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## Village Learning Place LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year 2022–23 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 historically underserved 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, 76% of LINK students are minorities; most are African American. One-quarter of students speak a language other than English in their homes. One-third of students live in single-parent head-of-household homes, and some are in foster care. 14% receive special services in school. 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.

### LINK After School 2022-23

LINK After School helps 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 serves Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students five days a week from 2:30–5:30 pm. LINK After School also fosters social-emotional growth with character education, field trips, service learning, mentorship opportunities, and family engagement.



**Enrollment:** 47 students

### Academic Successes

- 89% of students improved in reading and/or math.
- 96% of our PreK-6<sup>th</sup> grade students shared that they feel prepared to succeed in the next school year.

## Social Development

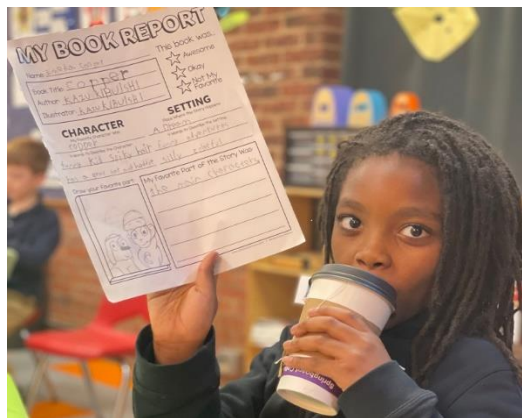
- 92% of PreK-6<sup>th</sup> grade students demonstrated that they know 2 ways to solve a problem without fighting.

## Family Engagement

- 92% of families engaged in LINK activity or event at VLP; 79% of families engaged 2 or more times during the year.

## Program Highlights/Successes

*Spring Reading Challenge:* This past March the VLP conducted a Spring Reading Challenge for the community. Adults and children alike were encouraged to partake in tracking their reading time and reaching various reading milestones. LINK students participated in this challenge, and it was clear that their overall interest and enthusiasm in books have increased. Students had a great time picking out books from the VLP library and Little Free Library. Time spent at the library became a quick enrichment favorite among many of the students.



To celebrate the culmination of the Spring Reading Challenge, Mr. Carson, the Lead Academic Teacher, hosted a Literary Tea event. Staff and families were invited to come in, pour themselves a cup of tea, and listen to students present a book report from their reading list. It was a wonderful way to bring the challenge to an end and have the students share their accomplishments.

*Celebrating Cultural Diversity:* This year the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class prioritized acknowledging and embracing the cultural wealth that exists among themselves and their peers. There are several students in the class that are multilingual, some are immigrants, and all have cultural identity. Mr. Daniel, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-grade Academic Teacher, shared one particular experience that really showcased the student's willingness to not only respect their peers' culture but embrace it; "I was surprised to hear a non-Arabic-speaking student say "marhaba" to an Arabic-speaking classmate. I turned around and asked if she knew what that meant. She said, correctly, that in Arabic that means "hello". I watched as that prompted another student to start looking up other words in Arabic to say."



Students also had a great time learning to make different dishes like migas, horchata, and pupusas (made with the LINK Leaders). Students felt inspired to learn and use Spanish words while exploring the cuisine. One family member who was there to pick up a younger child saw that some of the kids were struggling to make the pupusas. She jumped in and shared her expertise. Everyone had a wonderful time cooking, chatting, and eating!

### **LINK Leaders School Year 2022-2023**

LINK Leaders operates during the school year for 7<sup>th</sup>+ 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.

**Enrollment:** 14 students

#### **College and Career Readiness**

- 100% of students improved their knowledge of career and college options.

#### **Community Service**

- 33% of students accrued 10 or more hours of community service.

#### **Mentorship**

- 86% of leaders felt staff cared about them and wanted to get to know them.

#### **Program Highlights/Successes**

*Exploring Opportunities for the Future:* The VLP wants to expose students to a variety of post-high school opportunities. There are multiple field trips to college campuses each year, but we are also aware that four years of college is not the right fit for everyone. So, while we will always be taking advantage of our position in Baltimore to visit the plethora of colleges and universities here, we also want to sprinkle in other possibilities. One example of that included ABC Baltimore. Students learned about the 10-month program offered at ABC to work in the trades.

The ABC team coordinated a great afternoon for middle schoolers. Students had a quick tour of all the labs and workshops (electrical, sprinklers, HVAC, plumbing, and carpentry) and then headed to the classroom where all the kids worked on making their own structures out of wood. Some of the kids took these home to continue building out their structure and some planned to give them to their moms as a gift. It was a visit that has since stuck in their minds.



*New Ways to Have Fun in the Community:* This year our LINK Leaders were introduced to new



activities that have quickly become enrichment favorites. The first is Pickleball. This nationally growing sport was a surprise hit for middle and high schoolers. Ms. Kim, the Teen Programs Coordinator, introduced students to it hoping to mix up recreation time which usually consists of playing basketball. As soon as the net went up and the kids started to play, adults and children alike flocked to the courts to watch and inquire about the sport. Leaders started to share the sport with community members and the younger LINK students.

The second new and exciting enrichment activity involved working with a community partner, BYKE Collective. For six weeks, students learned how to do bike repairs, took part in fitness and teamwork exercises, and went on bike rides through Charles Village and Remington. Students were able to learn a new skill and directly engage with the surrounding community. During the final session, students got to ride their bikes to a secret waterfall in Baltimore.