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Village Learning Place LINK After School 2017-18 Final Report

The VLP's successful LINK (Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids) initiative includes the LINK After School, LINK Summer, and LINK Leaders Summer programs. LINK programs focus on at-risk or below grade-level students, serving vulnerable students at no cost to families. The VLP's neighborhood, Greater Charles Village/Barclay, has higher rates of high school dropout and juvenile arrests than Baltimore City's average; 42% of children live below the poverty line. This year, over 90% of LINK students are minorities; most are African American or Latino. Over half live in single female head-of-household homes. More than 20% receive special academic services in school. Some students are in foster care or are experiencing homelessness. Nearly 100% attend Title I schools; 12% receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Many would have nowhere to go after school or during the summers without LINK.

LINK addresses the whole child, working to foster academic success, social development, and family engagement. Many students write their first poem, launch their first rocket, and see the Chesapeake Bay for the first time during LINK. We believe that helping vulnerable students become engaged, lifelong learners will directly address some of the neighborhood's critical problems, including high school dropout, juvenile arrest, and the cycle of poverty.

LINK After School 2017-18

LINK After School helps at-risk students achieve and maintain grade-level proficiency in a safe, welcoming environment. Homework help, original instruction, supper, and fun enrichment activities all enhance learning. The program serves students in pre-K through 6th grade five days a week from 2:30-5:30pm. LINK fosters social-emotional growth with character education, field trips, service learning, mentorship opportunities, and family engagement.

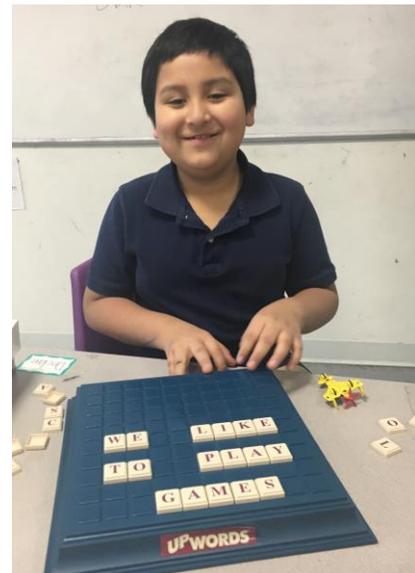
Goals and Outcomes

Enrollment goal: 80
Total enrollment: 89

Academic success

Performance Measure: 80% of students will meet their goals for grade-level growth in literacy.
Outcome: 80% of students met individual literacy goals.

Performance Measure: 75% of students will meet their goals for grade-level growth in math.



Outcome: 55% of students met individual math goals. *Note: 83% of students demonstrated some growth in math, with 36% gaining more than an entire grade-level of skill proficiency. LINK sets ambitious individual goals for students who are below grade level.*

Social development

Performance Measure: 85% of students will be able to articulate gains in specific character areas.

Outcomes: 96% of students were able to identify two or more methods or strategies of conflict resolution. 91% reported making friends in LINK.

Performance Measure: Students will have 12 hours of direct character education; 5th and 6th grades will complete 12 hours of service learning.

Outcome: All students had at least 12 hours of direct character education. 100% of 5th and 6th grade students earned 15 or more service learning hours.

Family engagement

Performance Measure: 70% of parents/guardians or more will participate in educational workshops, program events, or field trips.

Outcome: 90% of parents/guardians were directly engaged.



Program Highlights/Successes

LINK has prioritized a social-emotional learning curriculum in the last several years. Social-emotional skills are now understood to be both essential and possible to cultivate. LINK's deep commitment to students' personal growth has greatly reduced the need for suspensions and dismissals, helped increase family engagement, and built great strength and understanding in the LINK community.

Note: Names have been changed to ensure the privacy of our students and families.

Building relationships: Tyler is a student who has been in LINK since Pre-K and has always been shy. He rarely spoke in class and seemed withdrawn. This year, Tyler was in 2nd grade and had the job of choosing the daily Circle Time question. Circle Time is the daily meeting for younger students and teachers talk to connect and process each day. Tyler's questions were always interesting and inventive, and he was excited about his responsibility, which made talking easier for him. By the end of the year, he had become chatty and made a good friend, Axel. In their year-end reflections, Tyler and Axel both named the friendship as one of their best after school experiences.

Solving conflict: Two students, Maria and Desmond, had been having ongoing conflicts. One day, Desmond's and Maria's conflict escalated to a physical altercation. Maria's parents came in, understandably very upset. They wanted to pursue Desmond's expulsion from program. Maria's parents and Desmond's mother agreed to meet for a Restorative Circle, a peaceful hearing to resolve conflict and come to a consensus about repairing wrong. Restorative Circles, based on research and multicultural tradition, give everyone an opportunity to speak and listen. In the Circle, Maria's father learned that Desmond has been struggling with being bullied at school. Desmond lashed out at Maria because of her unkind words. Maria's father told Maria that she was not to bother Desmond further. He told Desmond never to put his hands on anyone again, but instead to come let him know. He told Desmond, "You are in my daughter's class, and I will protect you, too." Desmond's mother was more receptive after Maria's father's words. She was more willing to open up. She and Maria's parents parted as friends.

Parent engagement: A focus on "micro-opportunities" and events at different times of day (e.g. breakfast, after-school, evening) helped engage a record number of LINK families this year. Teachers were successful this year by engaging hard to reach parents through their students' experiences and learning. For example, our 5th/6th grade students each researched and presented a lesson to the class. Many of the 5th/6th presentations focused on students' interests, hobbies, and culture. Several ESL families came in to support their students lesson which featured a cooking demonstration of a family recipe. Similarly, in our 1st/2nd classroom, each student was featured as "The Big Cheese" for one whole week. Families of these students were invited in to participate in circle time and their "Big Cheese" sharing.

