

Pitch In Impact Report - 2021 - 2022 School Year

Dear Friends of the Wood Family Foundation & Pitch In Program,

It is such an honor to share our progress and celebrate the continued growth of the Pitch In Program. Considering the resilience of our students, families, and school partners we have truly embodied persistence this year as a staff and I could not be more proud of the direction in which we are going. This past school year was **the first full year of in person learning for Chicago Public School students** in two years. Our 6th graders had not completed a school year in person *since they were third graders*. That perspective continues to ground the planning of our program team every day to prioritize student relationships rooted in empathy. Our students have the ability to be compassionate with their peers especially considering the larger national and global context in which many students are currently unable to attend school or feel completely safe when they do.

Pitch In is a safe place for students. In Chicago, young people, especially teenagers are seeking resources and opportunities to be in community with each other. It's a vital part of adolescent and human development - to feel a sense of belonging. At Pitch In, we not only provide a safe space, we work collaboratively with our students to create the community they seek. When you visit a Pitch In site, you might see students engaging in a peace circle, practicing yoga, meditating, sharing affirmations, illustrating their emotions through artwork, and the occasional competitive and friendly game of "Johnny Come Across." No matter what you hear and see in the Pitch In Resource Room, you will always feel safe and you will always be welcome. This social emotional learning experience is more vital now than ever before. As we continue to navigate the uncertainty of life impacted by Covid-19, and now the global economy, we are aware of the importance of mental health and emotional wellness especially for young people. The Pitch In Program Staff work hard to ensure that their students know how deeply they care for them and that they are **an adult they can trust**. These relationships continue to be key in helping students navigate the complexities of their emotions because of the stress they endure from the outside world and all of the changes they undergo as adolescents during this unique time in their lives.

We continue to extend our greatest gratitude to all friends who continue to support, encourage, and celebrate the Pitch In Program.

This year we implemented the first ever Rite of Passage ceremony to truly honor who our students are becoming. We encourage you to remain involved as we plan to serve 250 students, six schools, and three Chicago communities this coming school year. **We could not do this work without you.** Your kindness and generosity make this innovative, inspiring, and important work possible. Thank you!



Janene Ingram
Executive Director, Wood Family Foundation - Pitch In Program




“Why do we Pitch In?” from Co-Founders Kerry & Sarah Wood

“We believe that the middle school years are the most formative years in a child’s life. After years of navigating the Chicago nonprofit landscape, we found that most organizations were either focused on early child development and the post-secondary landscape; there was a significant gap in the middle school space. When creating Pitch In, we knew that when beginning in 4th grade, we had the opportunity to impact a child’s development in significant ways through our social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. Through the opportunity to build life-giving consistent relationships with our Pitch In staff and mentors, maintain summer programming to keep that consistency, and assist families in navigating the high school selection process. We have seen, first hand, the difference that not only Pitch In has made in the lives of our students and families, but for our school partners as well. Pitch In provides community schools with the daily programming needed, to fill a gap that many under-resourced schools are faced with. Our Chicago middle school students deserve more and Pitch In sees those students, desires to serve those students, and is committed to making a significant impact in that space.”



- **Kerry & Sarah Wood**

School Year 2021 - 2022 PROGRAM OUTCOMES
Served over 200 students, within 15 cohort classes at four Pitch In Partner Schools within two Chicago communities.
Over 90% Pitch In students meet/exceed academic expectations (C or better core content classes: Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies) and have attendance at/above 90% for the school year.
Kids vote with their feet! Over 85% program attendance for the school year.
Inaugural Social Emotional Learning Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">95% of students strongly agree/agree “Pitch In is a safe place where I can spend time with friends.”94% of students strongly agree/ agree “My Pitch In teacher cares about me.”92% of students strongly agree/agree “I can trust my Pitch In teacher.”

PITCH IN PROGRESS	
Pitch In Expansion	In Fall 2022, we will launch our first soft expansion into the Englewood community serving at King Academy in collaboration with veteran Principal Jasmine Thurmond and Principal Tanyelle Hannah at Mays Academy. We are very excited to spend the year building a relationship with the King and Mays school communities while executing several of the Pitch In signature program experiences.
Exceptional New Leadership	We welcomed Quinn Daniels and Jon Arndt to the Executive Leadership Team. Together they have over thirty-five years experience in the education non-profit sector. Their leadership is guaranteed to take our program and organization to the next level. We are so lucky to have them on the team!
Program Partnership	We remain humbled and grateful to continue to partner with A Better Chicago as they invest in our program and believe fervently in the services we provide to students and schools. It is an honor to announce a new partnership, AMPT , another nonprofit partner who intentionally seeks to advance nonprofits of our size by providing resources and community spaces for leaders to collaborate.
Program Best Practices	 <p>The transition back to in person learning after two years of remote and hybrid learning has been both exhilarating and challenging. Chicago not only made the national news for the CTU strike two years ago, CPS was back in the news in January 2022 due to class cancellations due to COVID19 safety concerns. Despite these learning interruptions, the Pitch In Program remains in touch with over 90% of families, students continue to attend the program at over 85% during the school year, and we served nearly 100 families during our Pitch In Summer Camp. This year we launched a new signature program experience called the “Rite of Passage Ceremony” and “Pass the Torch Ceremony” that will serve as a beacon of maturation for our rising 6th graders for many years to come.</p>

Spotlight on the new Pitch In Program Signature Practice - Rite of Passage Ceremony

Our 6th graders throughout our program participated in a Rite of Passage/ Pass The Torch ceremony to signify their growth and transition into middle school. Grounded in the history of Black people from the South and the cultural implications of youth transitioning to adulthood in Latin and Jewish cultures, the ceremony is centered around students and this stage of their life. Each ceremony was different to meet the unique needs of the students and their school yet focused on the transition into middle school with the inclusion of self-expression and a communal art piece.

- [Inaugural Sumner Pitch In Rite of Passage Ceremony](#)
- [Inaugural Lawndale Community Academy Rite of Passage Ceremony](#)

"This program was a beautiful physical representation of the students' transition from 6th to 7th grade. This inaugural ceremony created a pivotal moment to celebrate the students' mental and emotional resilience as they prepare for this next phase of their education journey. It was delightful to pause and make the connections between their 6th grade experience and who they are becoming as 7th grade leaders at Sumner. This Rite of Passage Ceremony was a powerful value add that completely fits into the culture of care at Sumner and we look forward to making this an annual ritual."

- **Mrs. Catherine Martin, Principal of Sumner Math & Science Community Academy**

"The Pass the Torch ceremony gave our 6th grade students the opportunity to take ownership and use their voice in developing a program to help prepare our 5th graders for the important transition to middle school. As educators, we know that this is a critical time for developing academic and social-emotional skills, but having students hear about expectations and get advice directly from their peers was so much more impactful than just being told by the adults. We are looking forward to this becoming a yearly tradition to celebrate the transition and help our rising 6th graders feel prepared and confident for the next school year and throughout middle school!"

- **Ms. Erin Conway, School Counselor at Moos Elementary**

School Wide Impact

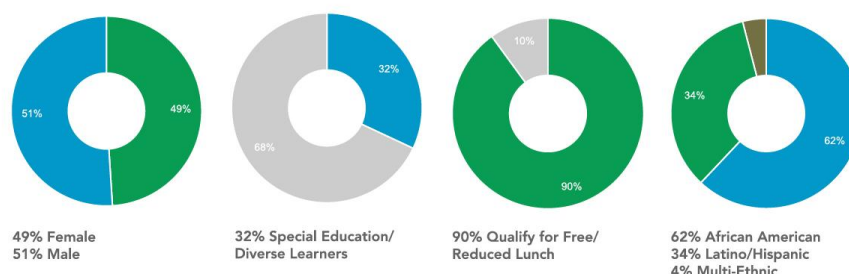
At Lawndale Community Academy Pitch In worked in collaboration to create a Parent Resource Room. In addition to building equitable spaces, staff worked collectively to provide training with school based staff interrogating the respect and relationships the adults needed when they were in elementary and middle school. Using that introspection as a starting point will directly contribute to the school wide climate and culture at the New LCA.

Charles Sumner Academy, Richard Yates Elementary & Bernhard Moos Elementary: This was the first year that each Pitch In School Partner experienced a Rite of Passage ceremony. In middle school, there is a big transformation that takes place,



physically, mentally, and emotionally. We aspire to honor the progression of every Pitch In student from child to adolescent. This ritual will become an annual experience in partnership with the entire school community. This unique moment in time provides an opportunity for the school, parents, teachers, and students to celebrate the growth and development of these young people during a pivotal moment of their transition from 5th to 6th (Moos) and 6th to 7th grade (LCA, Sumner, Yates).

200 STUDENTS ENROLLED



Thank you for your time, talent, and treasure!

Your support and resources continue to drive the work that we do every single day. We know that not many students received after school programming for the past two to three years. We are proud that we were able to maintain contact with our students and we grew the number of students and schools served. Your friendship has helped us to provide during school and after school experiences that affirm the identities of our students and expand what they have access to. This expansion continues to ignite a fire that is unique to the individual strengths and passions of every single Pitch In student. Please follow us on social media, visit our website, and sign up to continue to learn more about the Pitch In Program and student experience.

A special thank you, to all of our Board members and funders, for the resources that makes Pitch In possible:

❖ **\$100,000:** A Better Chicago

❖ **\$50,000 - \$99,999:**

- Ace Hardware Foundation*
- Graham Allen, Sloan*
- HJ Weinberg Family Foundation
- Kerry & Sarah Wood

❖ **\$25,000 - \$49,999:**

- Adam Damerow, Katten*
- Gatorade*
- Jeff Shaw
- LSV Asset Management*

- Rick & Mary Van Horne
- Tom Ricketts, Chicago Cubs*
- Tony Hoban, William Blair*
- Storer Magnusson Family Charitable Fund

❖ **\$10,000 - \$24,999:**

- Chicago Cubs Charities Foundation
- John Ver Bockel
- William Barry

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