City School by Mohawk

Building Pathways to Post-Secondary Education for At-Risk Students and Vulnerable Youth Through Community-Based Learning Hubs

Student Pathways in Higher Education Conference
Conférence sur le parcours des étudiants dans les études supérieures (May 1-2, 2017)

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oncat

Presentation overview

- ❑ City School origins and background
- ❑ A look at the City School Model
- ❑ Research methodology
- ❑ Research findings
- ❑ City School in the municipal, provincial, and federal context
- ❑ Challenges, lessons learned, and future directions
- ❑ Q & A

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The City School Model

- Mobilizing college and community resources to reduce poverty through innovative educational initiatives targeted to vulnerable communities
- Community-based (place-based) and community-informed educational initiative
- Accessible and timely learning activities delivered within targeted neighbourhoods
- Specialized learning programs, workshops and services that will encourage gradual steps forward to postsecondary
- Engagement and collaboration with community stakeholders in planning and launching City School activities

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Community Engagement

- Attend Neighbourhood Action Strategy planning teams for eight neighbourhoods monthly

Regular engagement locations:
- 541 Eatery & Exchange
- Central Library
- Barton Library

- Total individuals reached in the community since fall 2015: **2805**

Social Media:
- 651 Twitter followers
- 297 Facebook friends & 438 Likes

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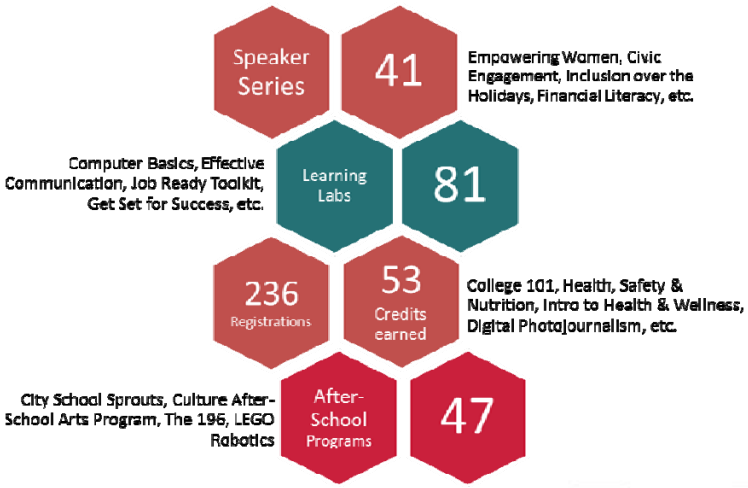
Student Success by Numbers



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Research Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews of City School (CS) students and Faculty.
- Online survey about the City School course.
- Follow-up online/phone surveys to track post-secondary and labour market participation rates every 6 months for 18 months.

- **Research Questions:**
  - 1. What is the post-secondary education participation rate of students who successfully complete a City School course?
  - 2. What are the experiences, issues, challenges and barriers facing City School students and faculty?
  - 3. How can City School be improved to better meet the needs of City School students, City School faculty and the community at large?

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Preliminary Research Findings

- City School Student Demographics
  - Age range 18 to 73. Mean=36 (Median=34).
  - Students include refugees, recent immigrants, native-born & Indigenous people.
  - PSE experience also greatly varies from unfinished High School to post graduate degrees.
  - There is no pithy or meaningful demographic profile of a 'typical' CS student.

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Preliminary Research Findings: Winter & Spring/Summer 2016 cohort

Table 2

Overview of City School Students

Course Code	COURSE NAME	REGISTERED	DAY 10	WITHDRAWN	COMPLETED
SSCI 10057	Introduction to Postsecondary Experiences	8	8	6	2
SSCI 10057	Introduction to Postsecondary Experiences	8	8	3	5
HLTH EC101	Health Safety & Nutrition	30	17	9	8
SSCI 10057	Introduction to Postsecondary Experiences -POGO	7	7	1	6
HLTH 10081	Introduction to Health & Wellness	13	9	4	5
		66	49	23	26
				Graduation Rate	53%

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Preliminary Research Findings: Winter & Spring/Summer 2016 cohort

- Follow-up of Initial Cohort (n=21 completers)
- Of the 15 students that were reached after attending City School;
  - 14 were in PSE or planning on attending PSE.
    - 2 students were in PSE on a full-time basis.
    - 5 students had PSE plans.
    - 7 students were verified by the Office of the Registrar as being registered at Mohawk College.

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Preliminary Research Findings: Fall 2016 cohort

Table 4

City School Graduation Rates September 2016

Course Code	Course Name	Registered	Day 10	Withdrawn	Completed
MCOM 10134	Digital Photojournalism	28	20	6	14
EDUC EC129	Family Dynamics	25	12	4	8
SSCI 10057	College 101 (Intro to PSE)	20	14	9	5
	Total	73	46	19	27
				Graduation Rate	59%

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Preliminary Research Findings: Winter & Spring/Summer 2016 cohort

- Key Instructor Findings
  - Passion and direct population knowledge
  - Flexibility
  - Student needs/skills assessment
  - Improving the transition
  - Rewarding teaching environment
  - Quote: “I’m not going to lie, that is probably one of the most challenging things I find about this class... is making it challenging for some and then, you know, not making it defeating for others” (on determining the difficulty level of course content).

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Preliminary Research Findings: Winter & Spring/Summer 2016 cohort

- Key Student Findings
  - Mastering Anxiety
  - Strong Instructor Positive Feedback
  - For-credit and free
  - Career Alignment
  - Quote: “So, I decided to do it [enroll] and I was scared to death [but] after the first assignment... that was it. I wasn’t nervous anymore or anything…that was pretty much it then, after that it was like well I can do this.” (On reaching an "Aha" moment)

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Municipal, provincial, and federal context

- City of Hamilton's **Neighbourhood Action Strategy** – focus on education, employment, and skills-building
- Government of Ontario's focus on **community hubs** – emphasis on how residents can become catalysts of social change
- **Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy** calls for a coordinated response to poverty reduction - City School is a community-based response to this strategy

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Building community capacity

- Poverty reduction strategies often highlight the importance of building **human capital** (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attributes that individuals possess) in combating intergenerational cycles of poverty
- Research into building pathways to education for marginalized populations highlights the importance of **social capital** (i.e. sense of community connectedness, well-being, and trust)
- Poverty is ***not*** a standalone factor in determining the accessibility of post-secondary education…

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Conclusions and Future Directions

- A majority of (sampled) students are continuing their PSE journey after City School.
- Areas where improvements could be made:
  - Supporting the transition to PSE after course completion.
  - Student retention
  - Bolstering students' skills in reading/writing & computer literacy.
- Future directions
  - Indigenous student experiences.
  - Early leavers.
  - Developing diversified learning opportunities to address the unique challenges that individuals face – as based on data and evidence

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Pathway Transfer to Postsecondary:
Exploring the Connection between Tuition Free Credit Courses and Postsecondary Studies

Jeremy Atkinson, Emily Ecker, Natalie Shearer, Lauren Soluk, Jim Vanderveken & Alan Bourke, Ph.D.

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ONCAT Final Report (#2016-14)

To learn more about City School check out our report available through the ONCAT website

Or visit our **website**:

https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/programs/get-prepared-for-college/city-school-by-mohawk

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Questions?