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Village Learning Place LINK After School 2021–22 Final Report

The VLP's successful LINK (Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids) initiative includes the LINK After School, LINK Summer, LINK Leaders School Year, and LINK Leaders Summer programs. LINK programs operate at no cost to families and prioritize at-risk students, including students performing below grade level, students with disabilities, and students who are non-native English speakers. 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, 90% of LINK students are minorities; most are African American. More than half of students live in single female head-of-household homes. 16% receive special services in school; 14% receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Some students are in foster care, and many would have nowhere to go after school or during the summer 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.

Covid-19 Programming

We have now shifted all programming to in-person. All children and staff are required to be vaccinated to be involved in programming. We have been hosting regular vaccine clinics within the library, as well as partnered with other community organizations to co-host clinics throughout Central Baltimore.

LINK After School 2021-22

LINK After School helps at-risk students achieve and maintain grade-level proficiency in a safe, welcoming environment. Homework help, original instruction, academic intervention services, supper, and enrichment activities all enhance learning. The program usually serves students in Pre-K through 6th grade, five days a week from 2:30–5:30pm. However, in the 2021-2022 school year, the program only served grades K, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th due to the repercussions of COVID-19. LINK After School also fosters social-emotional growth with character education, field trips, service learning, mentorship opportunities, and family engagement.

Program Highlights/Successes

Back in Action

During the school year, we were able to successfully pivot to online programming as schools were shut down due to a COVID outbreak after the winter break. Many of our students were able to join and one parent shared that LINK program “is his favorite part of the day”. We were able to help our students advance academically in math and reading.



Restorative Practices

While working on the virtues of friendliness and gentleness, one student noticed another was feeling upset and he talked to him and was trying to help him find out what was wrong. It’s amazing how the kids take to heart and apply what they learned in LINK’s *Virtues of the Week* program aspect.



Family Engagement

LINK families were able to enjoy multiple family events together after a year and a half of virtual programming. We were able to safely host joyous events such as our Spooky Harvest night and End of Year Carnival.

LINK Leaders After School 2021-22

LINK Leaders operates during the school year for 7th+ grade students and focuses on college and career awareness, leadership development, social-emotional growth, and enrichment for older students. By providing programming for older youth during the school year, teachers develop deeper, more impactful relationships with students, and learning is reinforced over a longer period, resulting in consistent student progression.

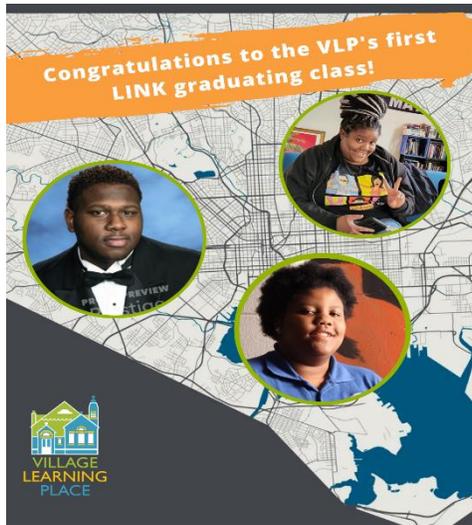
Program Highlights/Successes

Planning for the Future

LINK Leaders were once again able to venture out to explore colleges on site. Seven students travelled to Lincoln College over spring break for a college tour.

VLP staff were also able inform LINK students and families of the new 529 College Savings Plans, and were also able to assist seven families sign up.





First LINK High School Graduates

We were thrilled to watch each member of our first class of LINK Leaders graduate from high school and head off to four-year colleges this fall. We had a wonderful time throwing them a graduation party with a delicious seafood broil (chosen by the students) shared with staff, friends, and family.

College Spirit

This year, LINK Leaders staff led our organization into becoming a college-going culture. We had “Wear your College Shirt” day, a March Madness Day in the classroom, and planned the first annual trip to CIAA Basketball Tournament at Royal Farms Arena. This trip gave the students a taste of college sports culture and all that

surrounds it: HBCU pep bands, cheer squads, student cheering sections. The students had a great time and enjoyed exploring different aspects of college life.