



C<sup>2</sup> Pipeline

# 2023-2024 C2 Pipeline Afterschool Program

**Focus Groups**

*Submitted May 2024*

# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Overview                                  | <u>3</u>  |
| Participants                              | <u>4</u>  |
| Themes Identified                         | <u>8</u>  |
| Highlights                                | <u>9</u>  |
| Conclusions and Possible Next Steps       | <u>18</u> |
| Notes from Each Site                      |           |
| Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School | <u>19</u> |
| Pershing High School                      | <u>27</u> |
| University High School (Ferndale)         | <u>37</u> |
| Warren Woods Tower High School            | <u>45</u> |

# Overview

- During Spring 2024, the C2 Pipeline Evaluation Team (Eval Team) planned to conduct eight focus groups across four C2 sites: Martin Luther King Jr., Pershing, University, and Warren Woods Tower High Schools.
- Two focus groups were planned for each site, one for staff at the school and one for parents of students.
- The focus groups were to collect feedback from participants on:
  - Impressions they had of the C2 Pipeline program at their school;
  - Their thoughts on afterschool programs, in general; and
  - Their opinions on College and Career Readiness (CCR).
- The Eval Team was able to conduct five focus groups. In the other three instances, participants did not arrive at the scheduled time.
  - At University High School (UHS), the Eval Team was able to have two separate discussions, each with two staff. No parents arrived.
  - At Pershing, we had a discussion with two parents.

# Participants

# Participation

- The Eval Team spoke with 58 people across the four sites, 35 school staff and 23 parents of students:

| High School Site   | Date     | Staff Group | Parent Group | Total     |
|--------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Martin Luther King | March 5  | 11          | 8            | 19        |
| Pershing           | March 7  | 10          | 2            | 12        |
| UHS                | March 19 | 4           | 0            | 4         |
| Warren Woods Tower | April 4  | 10          | 13           | 23        |
| <b>Overall</b>     |          | <b>35</b>   | <b>23</b>    | <b>58</b> |

*Note:* In the following slides, we report on the numbers of participants in certain categories. We report based on the data available. In some instances, a participant may have joined the group after a question was asked (which is the reason we report 16 of **22** parents had children who participated in C2). In addition, a few people skipped one or more questions on the demographic survey.

# Participant Demographics: Race and Ethnicity

- Overall, over half of focus group attendees identified as Black/African American and nearly 40% as White. 5% identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x and 2% as Arabic or Middle Eastern.
  - The vast majority of attendees at MLK and Pershing were Black/African American; while the majority at Warren Woods Tower were White. Two few attended UHS to report.

| Race                   | Number    | Percent     |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Black/African American | 31        | 54%         |
| White                  | 23        | 40%         |
| Other                  | 3         | 5%          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>57</b> | <b>100%</b> |

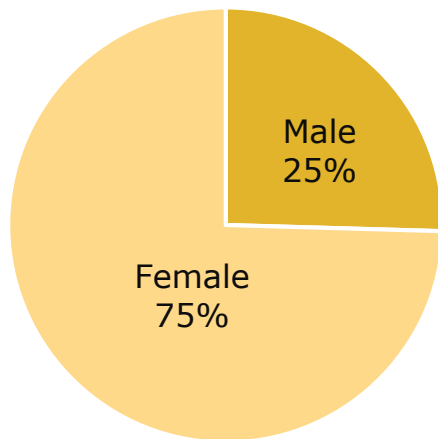
| Ethnicity                | Number    | Percent     |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Hispanic or Latinx       | 3         | 5%          |
| Arabic or Middle Eastern | 1         | 2%          |
| Neither                  | 53        | 93%         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>57</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| Site               | Largest Group          | Number | Percent |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------|---------|
| MLK                | Black/African American | 16     | 84%     |
| Pershing           | Black/African American | 11     | 92%     |
| UHS                | --                     | --     | --      |
| Warren Woods Tower | White                  | 16     | 73%     |

# Participant Demographics: Gender

- Three-quarters of focus group participants were female.
- Half of all male participants were from the staff group held at King.

| Gender       | Number    | Percent     |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Male         | 14        | 25%         |
| Female       | 41        | 75%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>100%</b> |



| Staff Group        | All       | Female    | % Female   |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| MLK                | 10        | 3         | 30%        |
| Pershing           | 9         | 8         | 89%        |
| Warren Woods Tower | 10        | 9         | 90%        |
| <b>Overall</b>     | <b>29</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>69%</b> |

| Parent Group       | All       | Female    | % Female   |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| MLK                | 7         | 6         | 86%        |
| Warren Woods Tower | 12        | 10        | 83%        |
| <b>Overall</b>     | <b>19</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>84%</b> |

# Themes Identified across Groups

- Overall, participants were very positive about the C2 afterschool program. There were several sentiments repeated across the C2 focus groups:
  - C2's flexibility, support of student athletes, the perceived social-emotional benefits, and value of a connection to WSU were commonly expressed.
- Participants had strong opinions on College and Career Readiness (CCR). In general, staff at most sites were more focused on the academic aspects while parents often conveyed a view that incorporated life skills and traits more frequently.
  - Staff at Warren Woods Tower (WWT) also described a more expansive view of CCR.



# Highlights

From the Groups

# C2 Engagement and Overall Impressions of C2

- Across sites, most participants had at least some familiarity with the C2 program in their schools.
  - 16 of 22 parents reported having children who were either current C2 students or recent alumni of the program.
  - Many of the staff at the groups were involved in afterschool programming, including a few who worked for C2 directly.
- At each site, the Eval Team was informed that one of the strengths of C2 was its flexibility.
  - Parents often noted they appreciated that students could participate in C2 while being active in sports and other afterschool activities.
  - That sentiment was repeated in staff groups. Additionally, many staff praised C2 support of student athletes. They mentioned the value of C2 providing meals (as well as a supervised location) and academic support before the start of practices. At Warren Woods Tower, teachers shared that in some cases student grades fell after the season was over—because they stopped attending C2.

# Value of Afterschool Programs

When asked, staff participants shared a wide variety of benefits to afterschool programming.

- Often they highlighted social-emotional benefits:
  - Staff at Warren Woods Tower noted they foster a sense of community, a sense of belonging, pride, and friendships among students.
  - MLK staff shared that they can provide students avenues to take ownership and assume leadership roles.
  - Pershing staff noted that they can improve the climate and culture at the school, by creating more of a community and encouraging students look out for each other; and
  - UHS staff noted that since they were not a “neighborhood school,” afterschool programming allowed students the time to develop stronger connections with each other.
- At UHS, staff related that C2 offers students and staff something not otherwise available.
- Repeatedly, participants said that the affiliation with WSU “*means something*” to students and their parents, potentially opening doors to college opportunities they may not have previously considered.

# College and Career Readiness

- In general, when asked about College and Career Readiness, participants highlighted:
  - Preparing for college (academically, application process, financial aid/scholarships);
  - Social-emotional skills (emotional regulation, self-regulation, confidence, working with different people in different environments, and being able to work outside your comfort zone);
  - Self-discipline, self-motivation, accountability;
  - Life skills (as one MLK parent framed it: being prepared for the *next level*, where they would be *totally on [their] own*);
  - Exposure to a variety of careers;
  - *Professionalism*, including skills such as resume writing, interviewing, and appropriate attire);
  - Understanding their own strengths and weaknesses; and
  - At MLK and Pershing, staff were concerned about preparing their students for an education environment where they would be in the minority.

# What's Needed for College and Career Readiness (staff)

- When asked what their students needed for CCR, staff suggested:
  - Communication skills, such as essays, public speaking;
  - Job shadowing/apprenticeships
    - One person suggested that these apprenticeships should be paid, noting that by participating in afterschool programs, students are giving up opportunities to work;
  - Resources (financial, computers/internet in the home)
  - Longer attention spans and the ability to focus; and
  - To be reached in earlier grades (middle school).

*A note:* MLK and Pershing talked about CCR efforts of school and those of C2 collectively, suggesting strong partnerships between counseling department and C2

# What's Needed for College and Career Readiness (parents)

- Parents suggested family engagement sessions that:
  - Taught financial literacy, money management, and credit;
  - Developed communication skills, that helped students to advocate for themselves and adapt their delivery based on the environment;
  - Promoted *family togetherness* and *being more engaged* with each other and away from screens;
  - Highlighted mental health awareness;
  - Provided guidance for parents on how to help their children with homework, using current methods;
  - Highlighted topics such as resumes and business attire;
  - Taught life skills such as cooking, ironing, being self-sufficient;
    - Taught families how to create nutritious meals together;
  - Offered guidance and support for those who will not attend college (addressing stigma, helping parents help children); and
  - Included platform for students to hear from college students (preferably recent alumni).

# What students say about C2

- At MLK and Warren Woods Tower, staff emphasized the enthusiasm students had for C2. One noted *"I've never heard one of them complain about C2, never once, and they complain about everything."*
- At the three sites where the Eval Team heard from parents, they shared that their children were excited to talk them about what they did in C2.
- Echoing comments from students during 2023's focus groups, parents shared stories of students joining C2 because their siblings or friends had convinced them how much *fun* it was.

# Misconceptions/Confusion around C2

- Despite the level of staff engagement with C2, there seemed to be some misconceptions about C2 among staff, though not to the level seen among the non-C2 participants from 2023's student focus groups.
  - Some staff expected C2 to be more rigidly STEM focused, either because they had formed impressions of C2 years ago; because they developed expectations due WSU College of Nursing sponsoring the program; or because administration at some schools emphasized certain aspects of the program.
  - Most staff did note that C2 had been discussed in staff meetings, but the one-on-one conversations with Site Coordinators (SCs) were the main way they learned the details of the program.
  - In some cases, there was uncertainty about whether an activity was officially a C2 activity or an activity that the SC had helped launch.



# Spotlight: Warren Woods Tower

- While sites typically vary based on the skills and interests of the SC, until now, the Eval Team had not heard of intentional efforts to ensure students with disabilities were fully included in C2 programming.
- At Warren Woods Tower, the SC seems to have built a strong partnership with the school's special education department.
- In the staff focus group, participants shared that C2 had been welcoming to students with cognitive impairments (CI) and physical needs. One noted "*they finally have a place where they can go after school [...] and still be with their peers.*"

# Conclusions and Next Steps

- The feedback gathered via these discussions with staff and parents at C2 sites and lead to several next steps:
  - The strong positive impressions of C2 suggest that stakeholders at sites could serve as ambassadors and advocates for the program—potentially valuable after years of reductions in funding;
  - Parent and staff recommendations for family engagement sessions and reports of what they believe students need in order to achieve College and Career Readiness can be considered for possible expansions and/or enhancements to program offerings; and
  - Those connected with C2 participants report a wide variety of benefits to the program that may not be captured by the current evaluation (either local or statewide components). C2 can consider developing a strategy for a longitudinal evaluation that would measure key aspects of students' CCR after high school graduation and beyond.

*“A lot of times, we see academics, academics, academics, test this, this, and this. But a lot of times we miss the whole child. [...] This gives the students the opportunity.”*

—Teacher at MLK describing C2

# Focus Groups

Notes from Martin Luther King, Jr. High School

**Groups held**

3/5/2024

**Staff**

11

**Parent**

8

# MLK: Engagement with C2

## Staff

- All staff were aware of C2 Pipeline before being invited to the focus group.
  - Several learned about C2 from their students.
- All but two of the 11 participants were engaged with some afterschool activity. They emphasized that the programs did not “compete” with each other and instead they described that by having multiple options, most days student had some program available daily and there were teachers in the building when students needed, such when they had questions related to credit recovery.

## Parents

- Parent noted that the Site Coordinator (SC) was always in communication about what was going on.
- 7 of the 8 parent participants indicated their child(ren) participated in C2. When asked why their children joined C2, several parents reported learning about the program by talking to the (former or current) SC,
  - During a school event, where talking to SC convinced them of value of program and that its flexibility would allow child to do C2 and still participate in sports;
  - At event outside of school, before child went to MLK; or
  - During open enrollment.

# MLK: Impressions of C2

## Staff

- Participants reported that the C2 afterschool program focused on:
  - Serving as a pipeline from high school to college, in particular offering mentoring through WSU;
  - Helping redirect students to a better path;
  - The *community* aspects of the program,
    - *"Decompression program so that young people could release any anxieties or stress from the day, get fed and socialize with each other, and then talk to the adults that were present about their academic focus."*
    - *"Being here with mentors and being here with peers and a sense of family"*
- One described being impressed by how students were able to communicate about and represent the program during open houses.
- Two agreed it was for all students, but noted that sports teams were especially involved.
- Several noted that C2 had grown over the years and now has more structure and organization, particularly under the new SC.
- They mentioned the flexibility of C2 allows students to participate in multiple afterschool activities during the year.
- Two mentioned that students enjoyed C2 field trips.

## Parents

Parents described C2 as an excellent program and reported:

- Their children were excited to share their experience in C2;
- The program provided academic support and tutoring;
- Their family valued the advice given by the SC, including guidance on creating a portfolio; and
- Podcasting, with students fulfilling different roles in the production, was a key activity.

# MLK: Misconceptions of C2

## Staff

- One reported seeing a flyer from the WSU [College] of Nursing about C2 or School of Medicine *in the fine print* so expected the program to be more geared toward nursing.
- One person noted that, based on a presentation from the previous SC, they expected it to teach students how to be entrepreneurs.
- Several noted that they initially believed that C2 included cooking and other fun activities as a way to get students into the program so they could provide the needed academic support.

# MLK: Value of Afterschool Programs

## Staff

- *"A lot of times, we see academics, academics, academics, test this, this, and this. But a lot of times we miss the whole child [...] This gives the students the opportunity."*
- Some reported seeing students take ownership and leadership roles in C2, even to point of alumni being willing to return to school to help out.
- Participants listed several aspects of the C2 Pipeline program they valued, including:
  - Opportunity for students to receive a meal;
  - The peer mentoring and support possibility for a multi-age group;
  - A partnership with the school's counseling department that allowed them to:
    - Bring in financial aid officers to do workshops with seniors to complete financial aid forms;
    - Host a open house at the site with Wayne State schools and colleges;
    - Take groups to visit universities and have lunch with campus students; and
    - Support of the school's career day.
  - Summer camp programs.

## Parents

Parents described C2 as an excellent program and reported:

- The program provided academic support and tutoring;
- The field trips and **WSU** summer programming were valuable;
- Students learned different things every week, beyond what they were already interested in; and
- It pulled their children *"a little out of their comfort zone"* (outside of their daily schedule, beyond their current interests, and with different students).

# MLK: What is CCR?

## Staff

- After two mentioned preparing students for college and then a career after that, one noted it also includes trade school or the workforce.
- Other aspects highlighted included social skills, emotional regulation, self-regulation, self-discipline, working with people in different environments, confidence, and being able to work outside your comfort zone.
- Staff shared experiences of culture shock when they found themselves in college with different demographics than their high schools in working with diverse groups.

## Parents

- The parents mentioned the following when describing CCR:
  - Being prepared for the *next level*, where they would be *totally on [their] own*;
  - Having exposure to many career paths, especially those that are *obtainable* and *lucrative*, but not widely considered;
  - Aware of scholarships and financial aid;
  - Familiarity with a college campus;
  - Hearing about the application process and college experiences of recent alumni from their high school;
  - Having a *particular skill set*, whether or not they attend college;
  - Having time management skills and the ability to stay on task; and
  - Developing a balance in life so they can enjoy their video games and still do their work, *communicate with people*, and *build real relationships*.



# MLK: What's needed for CCR?

## Staff

- Essay writing and public speaking were mentioned as two aspects of CCR where their students needed extra support.
- Several participants discussed that job shadowing or apprenticeships would be useful to familiarize students with careers of interest and help contextualize their schoolwork.
  - One person suggested that these apprenticeships should be paid, noting that by participating in afterschool programs, students are giving up opportunities to work.

## Parents

- Parents suggested family engagement sessions that:
  - Promoted *family togetherness* and *being more engaged* with each other and away from screens;
  - Taught financial literacy, money management, and credit;
  - Highlighted mental health awareness;
  - Developed communication skills, that helped students to advocate for themselves and adapt their delivery based on the environment;
  - Provided guidance for parents on how to help their children with homework, using current methods;
  - Taught families how to create nutritious meals together;
  - Career readiness topics such as resumes and business attire; and
  - Life skills such as cooking, ironing, being self-sufficient.

# MLK: What else?

## Staff

- One person suggested that early exposure to the SAT and test taking strategies was important.
  - Another added that study skills and vocabulary session would be valuable.
- Someone suggested C2 Pipeline partner with the school to host middle school students and their families for an early introduction to the ways the school will prepare them for careers.

## Parents

- One participant suggested having more programs to serve more children.
- One parent stressed communicating to students the importance of GPAs and consistency well before 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Several were interested in better advertising of programs like C2 and brainstormed way that could be accomplished:
  - Sharing information in mandatory sessions, such as orientation; and
  - Advertising during school events and in school/district newsletters or other communication channels.

# Focus Groups

## Notes from Pershing High School

| <b>Groups held</b> | <b>Staff</b> | <b>Parent</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 3/7/2024           | 10           | 2             |

Note: Rather than a parent focus group, the Eval Team was only able to have a conversation with two parent participants.

# Pershing: Engagement with C2

## Staff

- One participant was also staff for C2.
  - It was noted that teachers at the school had the opportunity to work with C2 and that knowing students and having an existing relationship with them helped.
- In addition to C2, staff were involved in other extracurricular activities.
  - Two noted that “*the morale is high here*” and “*everybody is passionate about [supporting students],*” with others expressing agreement that “*everyone here contributes,*” as they are able.
  - When another noted that for staff to be more involved, staff would need more money, a few quickly clarified:
    - Some might need the money to cover their own childcare and others might “*put that money back into the kids,*” by helping students financially, such as with senior dues.

## Parents

- Both discussed being able to communicate with the Site Coordinator (SC) for program updates, with one noting that through four different SCs, the communication had been consistent.

# Pershing: Impressions of C2

## Staff

Participants reported that the C2 afterschool program focused on:

- College and career readiness;
- Being a safe place, where they support social emotional learning, students being able to “unwind and release,” and (peer) relationship building;
- Exposing students to a variety of things right after school;
- Field trips;
- Reading and math; and
- Podcasting and students recording baseball games, as well musicals at school.
- When asked whether C2 was for a certain type of student, one participant responded “*No, that’s what makes it so cool*” and several chimed in to report the different types of student who participate (*quiet, artsy, academic, athletes, robotics kids, shy, everybody*)

## Parents

- Both parents related that their children joined C2 because of peers, who were already in C2, had shared about the activities and trips and how much fun they were having.
- One stated that C2 was like a family and the program is great and they love the program for their children.
- They described the focus of C2 as introducing the students to college and preparing them to attend.
- Parents reported students do a lot of trips with C2, sometimes twice a month, with trips including skating and college visits.
- One described C2 as helping their child *come out of [their] shell*, with activities such as sports broadcasting for sports games that required they interview players.
- They noted that C2 offers meals to student athletes before their practices.

# Pershing: Misconceptions of C2

## Staff

- Overall, staff seemed knowledgeable about C2. The only counterexample occurred when someone shared that C2 includes podcasts and at least one participant noted they had heard students' excitement about podcasting, but had not realized they were doing it with C2 (others noted that other school activities also did podcasting).

# Pershing: Value of Afterschool Programs

## Staff

- All participants reported referring students to C2 and encouraging them to sign up for the program.
- Several reasons were shared, including:
  - Improving the climate and culture at the school, by creating more of a community and encouraging students look out for each other more;
  - Helping students be more vocal and communicate with each other better;
  - Fostering positive relationships between students who normally would not be friends with each other;
  - Helping some students calm down and deal better with conflict; and
  - Broadening student perspectives by exposing students to college campus, academic expectations required in college.
    - One noted the program reinforces academics, holds students accountable and challenge them to improve their grades.

## Parents

- Parents shared what they wanted in afterschool programs, including:
  - Safety, based on who is around and having adult supervision of activities; and
  - Their children having a good time and feeling *open* and *comfortable*.
- Participants reported C2 participation afforded their children several opportunities:
  - Seeing what college is about;
  - Being able to travel to different colleges;
  - Building confidence and respect;
  - Being exposed to different people and social communications; and
  - Getting experiences outside of the program itself (such as students doing interviews/podcasts).
- One noted that they have seen many students *coming out of their shell* and becoming stronger due to C2 participation.

# Pershing: What other afterschool program would benefit students at this school?

## Staff

- Participant suggestions included marching band, swimming team, soccer, lacrosse, and drama.



# Pershing: What is CCR?

## Staff

- Note that when the group was asked what they considered the important aspects of College and Career Readiness (CCR), many of their answers were intertwined with descriptions of what C2 does.
- Participants mentioned several aspect of CCR, such as:
  - Helping students be “*a little more prepared for that culture shock*” where they find themselves in the minority on campus, via:
    - Trips to campus so that students can see what the greater college community looks like.
  - Exposing students to the variety of potential careers; and
  - Sharing the expectations of the academic rigor that college requires and working with students on accountability and improving their grades.

## Parents

- The parents shared the following as important aspects of CCR:
  - Learning how to fill out applications;
  - Being able to ask questions;
  - Being able to write in cursive;
  - Being educated on school loans and credit;
  - GPA and grades;
  - Staying focused, and being able to be productive in college without someone “*over your shoulder*” for external accountability.

# Pershing: What's needed for CCR?

## Staff

- Staff noted the challenge of the digital divide, with many of their students not having computers at home.
- One person mentioned students not having money.
- Several bemoaned a “*TikTok attention span*” and noted some students lacked stamina and struggled with completing an hour of homework, writing essays, taking tests or working through the Xello college and career readiness program.
- One person noted that while C2 students have the opportunity to visit college campuses, other students have transportation issues.
- One suggested it would be beneficial for C2 to offer college fairs for younger students, in addition to seniors.

## Parents

- When asked whether there are things students need, but either their families do not have access to or enough support for, participants shared examples of social-emotional needs within their families and the need for support that allowed them to be comfortable about privacy.
- When asked about family engagement sessions that they would find beneficial, they mentioned:
  - Sessions for the whole family that would explore what support the students need from parents to when it comes to college and careers;
  - Sessions that support parents who have maintained a *mask* of strength in order to be a “*safe space*” for their children;
  - Financial literacy, particularly teaching students how to save; and
  - Sessions to help students choose to be “*leaders rather than followers*” and how to positively stand up for themselves.

# Pershing: What's the best way to get information to families?

## Parents

- Parents suggested:
  - For recruitment, C2 could call, send emails, and give out flyers or letters for students to take home.
  - For parents of current students, they suggested simply having in-person conversations or sending texts.

# Pershing: What else?

## Staff

- When asked if they wanted to add anything, many participants used that time to praise C2:
  - *"Keep up the great work!"*
  - One added that it should *"continue and expand."* When asked to elaborate, they related that because the program is *"really, really needed by young people,"* C2 should lobby for the state to continue funding and to expand into more DPSCD and inner-city schools, where kids do not get the exposure and resources they deserve.
- One person wondered whether C2 programming could be included into the school day itself.

## Parents

- When asked what else was important to know, the two parents reported that:
  - This discussion helped them learn more about the program;
  - They have watched the program grow as more students have joined over the years and they see the value;
  - *"I see a whole change in my daughter and I love it;"* and
  - The students in C2 *"are like a family"* and *"my kids loved it."*

*"C2 is just a bright light for [the students]."*

--Staff member at University High School describing the C2  
afterschool program

# Focus Groups

## Notes from University High School (Ferndale)

| <b>Groups held</b> | <b>Staff</b> | <b>Parent</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 3/19/2024          | 4            | --            |

Note: There were no focus groups at UHS. While the Site Coordinator reported confirming 10 for the parent group and five for the staff group, no parents came and only one teacher came at the scheduled time. Another staffer was convinced to join the conversation between the Eval Team and the teacher and later in the afternoon, another two staffers had a second conversation with the Eval Team.

# Ferndale Staff: Impressions of C2

- One reported that with the shift to a “club based” format, the program has less variety, but it is “*now what the kids exactly want.*”
- One suggested C2 gives students and staff access to field trips and activities they would not otherwise have, such as seeing a musical, visiting a museum, or learning CPR.
- Participants emphasized the social emotional learning supported by the program.

# Ferndale Staff: Engagement with C2

- All four individuals reported familiarity with C2.
  - Two officially worked with the program and another was engaged with activities with C2 students in some capacity.
- When asked about integration between the school and C2, one initially noted that there were only a few school teachers who work at C2, but then noted that there was a lot of integration with the school, giving examples of:
  - Providing meals to many students who are registered for sports and participate in C2 either before or after their sports;
  - Coordinating with other afterschool clubs so that students are able to participate in both; and
  - Identifying students who need assistance with their school work and working with the teacher(s) to get the student that help.

# Ferndale Staff: Benefits of Afterschool Programs

Participants suggested that about one-quarter of students attend afterschool programs and reported several benefits:

- They noted participating in afterschool programs allowed students to build stronger friendships with others who are not in their classes and who are unlikely to live in their neighborhood (as the UHS study body is drawn from across the tri-county area).
- *"It's a different way to decompress."*
- Participants described C2 as a safe environment for students to be in after school.
- One participant explained how making participation in afterschool programming contingent on completing school work could be used to motivate students academically.
- One noted that unlike the school day, C2 is *non-threatening* because students choose to participate in the program, have choices in the activities, and are not graded.
- *"C2 is just a bright light for them."* A participant described C2 as offering students and staff something not otherwise available.
  - Staff mentioned that C2 is able to offer programming that either would take more time or not be possible in the same way as a direct school or district effort.
  - One noted that C2 allows students to explore different career opportunities, as well as allowing student to understand there are people at the school (school day and afterschool) who will help them to achieve those possibilities.



# Ferndale Staff: What other programs?

- When asked about afterschool programming that is not currently at the school, but would benefit its students, two staff participants were quick to report “*all staff are maxed out.*” Participants noted many school staff are engaged with various afterschool activities and suggested that those who are not have young families so the school could not support additional afterschool activities.
  - One highlighted how the school had tried to incorporate activities into the school day, such as a photography class.
- Another mentioned that student might benefit from music programs or a foreign language club.

# Ferndale Staff: What is CCR

- Overall participants emphasized priority setting, being disciplined, and self-motivation as key to CCR. One noted that for many students college will be the first time they are on their own and will need to *figure things out*.
- One aspect of CCR mentioned was excitement to attend college, which they said was increased via exposure to university campuses.
- They explained the importance of raising awareness of various career paths and giving students the opportunity to explore how those might align with their interests.
- One person mentioned that it include budgeting and being able to save money.

# Ferndale Staff: School's Approach to CCR

## Staff

- A participant reported "*we are college prep,*" noting that UHS's focus includes:
  - Helping students develop the skills of prioritization, discipline and self motivation;
  - Their partnership with WSU;
  - Campus tours; and
  - Providing assistance with FAFSA.
- In addition, participants described that the school educates students about careers that do not require college degrees, offering field trips and career fairs with highlights including trade schools, construction, manufacturing, and cosmetology.

# Ferndale Staff: What Else?

## **Staff**

- Two discussed need for additional C2 staff to assist the Site Coordinator and to allow for programming to continue in case the SC or an instructor is absent.

*"It's a lot of fun. It's different activities that you can participate in. If you need help, you can get the help. If you want to learn this, you can learn this. So it's really welcome; that's something I think is really needed."*

Parent at Warren Woods Tower High School describing the C2 afterschool program

# Focus Groups

## Notes from Warren Woods Tower

| <b>Groups held</b> | <b>Staff</b> | <b>Parent</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 4/4/2024           | 10           | 13            |

Note: Five of the 10 staff participants identified themselves as part of the Special Education Department.

# Warren Woods Tower: Engagement with C2

## Staff

- Many of the participants indicated partnering with C2 in various capacities:
  - One had an agreement in place for student athletes to attend C2 prior to their practices.
  - Half of all participants were part of the school's Special Education department and C2's inclusion of their students was discussed at length.
  - One teacher reported becoming aware of resources C2 could provide, such as programs and grants, after talking with the Site Coordinator and was currently working on ways to collaborate.
  - One shared that their program normally works with donated and recycled materials, but with C2 tools and resources (like 3D printers or laser cutters) they are able to make "upscale" projects.

## Parents

- 7 of the 12 participants reported having a child in C2 (another had a child attend a single time).
- Whether or not their children participated in C2, all reported that they had heard of the program.
- One noted that parents received regular updates from the Site Coordinator via text and others agreed they could reach out to the SC for support.
- Several reported that their children were excited to talk about what they did in C2 (to parents and office staff).

# Warren Woods Tower: Impressions of C2

## Staff

The majority of participants praised C2.

- Those from the Special Education department highlighted how inclusive the SC had been to students with cognitive impairments (CI) and physical needs:
  - *"They finally have a place where they can go after school [...] and still be with their peers."*
  - Participants lauded the summer camp and described field trips as having *"such good educational plans."*
- Some reported C2's benefits for student athletes as:
  - Providing them a place to be after school, before practice; keeping students focused and helping them complete homework and maintain grades.
    - They noted a drop in grades for some students who stopped attending C2 after their sport's season ended.
- Overall, they spoke with excitement, saying C2 provided exposure to less common experiences via activities and field trips (examples included crafting a cutting board, viewing the eclipse, seeing a Broadway show).

## Parents

*"It's a lot of fun. It's different activities that you can participate in. If you need help, you can get the help. If you want to learn this, you can learn this. So it's really welcome; that's something I think is really needed."*

- Those whose children did not participate in C2 reported that it was:
  - *"A safe haven for kids"* that offered students *"who might not have things that they need at home"* resources like food;
  - *"Very supportive"* of the Special Education department;
  - Helping with college readiness;
  - Teaching basic skills like cooking and cleaning;
  - Enjoyed by students and included *"fun field trips."*
- Parents reported that their children had joined C2 for various reasons, including:
  - A desire to make friends and socialize;
  - An interest in the activities;
  - Having enjoyed the summer program; and
  - Hearing from friends or relatives how much fun it was.

# Warren Woods Tower: Misconceptions of C2

## Staff

- Only one participant was less aware of C2. That person recalled hearing C2 promise years ago that there would be *"be robots in the halls,"* and asked whether C2 was no longer science-related. Others then agreed that before direct conversations with the Site Coordinator, they also had misunderstandings about the program.
- Participants suggested messaging around C2 was often *generic*, with school announcements saying *"Yeah, you have nowhere to go. You come here. Oh, your grades are bad. You go here."*
  - One reported initially believing something similar, that it was a program for those whose parents were still at work and didn't have transportation home.
- The group suggested that while information on C2 has been presented in staff meetings and at student events (such as open house or freshman orientation), much of the school community was still unaware.

## Parents

- SC helped launch the school's eSports club, unclear whether it is part of C2 or a separate activity.



# Warren Woods Tower: Value of Afterschool Programs

## Staff

- Participants described after school programs as fostering a sense of community, a sense of belonging, pride, and friendships among students.
- One participant noted they bring structure and another agreed saying “*and believe it or not, they do crave that.*”
- The affiliation with WSU “*means something*” to students and their parents, potentially opening doors to college opportunities they may not have previously considered.

## Parents

- Parents reported their children’s involvement in a variety of afterschool and extracurricular activities, including sports (noted by 5), National Honor Society, marching band, mock trial club, and trainings from the Food Department.
- Parents indicated the following was important:
  - Inclusion, which was explained to include:
    - Offering opportunities to appeal to students who do not like sports;
    - Being aware that some students cannot participate as they rely on the bus for transportation;
    - Appealing to a broad range of students, not just those with a particular talent or skill;
    - Welcoming to students who may be anxious about trying new things;
  - Activities that are enriching for students, in addition to being an option for students whose parents are working immediately after school.
- Parent described various benefits to C2, including:
  - A child who is now “*doing extremely well*” in math due to C2;
  - Students have opportunity to become friends with others they don’t normally interact with;
  - One has chosen a career path after being exposed to that option in C2; and
  - Attendance can be flexible so students can participate in other activities.

# Warren Woods Tower: What is CCR?

## Staff

- Participants talked about skills such as cooking and time management.
- Several chimed in on the topic of money management (including budgeting, checkbooks, mortgages and credit cards),
- One mentioned “professionalism,” which included skills such as resume writing, interviewing, appropriate attire and).
- They gave examples of “school-related readiness,” such as knowing how to complete the FAFSA and understanding loans.

## Parents

Parents described many aspects to college and career readiness, including:

- Advocacy, particularly when a student receives special education services and transitioning to college requires supports;
- Independence around life skills, such as cooking, laundry, medication management;
- Career exploration that includes:
  - *Variety and exposure*, to ensure students understand the array of choices available to them and are *not afraid to step out there and try*.
  - Hands-on learning through job shadowing opportunities so that students understand what that career choice looks like on a daily basis; and
  - Openness to the trades; and
  - Understanding their own strengths and weaknesses.

# Warren Woods Tower: How your school approaches CCR

## Staff

- Participants noted that their school does not focus on readiness broadly for all students, but that some students received this type of skill building, for example:
  - In consumers' math, through the special education program, students learn about writing checks and figuring out interest rates.
  - A teacher mentioned that there is professional development at the ISD for Career Technical Education teachers on incorporating practical, real world math into their classes on an ongoing basis.
  - Some teachers may take the initiative and incorporate it into their classes.

## Parents

- The group suggested that CCR supports be mandatory for all students.

# Warren Woods Tower: What's needed for CCR?

## Staff

- One person described a need for students to be exposed to and aware of "*what college is*," college as a possibility, and "*a million possibilities*" for careers.
- A few reiterated the necessity of students learning basic life skills.
- Several discussed the importance of conscientiousness around time and accountability.
- Some suggested that schools could increase students' readiness for college and careers by effectively partnering with their families and to hold student accountable for school expectations such as attendance.

## Parents

- When asked what own children *specifically* needed to become CCR, parents indicated their children needed to:
  - Limit phone use, particularly social media, and to focus on other areas;
  - Push themselves and step out of their comfort zone to explore new opportunities and experiences;
  - Develop internal motivations;
  - Have a realistic understanding of college life, including academics and dormitory living;
  - Have opportunities for to interact with college students to really understand the experiences, like classroom sizes and workload expectations;
  - Develop social, communication, and conflict resolution skills; and
  - Develop resume writing and interviewing skills.

# Warren Woods Tower: Parent Engagement Session Suggestions

## Parents

- When asked what they would like to see in parent engagement sessions, they reported an interest on a variety of sessions, including:
  - *“How to pick colleges, how to pick careers, how to do all of that;”*
  - Helping your child develop a plan for after high school, and focus on that path;
    - This might include educating parents on the options, the timelines, and how to encourage them;
  - FAFSA training;
  - How to support children who will not attend college;
    - *“My son is [...] most likely not going to be a college kid, but he'll have to do something else and where do I start? I don't even know, what's a trade school? Where is a trade school? How much is it?”*
    - Familiarizing parents with available resources for trade school or career technical education (CTE), particularly those at the school;
  - Combatting the stigma around *not* going to college; and
  - Having field trips (either career exploration or life skills related) that include parents.

# Warren Woods Tower: What else?

## Parents

- One asked for a group chat for C2 parents for updates on these topics.
- Another was interested in better communication, so that parents are aware of what the school offers because even navigating Schoology regularly, a lot of things were missed.
- One described the program as “amazing,” noting that it needed to be larger so it should be marketed more.
  - Parents then began discussing how they could get more information about school resources.
- Someone suggested there needed to be more of a focus on parents so that they could better support their children, but then acknowledged the challenge in getting parents to attend.
  - There was a suggestion of having family engagement sessions per once or twice a month, parents were invited to participate in the program with their children.



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