

SALUTEU IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024



FOR THE STRUGGLE

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BACKGROUND



SaluteU was created in memory and honor of Umar “Salute” Muhammad.

Prior to his untimely passing, Umar was a formerly incarcerated individual who subsequently utilized his experiences with the criminal system to advocate for black communities and other incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

SaluteU commenced on April 11, 2023.

This report captures metrics and impact during the inaugural year of the program.



INTRODUCTION

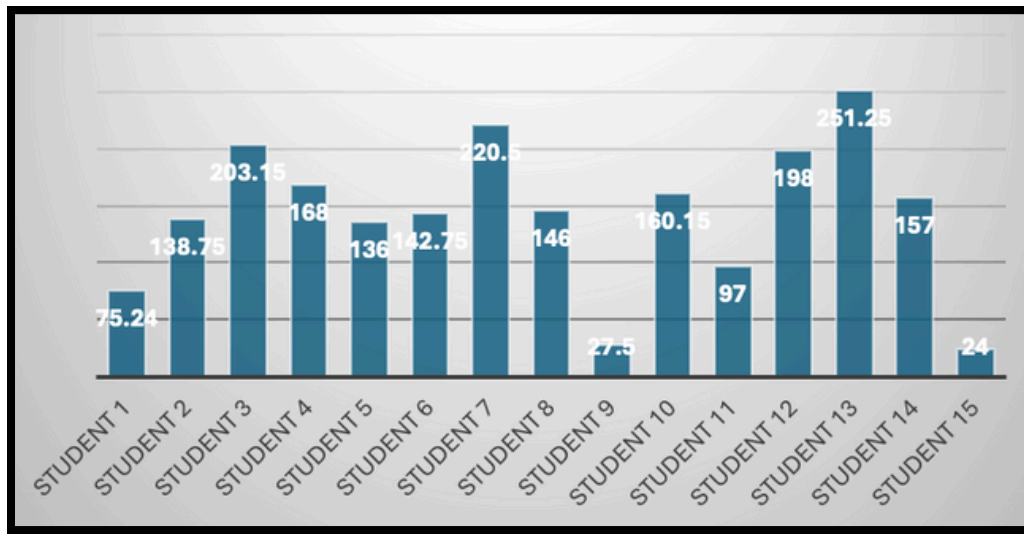
SaluteU focuses on providing education and resources to youth involved with the criminal system or engaging in activities that tend to lead to involvement with the criminal system. Although 25 students were referred and admitted into the program during its first year, for reporting purposes, participation is defined as students who actively participated in SaluteU for six months or longer. During the first year, participants received access to the following wrap-around services and support:

- A “Changed Action Plan” or CAP- a 12-month plan outlining the youth’s plan to change his/her actions with short- and long-term goals;
- Weekly courses on conflict management, financial planning, and career readiness;
- Workforce Development Training;
- Job training and opportunities that pay a competitive \$20.00 per hour; Access to
- SaluteU Program attorneys as needed;
- Free boxing classes with a professional boxer twice a week;
- An assigned mentor with a personal understanding of the challenges faced by those involved in the criminal system;and
- Therapy and mental health services as needed.

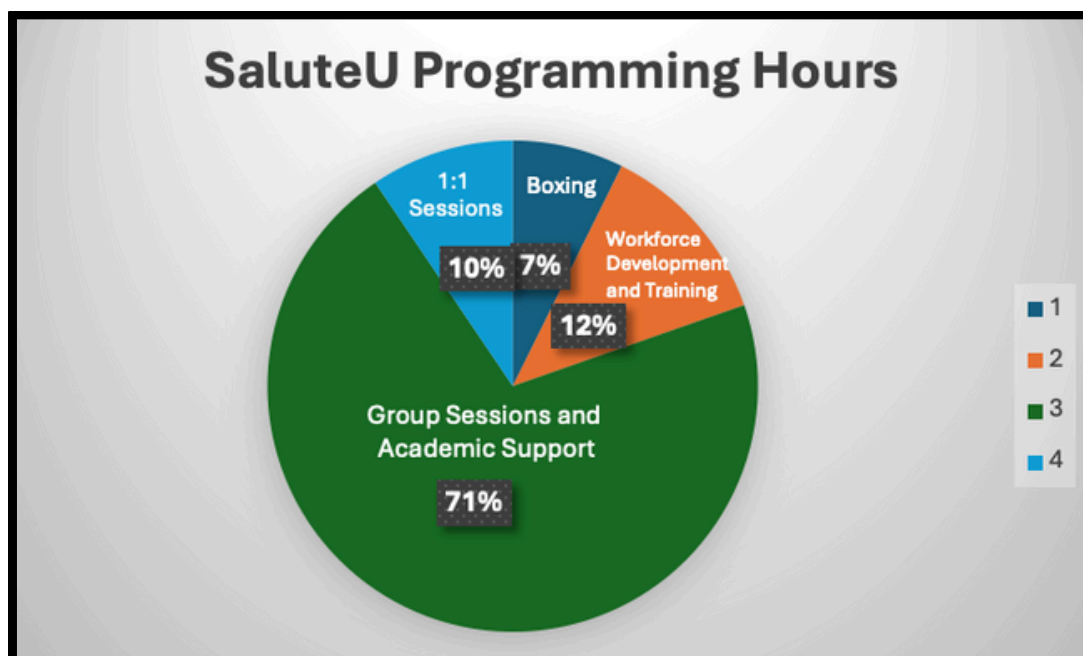
Although these services are offered consistently, SaluteU provides its students with the largest support in the form of love, trust, consistency, and support. Overall, the services offered through the SaluteU Program have had a profound impact as evidenced by our students’ and parents’ cooperation and trust in program staff and efforts. This report highlights SaluteU’s progress, achievements, and impact.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

SaluteU services are offered on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and/or Sundays. On average, SaluteU students spent 6.5 hours per week participating in the program, with the highest weekly hour participation being 25 hours. The chart below demonstrates the total number of program hours for each student.



Of the overall hours spent in the program, seven percent of students' time was spent at boxing, 71 percent was spent at Tuesday group sessions and tutoring/academic support, 12 percent was spent on employment and vocational training and opportunities, and 10 percent was spent on 1 on 1 sessions.

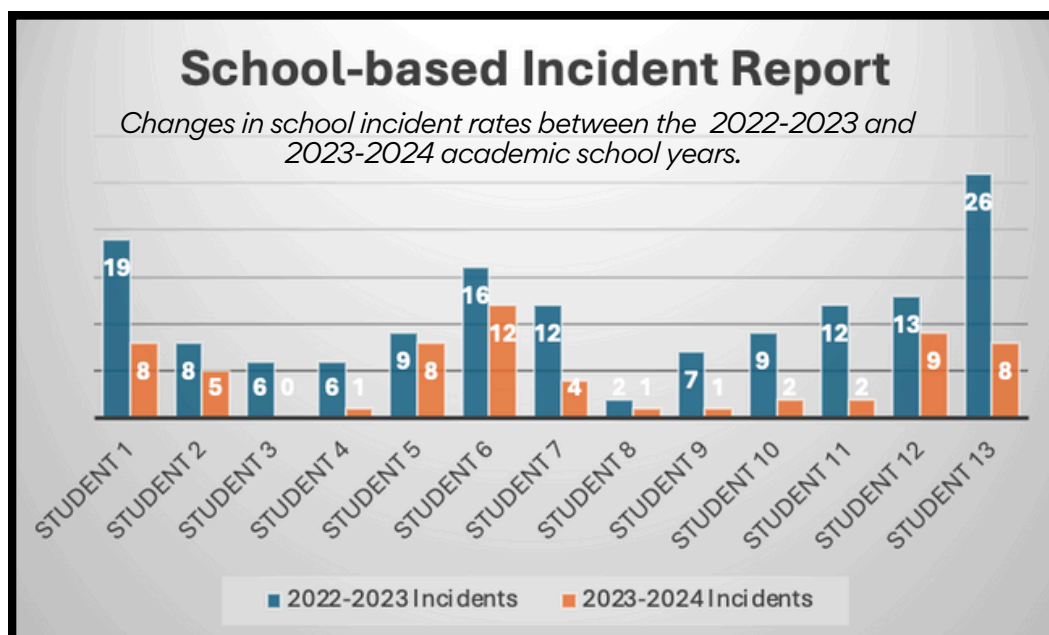


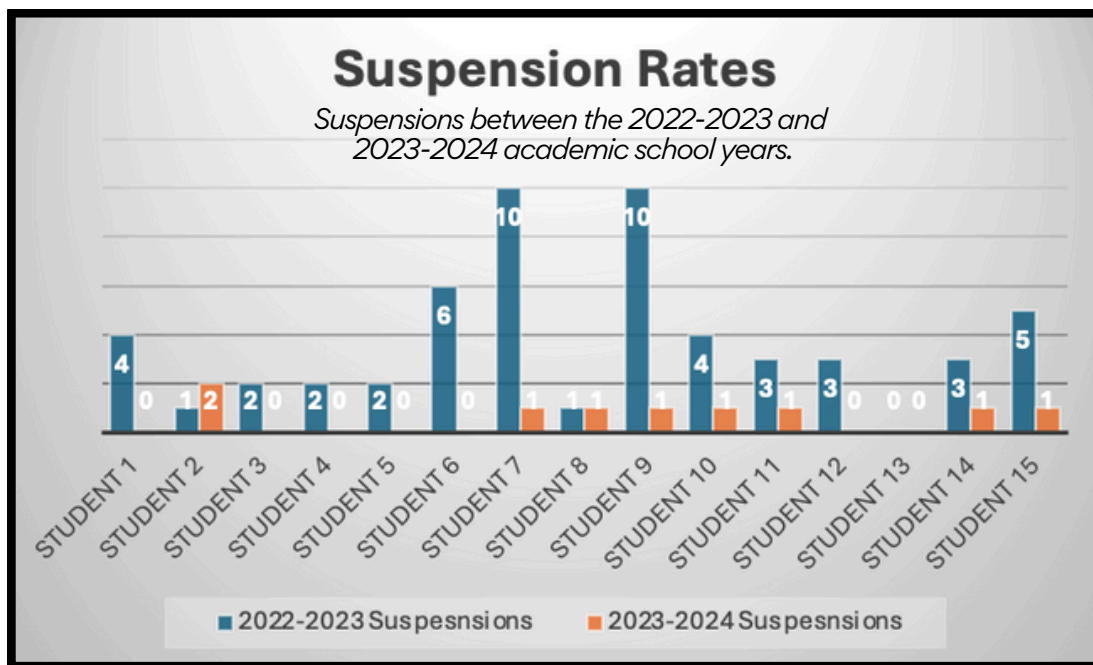


SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

SaluteU focuses heavily on preventing school suspensions through its group and individual conflict management sessions. SaluteU staff worked extensively with students to address poor behaviors and attitudes, disrespecting adults and demonstrating aggressive and violent behaviors.

At the beginning of the cohort, all SaluteU students had engaged in violent behaviors, the majority of which led to school incidents and suspensions. By the end of the first cohort, overall school incidents decreased by 57 percent, with the largest decrease going from 26 incidents in the previous academic school year to 8 after the student joined the SaluteU program. At the end of the cohort, only two students had engaged in violent behaviors.





On average, suspensions, violent behaviors, and criminal acts, all declined during the first year of the SaluteU program. We attribute much of our success with decreasing school incidents and violent behaviors to the boxing classes offered twice a week in partnership with Stokes Boxing Academy. On average, students boxed a total of 155 hours during the first year of the program.



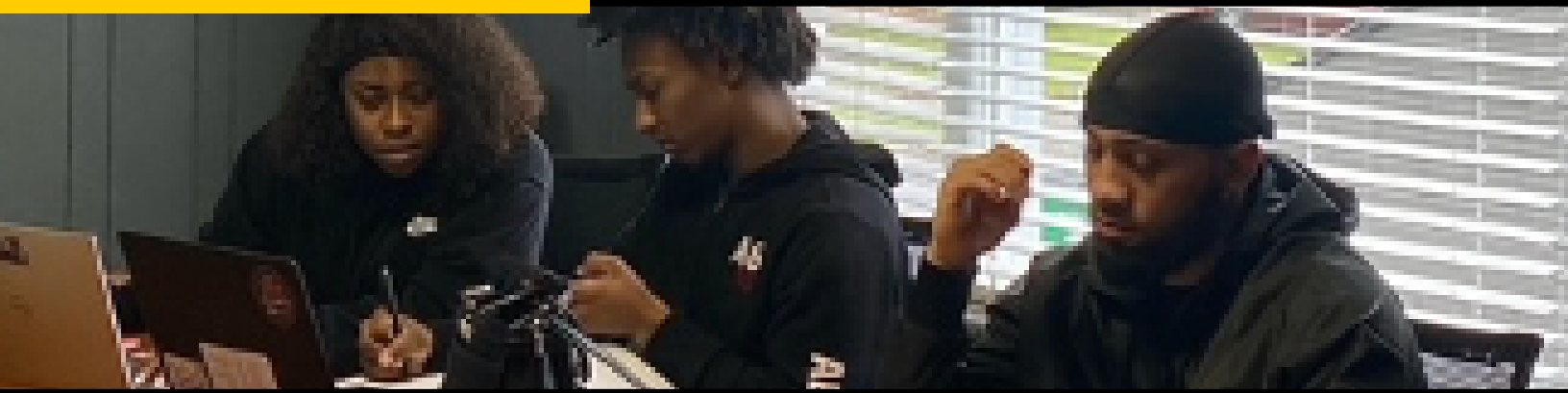
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

55%

Of the students who attended school and SaluteU regularly, 55% increased their GPAs, with the average increase in GPA being 0.4 points.

Studies demonstrate that downward educational pathways were predictive of increases in crime, whereas upward pathways were associated with decreases in crime.

Upon hiring a full-time Program Director in December 2023, SaluteU was able to strengthen the academic support/tutoring component of the program.



EMPLOYMENT + VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In August 2023, FTS secured funding to include employment opportunities and vocational training as a key component of its SaluteU Program. SaluteU students were trained on employability and learned transferable employment skills to help prepare them for the workforce. On average, SaluteU students worked 5 hours per week, with a total number of 260 hours at various community-centered events including expungement clinics, community education events, and voter registration, education, and engagement events. Additionally, students conducted policy analysis by taking notes at a County Budget Hearing, canvassed neighborhoods to identify senior citizens in need of services, worked community fairs to educate the public on FTS's free services, and more. Students earned \$20.00 an hour for every hour worked.

TESTIMONIALS

■ STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

- “The SaluteU Program helps us with our work, gives us food, and ways to make money.”
- “What I like most about the SaluteU program is that they treat us like family- and everyone involved like family.”
- “The SaluteU program will help you with anything, at home or at school.”
- “The SaluteU program has helped me grow academically and personally.”
- “I like the SaluteU program because of the job opportunities and they make us stay on top of everything we do even if it’s a job or something that we had before joining.”
- “I would recommend to the SaluteU program because it’s really helpful and helps you prioritize more.”



TESTIMONIALS

■ PARENT TESTIMONIALS

- "The positive influence Alesha and this program have had on Cortez is something I will always be grateful for."
- "The SaluteU Program was good for him because I had problems with the school, but the program always supported us. Whatever we needed, they were there no matter what time I called. It helped him a lot even though we had to change schools; he wouldn't be where he is now without the program."
- "I could not have asked for a better program for my son to be in. I have recommended the program to many parents who have struggled with their children. Ms. Alesha and I stay in contact with each other, and her dedication to the kids, treating them as her own, is truly commendable. It's this personal touch that makes the program stand out."
- "They love going boxing. It is a great program, and I give Mr. Antwan two thumbs up. I am very grateful for the program; it has been a lifesaver."
- "Ms. Alesha would help diffuse situations between me and my daughter. They would also provide transportation for the kids if they needed it."
- "I'm so grateful for everything you all have done."
- "I think the program is a great outlet for our youth. It keeps them busy and gives them something to look forward to. It has helped Jada stay focused and strive for goals. Hopefully we can keep her on track for college or help her with the necessary life skills she will need to succeed in life."
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TESTIMONIALS

■ PARTNER TESTIMONIALS

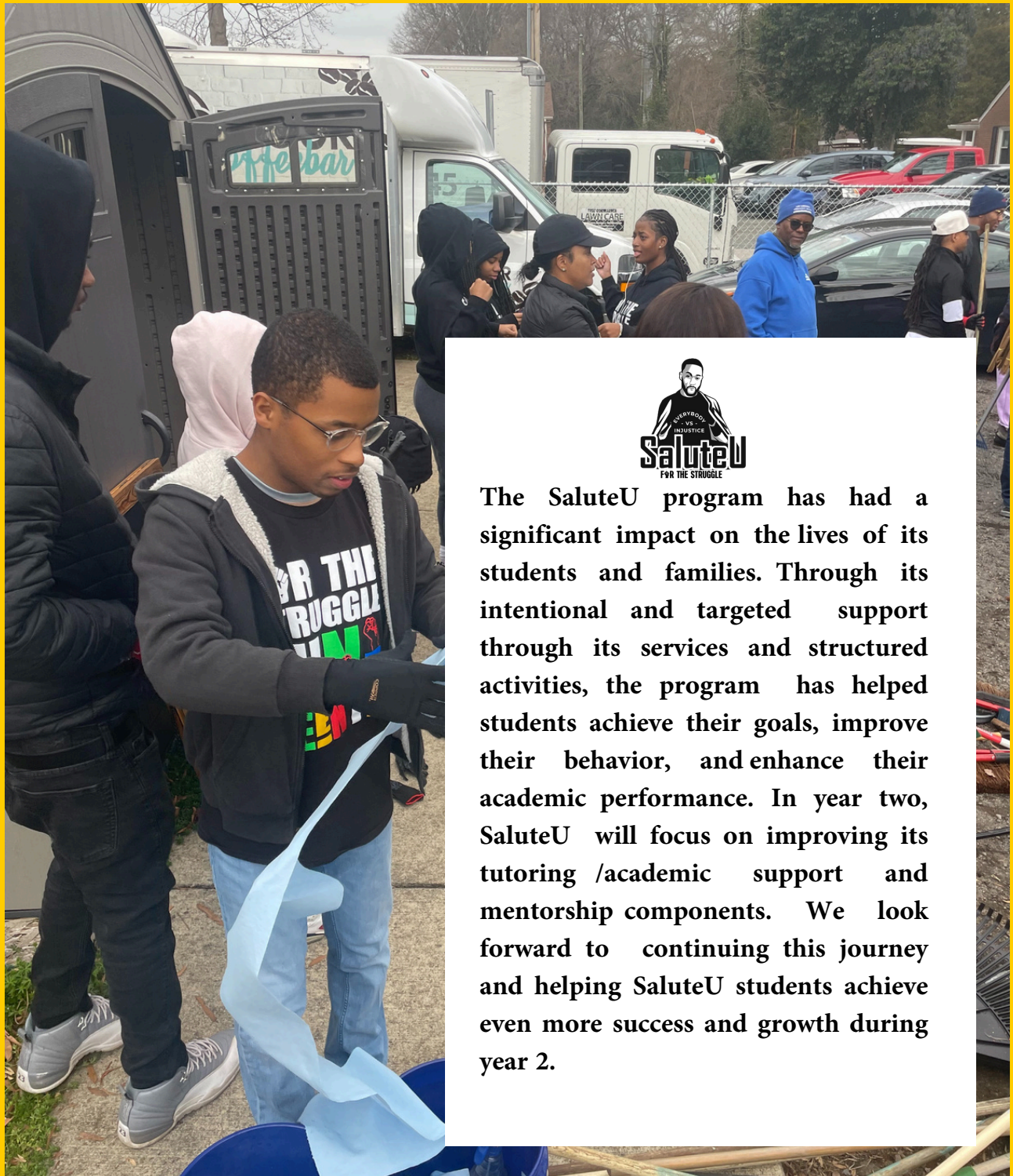
SaluteU has been one of the most transformational programs for scholars at West Charlotte HS. It's exactly what a partner should be, which every school would hope for! They are on the ground, invested, and committed to our students - consistently building super-strong relationships with our scholars and supporting them in their academic and social-emotional needs. Since SaluteU, we've seen so many scholars change their behavior and entire trajectory because of the experiences that our kids have with the SaluteU program. We are grateful and excited to continue to partner with them!

~ Assistant Principal Poitier, West Charlotte High School

I can't speak enough about how For the Struggle has stepped up for a young man I work with who is in foster care. At first, I saw the program as an outlet to get him involved with a regular positive activity, but his relationship with the program and the staff has grown into much more than a boxing class. Since joining the program, this youth has experienced a tremendous amount of hardship and inconsistency, and For the Struggle has been a beacon for him throughout it all. They have been a constant place for the young man to look to for guidance, accountability, and support. They have helped us bridge some of the gaps we have had in maintaining rapport with him. At times when he has said he felt like he did not have anyone else on his side, For the Struggle has been there for him and worked with his team to help figure out the best ways to support him.

~ Patrick Swann, DSS

MOVING FORWARD



The SaluteU program has had a significant impact on the lives of its students and families. Through its intentional and targeted support through its services and structured activities, the program has helped students achieve their goals, improve their behavior, and enhance their academic performance. In year two, SaluteU will focus on improving its tutoring /academic support and mentorship components. We look forward to continuing this journey and helping SaluteU students achieve even more success and growth during year 2.