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Village Learning Place LINK 2020-21 School Year Final Report

The Village Learning Place’s LINK (Let’s Invest in Neighborhood Kids) initiative includes two school-year programs: LINK After School, which serves students in grades PreK–6th, and LINK Leaders School Year, which serves students in grades 7th+. LINK programs are provided at no cost to families, and they offer priority enrollment for English language learners and students who have special learning needs.

The year 2020 was a challenging one for every community, family, and person. Luckily, resilience is built into the Village Learning Place’s foundation. In 1997, when protests and legal action failed to stop Enoch Pratt from closing its Charles Village branch, the community rallied to reopen the library as a nonprofit. They called it the Village Learning Place. Over the past year, Village Learning Place staff drew on that strength for motivation, on the innovation of those around us for inspiration, and on our vision—that every person and family in our community has the resources they need to thrive—for guidance.

LINK school year programs operated virtually for the first time ever during the 2020–21 school year. Like any change, it took some time to adjust, but what resulted were some truly beautiful moments.

LINK After School, PreK-6th

September 14, 2020 to May 28, 2021
Monday - Friday, 3:00–5:00pm
Students Served: 53

LINK After School students in grades 1–6 could attend live sessions on Zoom, which consisted of an academic enrichment block, homework help, structured socialization, and the wildly popular (based on student feedback) Animal Adventures lessons. Through a collaboration with the Central Baltimore Partnership, the Village



Learning Place was able to provide laptops and hotspots to LINK families. One benefit of virtual classrooms are the built-in digital communication tools. During online sessions, the LINK After School 4th–6th grade Lead Teacher used Google translate to chat with two of his students in



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Arabic. Their excitement at the opportunity to participate in Arabic led to a noticeable increase in their engagement.

Additionally, LINK After School staff delivered at-home learning kits bi-weekly to provide students with offline educational tasks. A grandmother of two LINK After School students—one in 1st grade; one in 3rd grade—said building 3-dimensional shapes with marshmallows and toothpicks was a particularly fun activity for their family. She thanked the LINK After School 1st–3rd grade Assistant Teacher for delivering materials and activities that helped her granddaughters unwind after long days of virtual school.

Goals and Outcomes

Supporting Social Emotional Development

- 50% of students enrolled in LINK After School can demonstrate a specific virtue, implement a conflict resolution strategy, and/or have received direct instruction in character education.
- 33% of LINK After School students completed 12 or more hours of community-building activities.



Supporting School Day Learning

- 30 out of 35 LINK After School students reported feeling like they can learn and succeed in school.

Encouraging Family Engagement

- 70% of LINK families engaged with program this year by either referring a new family, completing an online survey, sending a photo of their student completing work, or attending one of our many virtual events: orientation, workshops, family fun nights, and PTO meetings at our partner school, Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School.

LINK Leaders School Year, 7th-12th Grade

September 14, 2020–June 9, 2021

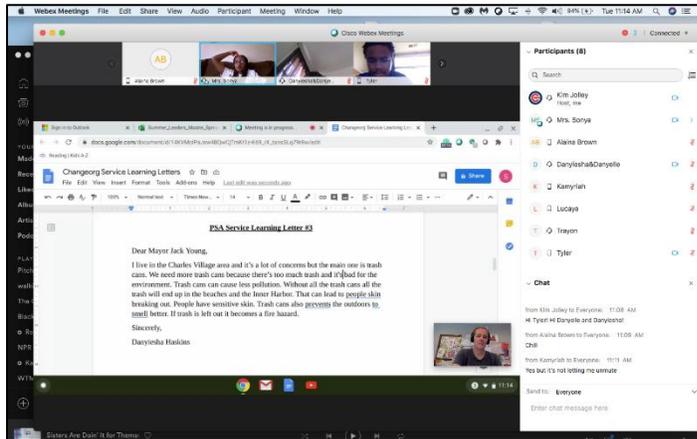
Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 3:00–5:30pm and Thursdays 4:30–5:30pm

Students Served: 19

LINK Leaders School Year students in grades 7+ could attend live sessions on Zoom on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays. Tuesdays and Thursdays consisted of one-on-one check-ins with instructors, community-building conversations during “huddle time,” and a cooking enrichment class.



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Wednesdays consisted of a music production enrichment class. Through a collaboration with the Central Baltimore Partnership, the Village Learning Place was able to provide laptops and hotspots to LINK families. Additionally, LINK Leaders School Year staff delivered at-home learning kits bi-weekly to provide students with offline educational activities.

As the year progressed, one-on-one check-ins and huddle time became invaluable as students grew more comfortable sharing challenges they were facing. Individual counseling prepared students to act as their own leaders, and huddle time encouraged them to consider perspectives different from their own. During one sharing session, a 10th-grade student asked the Teen Programs Coordinator for advice about how to approach a friend you believe could be in an unhealthy relationship. At the end of the conversation, the student expressed that they felt less anxious about the matter and more confident about how to support their friend.

Goals and Outcomes

Supporting Social Emotional Development

- 50% of students enrolled in LINK Leaders School Year can demonstrate a specific virtue, implement a conflict resolution strategy, and/or have received direct instruction in character education.
- 33% of LINK Leaders School Year students completed 12 or more hours of community-building activities.

Supporting School Day Learning

- 6 out of 9 LINK Leaders School Year students reported feeling like they can learn and succeed in school.

Encouraging Family Engagement

- 70% of LINK families engaged with program this year by either referring a new family, completing an online survey, sending a photo of their student completing work, or attending one of our many virtual events: orientation, workshops, family fun nights, and PTO meetings at our partner school, Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School.