



Stepping up
to the plate for
Chicago's kids.

2020-2021 Pitch In Impact Report

The Wood Family Foundation team and our Chicago-based *Pitch In* program were humbled and honored to work in partnership with you during the 2020-2021 academic year, a season of worldwide uncertainty, isolation, and challenge due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and its layered consequences. Thank you for playing such a significant role in *Pitch In's* ability to quickly pivot to respond to our students', families', and communities' needs, and to never once interrupt our crucial social-emotional learning programming for 4th-8th graders, even as we navigated shifting to an all-virtual delivery model. Below, we are proud to share our FY21 Impact Report with you, which includes highlights of the work your generous support fueled.

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Supporting Pitch In Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The 2020-2021 school year presented a unique set of challenges that caused many nonprofit organizations and school-based programs to close their doors or suspend their services. However, the Wood Family Foundation's Pitch In program was proud to leverage our strong relationships with students, families, and school communities to deeply understand and adapt to what our partners needed to survive and thrive. In response to community input, we quickly evolved our work to implement a two-part COVID-19 Response Plan:

- **Pitch In Virtual Programming:** our team adjusted our typical **school-day support, after-school programming, and summer enrichment programming** to be all virtual, leveraging Google Classroom and Zoom to remain connected with our students, families, school counselors, and school leaders, and offer timely support and emergency assistance. Where many schools and Chicago Public Schools as a whole district struggled with attendance rates and student engagement, Pitch In maintained an 81% attendance rate throughout the regular school year.
- **Fielding Essentials Initiative:** simultaneously, we launched our Fielding Essentials initiative, dedicated to **responding to families' basic needs**, including groceries, cleaning supplies, laptops/tablets, Wifi access, e-learning kits, and small bills assistance. By the close of the 2020-2021 school year, we invested nearly \$65,000 in direct response to student and family needs created by COVID-19. The Pitch In team also rallied support for our school communities as they pivoted back to hybrid instruction, securing PPE, air purifiers, and mobile handwashing stations that could be placed in high-traffic areas, like cafeterias and entryways.

Pitch In's Reach + Unique Impact

The 2020-2021 school year was unprecedented for so many reasons, and as such, we believe it is important to take an even more expansive look at what we were able to accomplish collectively. The metrics below tell a story of adaptability and resilience, and we thank you for playing a role in making all of this possible:

- Pitch In served our **4** Chicago Public Schools elementary school communities through the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- We reached **150** 4th-8th grade students and their families, staying connected, consistent and responsive;
- Throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, **90%** of our Pitch In families remained in touch with our team.
- We delivered nearly **\$65,000** in *Fielding Essentials* emergency support;
- We leveraged a partnership to have **20,000** N95 masks donated to Chicago Public Schools at the height of the pandemic;
- In tandem with our virtual curriculum experiences, students received **500** snack and activity packs to support their at-home learning;
- To help care for teachers' mental health at our partner schools, Pitch In delivered **80** teacher well-being packages and appreciation gifts throughout the school year;
- Our team provided **71** holiday meals to Pitch In families in November 2020;
- We trained and engaged **50** adult mentors to "pitch in" with us during virtual programming;
- We sourced **70** laptops and tablets and got them into the hands of Pitch In students as we rapidly moved to e-learning;
- Our team consistently performed **monthly** family well-being checks;
- Pitch In offered **free virtual access** to Zumba, hip hop, art therapy, STEM-informed expeditions, and poetry workshops for all students;
- Despite the numerous challenges of the 2020-2021 school year, our 8th graders received high school acceptances from the **most diverse** group of schools in our organizational history;
- We have bold plans in place to **launch Pitch In in the under-resourced Chicago neighborhood of Englewood** by Spring 2022, and we are on track to reach 10 Chicago Public Schools communities and **500 students by 2024!**

Preparing for Fall 2021 Return-to-School

While celebrating the successes and achievements of the Pitch In community, we are also carefully and thoughtfully preparing to return to full, in-person programming in Fall 2021, the first time since March 2020. Over the last 14 months, our Pitch In students have built their autonomy through their e-learning experiences, and we know that they will continue to seek out this independence. We also know that they deeply deserve the space to be fully, authentically themselves at school, and we want to support them in bringing the comfort and freedom of home back to school with them.

To do so, we are making meaningful investments in students' physical classrooms and creating special in-classroom spaces - "Home Bases" - for students to step away to within each of our four school partner buildings. The goal of Pitch In Home Base

spaces will be to allow students to take a break when needed, to re-center themselves during class time, to take a moment of quiet reflection, do a body and brain scan in a safe, calming nook, and step away without having to fully disengage from and leave the classroom space. We envision not only purchasing the physical materials to create these Home Bases, but also offering our team's capacity to set everything up so that this burden does not fall to overstretched school staff.

Once complete, Home Bases will include items such as:

- Comfortable seating, like bean bag chairs and rocking chairs
- Pillows and other plush objects to add comfort
- Floor lamps for softer lighting
- Area rugs to designate this special space
- Positive affirmation posters and wall hangings
- Notebooks, journals, and colorful writing utensils to promote student reflection through writing, doodling, etc.

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On behalf of our co-founders, Sarah and Kerry Wood, the Wood Family Foundation Board of Directors, and the entire Pitch In team, thank you for your steadfast partnership and support. Knowing that we could show up as true responders and collaborators within our school communities because of your generosity was nothing short of freeing and transformational, and truly taught us about what adaptability, success, and family can look like, even in the face of adversity. We look forward to remaining in close touch as we embark on the coming school year together, and welcome a more personalized visit to our Pitch In communities once we return this fall. Many thanks again!