SCHOLAR ATHLETE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

On October 5, Cincinnati Public Schools Athletics held the first Scholar-Athlete Leadership Conference. Over 100 students from 12 high schools across the CPS district came together for a day-long event held at the University of Cincinnati. The conference included insight on leadership and achievement from speakers Ray Ball (Food Blogger/Walnut Hills Alum), Nick Baynes (Celebrity Barber/Hughes Alum), and Jeff Berding (FC Cincinnati General Manager). Encouraging video presentations were also provided by the Cincinnati Bengals, Cincinnati Reds, and FC Cincinnati players.

Scholar-athletes also participated in breakout sessions which were led by student-athletes from the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University to discuss building character through sports, as well as leadership and mentoring. Students were mixed into different rooms based on grade and school they attend in efforts to create a diverse learning environment. After the breakout sessions, each school and their athletic director gathered back together and paired with one other school and their athletic director to have a discussion regarding the major takeaways from the breakout meetings. Students went through what was necessary to administer the continuation of success, responsibility, and leadership through athletics in their respective schools.

The conference moved over to Hughes High School in the afternoon for lunch provided by Buffalo Wild Wings, O’Bryons Bar & Grill, and Taglio. After lunch, students participated in a giveback project where everybody was given a bag to fill with school supplies and other amenities important to the physical and mental health for elementary students throughout the district. Also included in the bags was a hand-written letter to a younger student in the district from our scholar-athletes, creating a mentor relationship between high school and elementary students. Following the giveback project, each high school got together to create a plan for their own Scholar-Athlete Leadership Team (SALT). With these teams now implemented into every high school, leadership qualities and other important characteristics can be spread and discussed with regularity throughout each school in the district.

Left and below: Scholar-athletes from different schools brainstorm during the breakout sessions.
Below, right: Students at Midway Elementary School receive their bags and letters.
“It creates a next-level athlete by making a difference in the community, in the classroom and in the hallways”
– Paul Brownfield (Aiken High School Athletic Director)

“I thought it was a great group of kids from each school to discuss leadership”
– Brian Meyer (Clark Montessori Athletic Director)

“It was a great experience in helping to build character and leadership”
– PJ Pope (Shroder High School Athletic Director)

“I saw this as an opportunity to bring the district together and grow their leadership skills”
– Josh Hardin (CPS Athletics Manager)

(www.wcpo.com/sports/high-school-sports/ohio-high-school-sports/cincinnati-public-schools-leadership-conference-receives-excellent-feedback)

Shroder High School (left) and Withrow High School (right) student athletes pose for pictures outside of Hughes High School.

★ LAUNCHED CPS ATHLETICS TWITTER
On the day of the Scholar-Athlete Leadership Conference, Cincinnati Public Schools launched our own athletics Twitter handle. With social media being such a prominent and interactional platform for media and information to be released, it was decided that an all athletics-based Twitter page was necessary for the promotion of sports on a district-wide level. @iamCPSathletics will provide athletics information and promote for each high school and their athletic department in the CPS district. Please follow us on Twitter!

★ THE FIRST TEE GOLF
The First Tee is a program designed to impact the lives of young individuals by providing educational programs that shape character, introduce life-enhancing values, as well as encourage healthy choices through the game of golf. Our athletics department joined forces with The First Tee to construct a presentation for physical education teachers throughout our district in efforts to implement a curriculum for students at nearly 20 elementary schools this spring, compared to having participation at 5 schools last year. The program will focus on learning the basic rules and fundamentals of the game in a fun and educational environment, while focusing on building character as a person. The First Tee has also been generous enough to donate equipment and supplies necessary to run the Physical Education programs at each school and will look to sponsor a CPS Jr. High golf clinic in the spring!

Left, above: Students pose with equipment provided by The First Tee. Left: The First Tee presents to CPS P.E. teachers on a staff professional development day.
Supporter Spotlight: Harley Frank from the Cincinnati Reds

How long have the Cincinnati Reds and Cincinnati Public Schools worked together?
The Reds Community Fund announced that it would support all CPS varsity baseball teams during Redsfest in December of 2008. The partnership, which also includes the ABC (Activities Beyond the Classroom) Foundation, has grown to include all varsity softball teams throughout the district as well. Beyond the funding provided to each team, the Community Fund also provides tournament experiences and offseason training at the Urban Youth Academy, as well as tickets and experiences at Great American Ball Park.

What are 3 words that describe the relationship between the Reds and CPS?
Authentic, progressive and essential. Both organizations are stronger with support from the other. The Reds desperately want to reach as many elementary, middle and high school aged kids in order to keep baseball and softball relevant in the urban core. Reds Community Fund underwriting, in conjunction with the ABC Foundation, ensures that additional resources will be available for varsity teams that often lack financial support. The two parties need each other in order to thrive.

Can you provide insight on your role with the Reds Community Fund?
I’ve served as the director of the Community Fund since March of 2004. During that time, I’ve focused on the programming, fundraising and marketing of the fund, working with Reds staff, ownership, sponsors, donors, players and others in an effort to keep baseball healthy throughout Greater Cincinnati and Reds Country. The mission is consistent with the priorities of MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred, who identifies youth participation as his number one focus. As one might guess, every day is exciting in this role, representing this iconic franchise throughout the community.

How would you describe the Urban Youth Academy?
A state-of-the-art testament to how much Reds ownership cares about the game and the community. No other team has raised this amount of capital for a facility that is truly community-based. The design and features make it a beacon in the Roselawn and Bond Hill neighborhoods and the free programs offered include baseball and softball instruction, as well as educational and vocational support. The Reds focus on youth-development and aim to assist student-athletes with the journey to college and the work force. It’s the first northern climate Academy and now serves as a model for all of baseball. All CPS teams have the ability to utilize the indoor and outdoor facilities in order to grow their baseball and softball programs.

How do you feel being a CPS (Walnut Hills) alum prepared you for your position today?
I’ve been blessed with a number of exciting jobs throughout my career and I credit my Walnut Hills experience for preparing me for each of them. The diverse student body helped expand my perspective and taught me how to feel comfortable in virtually any social situation. Most importantly, I credit my ability to connect with people and to understand the nuances of our community to the unique environment and culture at Walnut Hills.

What is your favorite part about working in baseball?
Having grown up in a Reds family, it’s hard to describe how exciting it is to represent this franchise in the community. Especially with our remarkable ownership group, it’s a thrill every day to feel their energy for the team and for the fan base. In terms of the game itself, there’s no other sport that teaches life lessons quite like baseball. It requires patience, humility and teamwork while forcing each and every player to overcome failure and disappointment. It’s also a game that brings generations together and fosters friendships and conversation. I also love how it provides opportunities for kids that aren’t the biggest, fastest or strongest, as long as you respect the nuances.

CPS Youth Lacrosse Clinic

Dick’s Sporting Goods recently collaborated with Cincinnati Public Schools Athletics to host a free youth lacrosse clinic at Walnut Hills High School in efforts to enhance the lacrosse presence around inner-city Cincinnati. Students from a variety of elementary schools throughout the district came together for a fundamentals based instructional clinic conducted by varsity lacrosse coaches from Walnut Hills High School. Dick’s Sporting Goods was able to provide equipment such as sticks, nets, and balls for the afternoon of lessons. After the clinic, students were invited into the auditorium to view a lacrosse-themed movie presented by Dick’s Sporting Goods which included free popcorn and a “goody-bag” for each student-athlete in attendance.

“With the popularity and growth of this great sport we felt it necessary to introduce the game to many of our students throughout the district that may have never even heard of lacrosse.”

– Josh Hardin, District Athletics Manager