and landscape scan to identify, assemble, and deploy the resources we'll need to best support students moving forward (while also sprinkling in her middle school teacher magic across all of our schools!). Her focus on building equity and access for all students will propel *Pitch In* forward with authenticity, strategy, and compassion.

We've Been Surrounded by Supportive Partnerships

We renewed our partnerships with the **Lefkofsky Family Foundation's** [Success Bound](#) program and Chicago venture philanthropy firm **A Better Chicago**, securing second-time grants and critical capacity-building support to fuel our ability to codify our program and increase our impact. These major grants allow us to explore new, innovative approaches to supporting students to be on-track, and build our confidence in our ability to deliver a strong and consistent program model as we grow.

We've Deepened Our Mentor Training

We hosted multiple *Pitch In* Mentor workshops focused on **building up our trauma-informed practice**. Mentors are so important for delivering the *Pitch In* model with integrity, and we strive to support their work with high-quality information, empathy, and care. Our "Trauma 101" Training allowed Mentors to better understand the brain science behind "ACEs," adverse childhood experiences, and how they might impact how students show up in the classroom. We are committed to approaching all *Pitch In* students as whole people, and this training was a big step toward equipping all Mentors to be well-positioned support systems for our students.



Snapshots: Inside Semester 1 of *Pitch In* Programming

At the end of Semester 1,
we are pleased to share
that **79% of all**
***Pitch In* students**
are on-track,
compared to school-wide
student rates that hover in
the mid-60s.

***Pitch In* works!**



Quality Time with Mentors

Message from our 9th
Grade Graduates



"Healthy Me"
January Cooking Class

"Pump It Up"
Enrichment Trip



Dec 2019 Holiday Wishes

Homework + Reading
Time at Pitch In



Pitch In
is reaching...

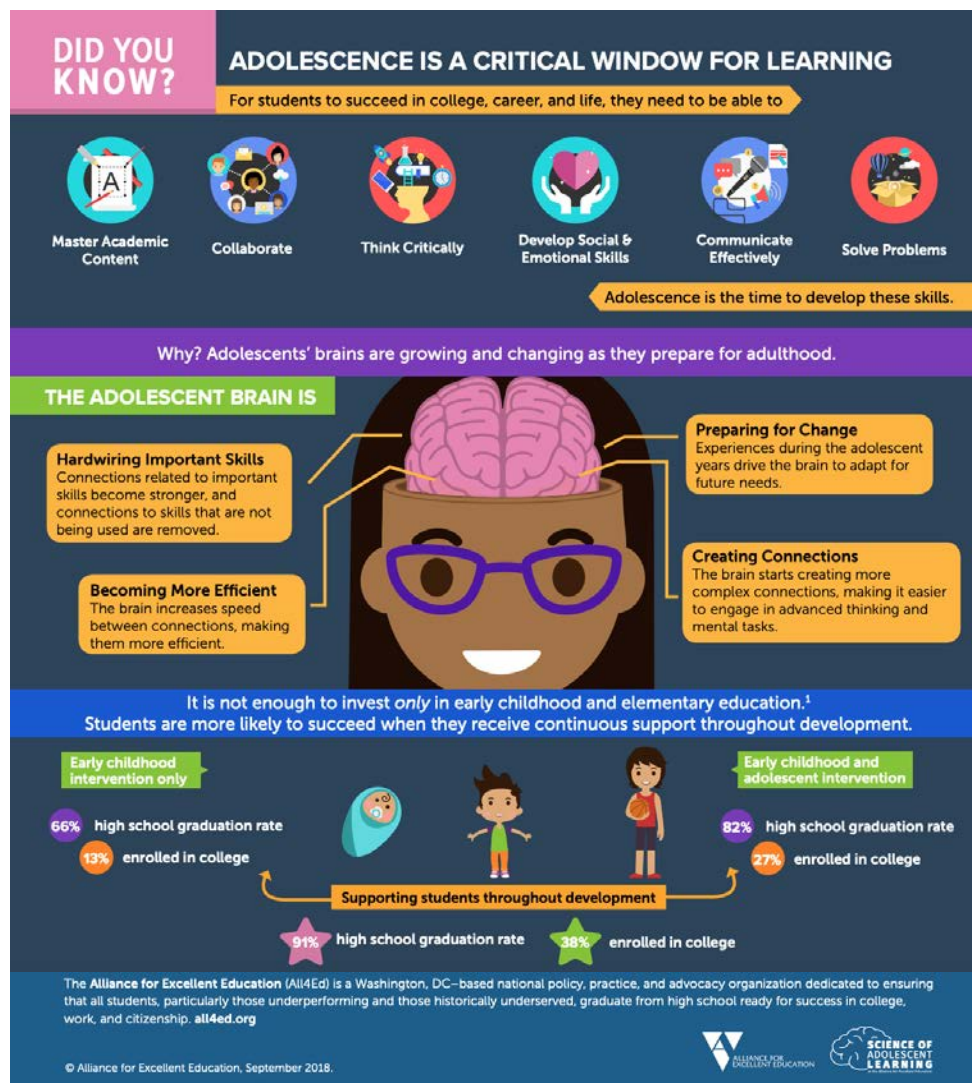
147 Students
9 Cohort Classes
100 Adult Mentors
4 Chicago Schools

Our Bold 4th-8th Grade Opportunity: Why Middle School Matters So Much

As we continue to deepen our passion for ensuring that all 4th-9th grade students receive the school-based support they deserve, we are thrilled to share this infographic from the Alliance for Excellent Education in Washington, D.C. It highlights the [promise, potential, and opportunity](#) that the middle grades present to shape and impact students' overall life trajectories. This is the very developmental stage that *Pitch In* focuses on, and the findings, particularly those that compare how high school graduation and college enrollment outcomes are impacted by interventions at key developmental moments, provide exciting evidence of what a program like *Pitch In* can help drive at scale across an entire school district. *Pitch In* and our family of supporters - YOU! - are working to fill a major support gap in our educational system.

When we invest in students during middle school, as well as in early childhood and adolescence, we catalyze high school graduation rates of 91%, and increase college enrollment rates by 11%! Middle schoolers' brains are *primed* to grow, and *Pitch In* is intentionally designed to reach students at this critical stage, guiding how they interact with, experience, invest in, and build their own paths forward.

We know the immense opportunity that the middle school years present us, but need new supporters to become founders in Chicago's middle school space with us. If you - or someone you know - is passionate about this uncharted middle school space and ready to learn more about joining our work, please reach out to Brynne Mancuso Krein, Development Director, at brynne@woodfamilyfoundation.org!

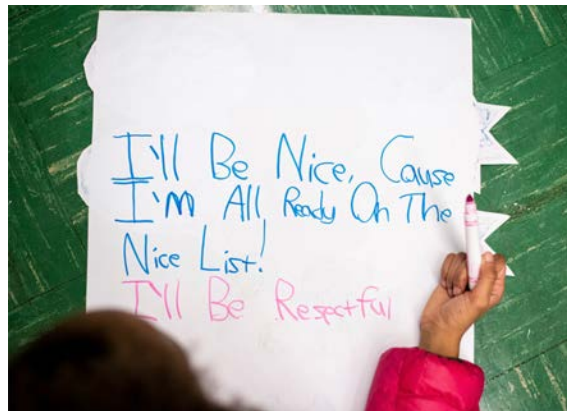


Spotlight on our “Holiday Wishes” 2019 Program

Each holiday season, *Pitch In* has an opportunity to partner with a variety of companies and individuals to make our “Holiday Wishes” program possible. Holiday Wishes works to ensure that each *Pitch In* student receives warm winter gear, including a coat, hat, and gloves, as well as has their holiday gift wishes fulfilled. It’s an opportunity for generous champions to give back and for our students to feel seen and celebrated. For our 2019 program, we were lucky to work with Allstate, Boka Restaurant Group, Carleton Washburn Junior High (led by Justin Wood), the Dillig Bowen Group, Draper and Kramer, Amy & Marty Kaplan and friends, the Kernan/Dunne/Free/Ray/Walsh Families, O’Hare-Midway Limousine, and Sloan Valve as our Holiday Wishes sponsors.



We are thrilled to shine a special spotlight on **Amy & Marty Kaplan** and on **Justin Wood and the students of Carleton Washburn Junior High**. Each of these Holiday Wish sponsors shared their belief in our *Pitch In* students with their extended networks, and motivated a large group of friends, family, and peers to band together to sponsor two full classes of *Pitch In* students. Amy and Marty collaborated with upwards of 30 people to gather gifts and winter gear, and Sarah and Kerry Wood’s very own son, Justin, spearheaded and inspired the Carleton Washburn effort. They each rallied their friends and family around a cause that is near and dear to their hearts, and made the holiday season so bright for two entire *Pitch In* classes. **Thanks for giving back, Justin, Amy & Marty, and for reminding us of what a small group of committed people can make possible!**



Why We “Pitch In”

Listen in on why *Pitch In* school leaders and Mentors stay so close, and hear more about the impact they see *Pitch In* having within the school communities they serve each and every day.

“We love having a partnership with Pitch In because they are truly a part of our school community. It is so valuable to have a program that recognizes the importance of positive adult relationships, social-emotional learning, and high school readiness. We have loved seeing what our students are learning each month at Family Dinners, and are looking forward to all of the opportunities our students will have as they participate in Pitch In in the coming years.”



~Lauren DeGiulio (left), Principal of Moos Elementary School

“We’ve been Pitch In supporters for years, so when we bought a house across the street from a partner school, we signed up to be Mentors right away. Although we’re only in our first year of mentoring our fourth grade class, we’re already deeply invested in their success. We look forward to cultivating a long-term relationship with the kids and watching first-hand as they grow and expand their horizons. We especially love the monthly family nights - it’s so heartwarming to see the kids’ pride as they present their projects to their parents and siblings!”

~Matt & Jill Ludwig, Pitch In Mentors, Yates Elementary School



“As a Pitch In Mentor, I am able to exercise my passion for education in order to impact the future lives of students. My favorite memory has been guiding students in learning about nutrition and preparing a macaroni & cheese snack: chopping broccoli, mincing garlic, and shredding cheese. I look forward to a different theme each month and a unique experience each mentoring session. “Pitch In” is an amazing program that contributes significantly to the growth of students and the acquisition of soft skills not traditionally taught in educational institutions. I am overjoyed to learn that the program will expand to concurrent enrollment across multiple grade levels next year.”

~Roque Mesa, Pitch In Mentor, Moos Elementary School

The Power of Partnership: Going the Extra Mile with *Pitch In*

The core of the *Pitch In* model is the school-day capacity we offer to our partners and our after-school programming for 4th-8th graders. But, we're always looking for ways to lend additional support, foster authentic relationships, acknowledge our collaborators for all their hard work, and move more students toward being on-track for high school. Here are three ways *Pitch In* offered responsive, additional supports to our school communities in Fall 2019:

1. During October 2019's Chicago Teacher Union strike, *Pitch In* invested time into **building strong relationships with students**. We had the chance to visit Energeewiz, the offices of Coyote Logistics (one of our corporate partners), and the Lincoln Park Zoo, exploring our city and getting to know each other better!
2. Teacher **professional development days** are key to educators' success and continued learning, and as **true supporters of our partner schools' teachers** we know it's important to stay fueled and focused. For this reason, *Pitch In* decided to cater lunch for the full faculty at two partner schools to show our appreciation and share some love through good food!
3. Our regular grade checks with students revealed that one of our 4th graders had been flying under the radar and was essentially a non-reader, reading at a kindergarten level. *Pitch In* worked with a long-time partner of the Wood Family Foundation to identify a **private reading tutor** for this student. They will be working together weekly to move him closer to being on track at the end of the school year. And, we will keep this tutoring resource close in case we identify future *Pitch In* students who could benefit, too!



Thank you + how to stay close to our work!

To each and every one of our supporters, thank you for being such critical parts of growing our middle school-focused work! No other organization in Chicago is uniting the power of social-emotional learning and academics in a school-based model, and you are catalyzing our ability to innovate and grow our unique approach. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue building our team, refining our after-school offerings, and preparing for our *Pitch In* Summer Program in July and August. If you or someone you know is interested in lending a hand and “pitching in,” here are some of the highest-impact ways to do so over the next few months:

- **Recruit new *Pitch In* Mentors!** We will grow to serve 12 different classes of 4th-8th grade students in Fall 2020, and we need 50+ supportive adults to join us as *Pitch In* Mentors. Mentors help guide *Pitch In* programming on a weekly basis, and join students in a group mentoring model 2-3 times per month for about an hour and a half (~4:30-6pm). This is an excellent opportunity for companies to increase employee engagement through volunteerism, or for individuals to give back more personally. **Reach out to Janene Ingram, Director of Program, at janene@woodfamilyfoundation.org to learn more.**
- **Join our 2020 Giving Circle!** Become a founding member of our most important supporter base, and help grow our school-based model to 12 4th-8th grade classes in Fall 2020. Your gift could help launch a brand new *Pitch In* classroom, supply educational toys and books for a full school year, or fund enrichment experiences like field trips and careers days. **Learn more about your potential gift's impact by reaching out to Brynne Mancuso Krein, Development Director, at brynne@woodfamilyfoundation.org.**
- **Help us find Part-Time Classroom Support!** Our *Pitch In* Site Leaders do an excellent job of leading our curriculum and overall partnership at each of our school sites, but we've identified that we need more hands on deck to best support all students. We currently seek 1-3 part-time Site Coordinators to support Site Leaders with operational classroom support, student-based support, and program logistics. Suggested hours are 1-6:30pm. **Reach out to me (laura@woodfamilyfoundation.org) to learn more or recommend a candidate.**

Thank you for all that you do for the growing *Pitch In* movement!