

**The To&Through Middle Grades Network** (MGN) is a group of CPS schools dedicated to creating more equitable and responsive educational environments where middle grades students thrive. The network aims to *increase the number of students with attendance at or above 90% and GPAs at or above 3.0 (i.e. condensed elementary on-track) through a meaningful increase in students' sense of belonging.*

Participating schools in each cohort work to redefine the middle grades experience by using qualitative and quantitative data to understand student experiences, develop a problem of practice, and test change ideas that positively impact the experiences and outcomes of middle grades students.

This profile shares the journey of one MGN school in hopes of inspiring others to reimagine systems and structures to ensure that middle grades students thrive.

## CHARLES SUMNER MATH & SCIENCE COMMUNITY ACADEMY LOCATED IN WEST GARFIELD PARK



### SY2022 - 2023 TEAM MEMBERS

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Counselor
- 7th/8th Grade Math Teacher
- 5th/6th Grade ELA + Social Science Teacher
- [Pitch-In](#) Program Manager

### STUDENTS

**School Grades:** PreK - 8

**Number of Students:** 178

**Middle Grades Enrollment:** 73

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**100% Black**

**14% Diverse Learners**

**80% Low Income**

### DEFINITION OF STUDENT

*Students at Sumner are successful when:*

- They feel seen, heard, and celebrated; and
- Teachers, staff, and students work together to create an environment that is safe, encouraging, developmentally appropriate, and challenges them academically.

# Charles Sumner Math & Science Community Academy

## Year One Improvement Story

### YEAR ONE

### CHANGE IDEA RATIONALE

In spring 2022, the Sumner team conducted student experience surveys and focus groups with their 5th-8th grade students. Survey results and focus groups revealed that students had a desire for deeper connection; not only in their academics but with their teachers and school community. Students spoke about the small groups or student surveys to strengthen these connections as well. After their first Elevate survey, 53% of students reported feeling that their work was meaningful. As a result of that data, teachers wanted to know more about what the word “meaningful” meant to their students. What they found was that there was a disconnect between the academic content and connection to the real-world. Based on the desire for more transparency and connection, the team decided to focus on how to improve the Meaningful Work learning condition.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. A student’s perception of what you’re doing might be different from what you’re doing.
2. Students develop a sense of agency by communicating their thoughts and opinions.
3. Students need to provide ongoing, direct feedback to teachers on how to adjust practices by participating in different surveys or activities.

### Data Sources

- Quarterly [Elevate survey](#) results related to the Meaningful Work classroom learning condition.
- Direct student feedback in the form of **engagement activities and Google surveys** to determine student understanding of the word meaningful.

### YEAR ONE

### CHANGE IDEA

#### Making Meaningful Work Connections through Learning Targets & Discussion

- Middle grades teachers committed to having explicit conversations with students around why, how, and what made their work meaningful.
- In addition, some students led small groups discussions around Meaningful Work and teachers included student choice in academic content.

### YEAR ONE

### IMPACT

*Making meaningful work connections* through learning targets and discussion led to students feeling a stronger sense of ownership and understanding of purpose behind their academic work. Using prompts such as “*this assignment connects to the real world by...*”, led to discussion about and helped students make those connections. In addition, teachers who met with students during small groups said they “*enjoyed talking about it*” and “*liked that there was not a wrong or a right answer.*” As a result, the team saw a 6% increase in the Meaningful Work learning condition between the two Elevate survey administrations.

Towards the end of the 2022-23 school year, the team shifted their focus towards the Classroom Community learning condition in Elevate and implemented different strategies to increase engagement. This will be the focus for the start of the 2023-24 school year with teachers keeping in mind, “*what strategies can be used to support student engagement, their sense of community in the classroom, and the middle grades as a whole?*” The team looks forward to collaborating and building off of last year.