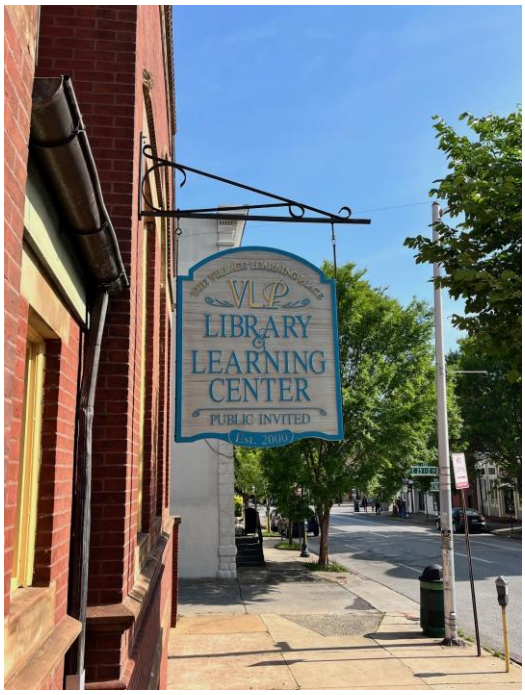
Academic and Social Transformation at the Village Learning Place

21st Century Community Learning Centers Annual Evaluation Report
SY2026: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School and LINK Leaders School Year



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"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."
Benjamin Franklin

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Acknowledgments

Dr. Amy Desai Graham would like to thank the staff and funders of LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year at Village Learning Place for the opportunity to serve and support your program and the young people and families you engage.

Acronyms

ELA: English Language Arts
LINK: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids
MSDE: Maryland State Department of Education
VLP: Village Learning Place
21st CCLC: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Executive Summary

Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School and LINK Leaders School Year are supported by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant and provide an afterschool enrichment program at the Village Learning Place (VLP). VLP aims to promote literacy, cultural awareness, and lifelong learning through access to information, resources, and educational programs.

During the three-year cycle, the program seeks to document academic achievement via demonstrated improvements in math and reading/ELA (English language arts); teacher-reported student engagement in learning; improved school year attendance; improved school year grade-point averages (GPAs); improvements in in-school suspension rates; parental engagement, and successful program implementation via site observations of academic and enrichment programming. During SY 2025-26, of the 47 students who enrolled in the LINK After School program, 46 attended the program for more than 30 days. In the third year of the three-year funding cycle, the program met three of its eight school-year indicators. During the summer, of the 42 students enrolled in the LINK Summer program, 38 were tracked for detailed outcomes and attended the program for more than 20 days. In the third summer of the current funding cycle, VLP was able to successfully meet one of its eight indicators; however, five of these indicators were either not applicable to summer programming, or not applicable to the student population the program served this year.

Of the goals and indicators outlined for the site, the evaluation team considered the following in Table 1:

Table 1. Program Indicators and Results SY2026

	Indicators	Year 3 Results	Cycle Results
1	By August 2026, 60% of students in grades 1–5 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.	✓Grade 1-5 regular attendees **met** the milestone during SY 2025-26. ✓Grade 1-5 regular attendees **met** the milestone during summer 2026.	✓Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during SY 2023-24. ✓Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during summer 2024. ***X*** Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **did not meet** the milestone during SY 2024-25. ✓Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during summer 2025. ✓Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during SY 2025-26. ✓Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during summer 2026.
2	By August 2026, 60% of students in grades 6-12 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.	**Not applicable** for SY 2025-26 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.	**Not applicable** for SY 2023-24 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. **Not applicable** for SY 2024-25 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2025 programming. **Not applicable** for SY 2025-26 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.
3	By August 2026, 60% of youth in grades 1–12 participating in 21st CCLC during the school year and summer who: (1) Have a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year; and (2) Demonstrated an improved attendance rate by August of the current school year.	***X*** Grade 1-12 regular attendees **did not meet** the milestone during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.	✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. ✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. ✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.
4	By August 2026, 60% of students in grades 7-8 and 10-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer with a prior-year unweighted GPA less than 3.0 will demonstrate an improved GPA by August.	**Not applicable** for SY 2025-26 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.	**Not applicable** for SY 2023-24 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. **Not applicable** for SY 2024-25 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2025 programming. **Not applicable** for SY 2025-26 programming. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.
5	By August 2026, 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will (a) demonstrate growth in reading/language arts on state assessments, and (b)	***X*** Grade 4-8 regular attendees **did not meet** the milestone for ELA nor math during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for	Progress towards the milestone is **undetermined** for SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. Progress towards the milestone is **undetermined** for SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer 2025 programming.

	demonstrate growth in math on state assessments by August.	summer 2026 programming.	Progress towards the milestone is **undetermined** for SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.
6	By August 2026, 60% of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts and math by August.	✓Grade K-3 regular attendees **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2025-26. ***X*** Grade K-3 regular attendees **did not meet** the milestone for ELA nor math during summer 2026.	✓Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA during SY 2023-24. ***X*** Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **did not meet** the milestone for math during SY 2023-24. Progress towards the milestone is **undetermined** for summer 2024. ***X*** Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **did not meet** the milestone for ELA during SY 2024-25. ✓Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for math during SY 2024-25. ✓Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA during summer 2025. ***X*** Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **did not meet** the milestone for math during summer 2025. ✓Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2025-26. ***X*** Grade K-3 entire cycle participants **did not meet** the milestone for ELA nor math during summer 2026.
7	By August 2026, 60% of students grades 1 through 12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year by August.	✓Grade 1-12 regular attendees **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.	✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer 2024 programming. ✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer 2025 programming. ✓Grade 1-12 entire cycle participants **met** the milestone for ELA and math during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer 2026 programming.
8	By August 2026, 70% of caregivers with children in grades preK-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year will participate in 2 or more parental engagement activities by August.	***X*** Program **did not meet** the milestone during SY 2025-26. ***X*** Program **did not meet** the milestone during summer 2026.	✓ Program **met** the milestone during SY 2023-24. ✓ Program **met** the milestone during summer 2024. ✓ Program **met** the milestone during SY 2024-25. ✓ Program **met** the milestone during summer 2025. ✓ Program **met** the milestone during SY 2025-26. ***X*** Program **did not meet** the milestone during summer 2026.

✓ milestone met **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Opportunities

- The program had strong retention and attendance in SY 2025-26. Of the 47 students enrolled in LINK After School, 46 (98%) were regular attendees. No students withdrew, down from 10 withdrawals (18%) in SY 2024-25 and 16 withdrawals (27%) in 2023-24. Average daily attendance rose to 91% from 87% the previous year. The average number of students attending each day also grew from about 31 in Q1 to 41 in Q4 as the program reinstated Grade PreK-K. These results suggest the program has largely resolved the attrition concerns identified in prior years.
- Despite major funding, staffing, and space disruptions, the program met several core school-year indicators and improved on others. Among regular attendees, 69% demonstrated improved teacher-reported engagement in learning (Indicator 1), up from 46% in SY 2024-25, meeting a milestone the program missed last year. K-3 students exceeded the academic growth milestones by a wide margin: 95% showed growth in reading/language arts and 77% in math (Indicators 6a and 6b). No students had in-school suspensions in either the current or previous school year (Indicator 7). The program also met the engagement milestone during summer 2026, at 62%. Students who participated across all three years of the grant cycle met every applicable school-year milestone in 2025-26.
- Youth-led projects and new community partnerships gave students leadership opportunities and helped the program through a year of transition. Grade 3-5 students won a Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) grant to renovate the library garden. They completed most of the initial application on their own and presented their proposal to the Council. Staff reported that several of these students went on to take leadership roles in the summer film project. VLP also secured summer funding from 21st CCLC, Family League, and the Summer Collaborative Fund. It used space at the 29th Street Community Center and worked with community partners, including Wide Angle Youth Media and the Church of the Guardian Angel. Together, these efforts give the program a model of student voice to extend to other grade levels and a base of partnerships for future programming.

Challenges

- Funding constraints significantly reduced the program's scope and stability this year. VLP did not offer LINK Leaders programming and served no Grade 6-12 students, so it could not assess Indicators 2 and 4. Grade PreK-K ran as paid childcare until it was reinstated as free LINK programming in January 2026. The program also gave up its additional classroom space and moved fully into the library, which had to close to the public during afternoon program hours. Securing long-term program space remains an ongoing concern as the program continues to lean on its partnerships with the local school, a neighborhood church, and the 29th Street Community Center.
- The program operated with reduced staff capacity for most of the year. The Director of Youth Programs left in November 2025, and the position was not refilled. The Deputy Director took on direct oversight of LINK, while teachers and library staff absorbed other duties. Program staff reported having no backup coverage when teachers were absent, frequent call-outs among classroom assistants, and difficulty keeping up with reporting, trainings, and team meetings.
- Several outcomes remain difficult to achieve, and family engagement declined. Among regular attendees, 40% of students with prior-year attendance at or below 90% improved their school-day attendance (Indicator 3), compared with 50% in SY 2024-25. Growth on state assessments

also remained below the milestone (Indicators 5a and 5b), although matched MCAP data were available for very few students. With fewer family events because of funding constraints, 54% of caregivers attended two or more engagement activities during the school year (Indicator 8). That falls short of the 65% milestone, after the program met it in SY 2024-25 at 68%. The summer rate was 50%. Summer academic growth among K-3 students also fell below the milestones, at 43% in reading/language arts and 40% in math.

Recommendations

- Reestablish family engagement with low-cost strategies that make the most of existing activities. Staff could turn student showcases into engagement opportunities, such as celebrations for the garden and film projects, end-of-program events, and volunteer roles for caregivers, without adding large standalone events. Partner sites such as the 29th Street Community Center may also be able to host events. Tracking each caregiver's participation by mid-year would help staff find families who have not yet attended two events and reach out to them before the year ends.
- Formalize the shared leadership structure the program developed after the Director of Youth Programs departed, and create a written coverage plan. The plan should document who owns each responsibility, especially data collection, classroom assistant supervision, and family communication. It should also name backup staff or substitutes for teacher absences. Working with the classroom assistants' university partner to set attendance expectations and schedules could further reduce call-outs. These steps would make the program less reliant on a single administrator and keep operations steady through future transitions.
- Use the end of the grant cycle to stabilize space, partnerships, and data systems for future programming. Formal agreements with partners such as the 29th Street Community Center could secure longer-term space, especially if they address the transportation and access concerns families raised. If VLP's application for continued 21st CCLC funding is approved, the program should work with MSDE to align its performance indicators with the grade levels it expects to serve.

Introduction

Village Learning Place (VLP) is an independent non-profit library that houses educational programs, enrichment opportunities, and informational resources located in Charles Village. Since 2007, they have worked with young people from pre-K to 8th grade and expanded to serve students in pre-K to 12th grade. They were selected into the 2023-2026 cohort of a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, a federally funded initiative managed at the state level through the Maryland State Department of Education. Over the three-year grant cycle, the funding has supported VLP's after-school and summer enrichment programs: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School, LINK Leaders School Year, LINK Summer, and LINK Leaders Summer. During the third and final year of the cycle, funding constraints prevented VLP from offering LINK Leaders School Year and LINK Leaders Summer, so programming during SY 2025-26 and summer 2026 served students in pre-K to 5th grade through LINK After School and LINK Summer. This report summarizes results for students who were regular attendees during SY 2025-26 and summer 2026. It also reports results for entire cycle participants, defined as students enrolled in the program during all three years of the grant cycle, across each school year and summer from 2023-24 through 2025-26.



Program Description

LINK After School is a small community-based after-school program offered at the Village Learning Place in the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. The program is offered free of charge and provided in-person programming in SY 2025-2026. As of this year, LINK After School serves Pre-Kindergarten to 5th Grade students every day, Monday-Friday from 2:25-5:30 pm. Due to funding constraints, the program was unable to offer free programming for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year, during which time care for this age group was available on a fee basis. Free programming for this age group was reinstated as part of LINK After School in January 2026. During SY 2025-2026, the program was offered from October 6, 2025, to May 22, 2026. The program provides students with free, dynamic programming and nutritious snacks and supper every weekday throughout the school year. The academic focus of the LINK programs is on reading, mathematics, science, and character education with quality instruction and research-based curricula. Enrichment opportunities include STEM, art, team building, and physical activities.

LINK Summer completed its sixteenth year of programming as a small community-based summer academic enrichment program serving pre-K to 5th-grade students from the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. The overall program is designed to prevent summer learning loss and to inspire creativity.

LINK (Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids) Summer was held for a little over 5 weeks from June 29th through August 7th from 9 am to 4 pm for grades pre-K to 5th. LINK Summer is a dynamic and educational program offering lessons in literacy, math, and science, and also includes important elements of character education such as circle time, identifying feelings, and friendship building. The program also provided enrichment workshops, including visual arts, cosmetology, fun fitness, music, poetry, etc. Learning was extended outside of the classroom into their garden, on community walks, and during Friday field trips. Students received breakfast and lunch through VLP's partnership with Baltimore Housing Authority's Summer Meals Program, and VLP provided morning and afternoon snacks for students.

In previous years, VLP also offered LINK Leaders, a school-year and summer program for students in Grades 7-12. LINK Leaders focused on character building, leadership development, college and career readiness, and community service, and it used a flexible drop-in schedule that allowed middle and high school students to attend as their schedules permitted. Due to funding cuts, VLP was unable to offer LINK Leaders during SY 2025-26 or summer 2026. As a result, the program served only students in Grades PreK-5 this year, and performance indicators specific to middle and high school students could not be assessed. VLP hopes to bring back LINK Leaders as soon as possible so it can again serve middle and high school students in the community.

Evaluation Overview

Dr. Amy Desai Graham and her team were engaged to assess descriptive goals and outcomes to satisfy external evaluation requirements during the second year of the current three-year funding cycle. Program planners are interested in the required monitoring and evaluation measures, as well as ensuring that the goals of the project adhere to the core values of the program's framework.

Performance Goals and Indicators

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) identified six performance goals to evaluate the effectiveness of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant programs. In the 2025 school year, the LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year programs aimed to measure success according to the following indicators:

	Indicators	Annual Milestones
1	Percentage of students in grades 1–5 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
2	Percentage of students in grades 6-12 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
3	Percentage of youth in grades 1–12 participating in 21st CCLC during the school year and summer who: (1) Have a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year; and (2) Demonstrated an improved attendance rate by August of the current school year.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
4	Percentage of students in grades 7-8 and 10-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer with a prior-year unweighted GPA less than 3.0 will demonstrate an improved GPA by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
5	Percentage of students in grades 4-8 participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will (a) demonstrate growth in reading/language arts on state assessments, and (b) demonstrate growth in math on state assessments by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
6	Percentage of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts and math by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
7	Percentage of students grades 1 through 12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%
8	Percentage of caregivers with children in grades preK-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year will participate in 2 or more parental engagement activities by August.	Year 1: 60% Year 2: 65% Year 3: 70%
9	Increase communication and partnerships with stakeholders statewide.	Year 3: 50%

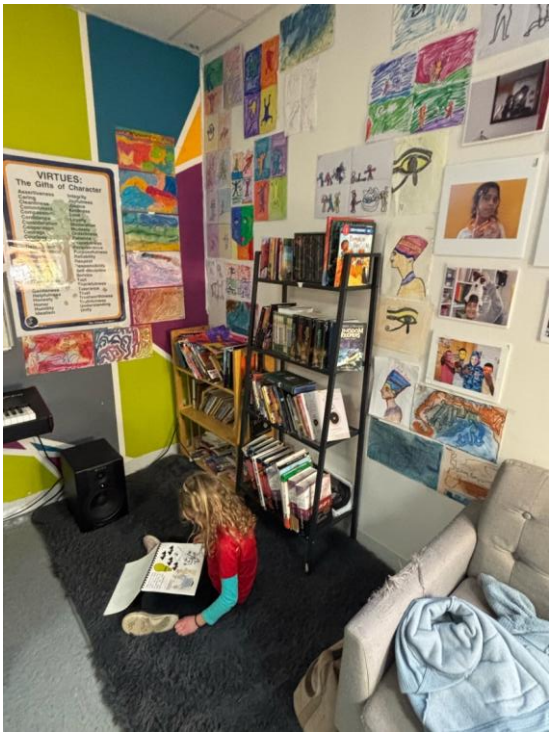
Evaluation Questions

For the third year of the cycle, the evaluation team focused on documenting the evaluation questions, which align with the goals identified by MSDE to measure the effectiveness of 21st CCLC programs.

1) To what extent did students demonstrate improvement in school engagement?
   - See results under Evaluation Question 1 (indicators 1-3) on pages 20-22 and Tables 5 and 6, which summarize teacher-reported engagement in learning and school day attendance achievements.
2) To what extent was academic success achieved for all students?
   - See results under Evaluation Question 2 (indicators 3-6) on pages 22-24 and Table 7, which summarize academic achievements for SY 2025-26 and Summer 2026.
3) To what extent do students demonstrate social-emotional benefits, as well as positive behavior change over the course of their participation in the program?
   - See results under Evaluation Question 3 (indicator 7) on page 25 and Table 8, which summarizes in-school suspension achievements for SY 2025-26.
4) To what extent was the program able to engage and support caregivers in family literacy and related educational development?
   - See results under Evaluation Question 4 (indicator 8) on pages 26-27 and Table 9, which summarizes caregiver and family engagement achievements and describes the engagement activities offered in SY 2025-26 and Summer 2026.
5) To what extent was the program implemented as designed?
   - See results under Evaluation Question 5 (indicator 9) on page 27and Table 10, which summarizes partner communication achievements for the 2023-26 program cycle. See results in the Program Quality section on pages 27-36, which summarizes the findings from the three site visits conducted during SY 2025-26 and Summer 2026.



Evaluation Design & Methods



This descriptive evaluation, designed to document both program implementation and participant outcome data, utilizes a mixed-method approach. Student outcomes and program implementation data were gathered through custom spreadsheets shared by program staff and assessed using comparative analysis of individual matched data. Quantitative analyses were conducted in Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and some summary and visualization using Google Sheets or MS Excel. Data accuracy was ensured by a central program staff member responsible for data entry and review. After data transfers, the evaluation staff ran the appropriate cross-checks to ensure data quality and notified the program staff of any discrepancies/errors. Data security was ensured by removing participant indicators from the data as soon as possible and maintaining standard data protocols for data management by securing data in password-protected files.

Site observation, the qualitative component, occurred on three occasions: once during the Fall of 2025, the Spring of 2026, and the Summer of 2026. Observable factors for focus via in-classroom observations and a walkthrough of the grounds and facilities typically include the facility, types of activities, classroom management, safety and security, student engagement with activities, teacher-student interaction, and utilization of resources.

Analyses and evaluations reflect a focus on program goals and associated indicators.

Evaluation Results — Findings

Participants

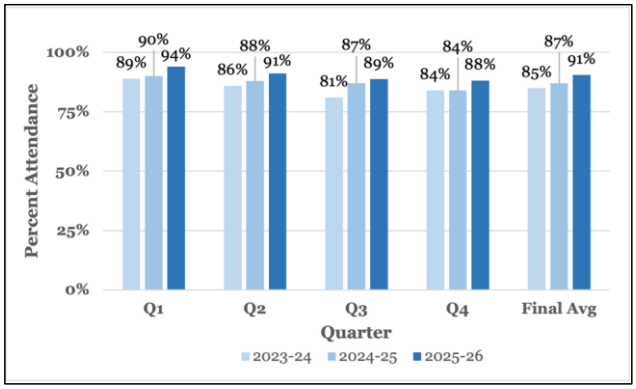
Attendance

Year three of programming for cycle 2023-2026 was conducted in person for the entirety of the school year. Average daily attendance was only calculated for the LINK After School program. Table 2 summarizes monthly and annual average daily student attendance based on the data supplied by the program. The program achieved an average annual attendance of 94% for SY 2026, which is an 8% relative increase compared to the previous year, and the highest recorded attendance rate throughout the program cycle. Figure 1 illustrates the average monthly attendance by quarter for SY 2023-2026.

Table 2. Average Program Attendance by Month SY 2026

Month	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2023-2024 (average N=43)	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2024-2025 (average N=42)	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2025-2026 (average N=36)
Oct	**89%**	**91%**	**94%**
Nov	**86%**	**88%**	**92%**
Dec	**84%**	**87%**	**89%**
Jan	**87%**	**87%**	**92%**
Feb	**77%**	**90%**	**88%**
Mar	**83%**	**86%**	**89%**
Apr	**80%**	**81%**	**89%**
May	**81%**	**87%**	**87%**
Annual SY	**83%**	**87%**	**94%**

Figure 1. Average Program Attendance by Quarter SY 2023-2026



Program Participation

Program participants are those who enroll in the program; however, the amount of program exposure should lead to better outcomes, thus participants include both enrollees (students who are enrolled in the program and attended at least one day) and regular attendees (those who were in the program for 30 days or more). Table 3a presents the data for LINK After School program participation based on the number of days in the program for all three years of the program cycle. During SY 2025-26, 47 students enrolled in LINK After School, of which 46 (98%) attended the program for 30 days or more and were counted as regular attendees. Throughout the program cycle, the program has maintained a high rate of program participation, with a rate of 94% during year one, and the 98% participation rate holding steady between years two and three. The program also saw a steadily decreasing attrition rate, with the withdrawals decreasing from 26% to 0% between years one and three.

Table 3a. LINK After School 2025-2026 Program Participation

Program Participation						
	2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Days in Program	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students
Less than 30 days	4	6%	1	2%	1	2%
30 Days or more	58	94%	46	98%	46	98%
Program Attrition Rate						
Withdrawals	16	26%	10	18%	0%	0%

Commented [MP1]: note that these numbers include preK students; preK students were not included in LINK until midyear due to funding constraints

Table 3b presents LINK Leaders School Year program participation data for SY 2023-2026. Due to funding constraints, the Village Learning Place was not able to offer LINK Leaders programming during SY 2025-26. Data from years one and two suggest the program's participation was trending upward, with year two data representing a 68% relative increase in the number of regular program attendees, as well as a 31% relative increase in the percentage of regular attendees.

Table 3b. LINK Leaders School Year 2025-26 Program Participation

Program Participation						
	2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Days in Program	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students
Less than 30 days	18	49%	16	33%	0	0%
30 Days or more	19	51%	32	67%	0	0%
Program Attrition Rate						
Withdrawals	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 3c presents the data for LINK Summer School program participation based on the number of days in the program during summer 2024-26. During summer 2026, 42 students enrolled in and attended at least one day of LINK Summer programming. A total of 86% of program participants were regular attendees in summer 2026. This represents the second highest proportion of program participants who were regular attendees since year one when 91% of program participants were regular attendees.

Table 3c. LINK Summer 2025 Program Participation

Program Participation							
		2024		2025		2026	
Days in Program		# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students
	Less than 20 days	5	9%	11	17%	4	9%
	20 Days or more	52	91%	52	83%	38	86%
Program Attrition Rate							
	Withdrawals	3	5%	0	0%	2	5%

Table 3d presents LINK Leaders Summer program participation data for summer 2024-26. Due to funding constraints, the Village Learning Place was not able to offer LINK Leaders programming during summer 2026. In the two prior summers, the program maintained high rates of regular attendance. In summer 2024, 26 of 30 enrolled students (87%) attended 20 or more days, and in summer 2025, 21 of 26 enrolled students (81%) attended 20 or more days and qualified as regularly attending participants.

Table 3d. LINK Leaders Summer 2025 Program Participation

Program Participation							
		2024		2025		2026	
Days in Program		# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students
	Less than 20 days	4	13%	5	19%	0	0%
	20 Days or more	26	87%	21	81%	0	0%
Program Attrition Rate							
	Withdrawals	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 4a presents detailed data concerning LINK After School participant demographics for SY 2023-24 through SY 2025-26. Among tracked program enrollees in SY 2025-26, 3% were classified as English language learners and 6% had special educational requirements. Approximately 44% of tracked enrollees were female, 53% were male, and 3% were gender nonconforming. The majority of students identified as White (58%), followed by Asian (14%), Black or African American (11%), and Other (11%). Notably, Pre-Kindergarten students were not tracked for demographic information during SY 2025-26 because they were not enrolled in LINK After School until midyear.

Table 4a. LINK After School 2023-2026 Demographic Information

Demographics	SY 2023-24 Tracked Program Enrollees N=61	SY 2024-25 Tracked Program Enrollees N=47[1]	SY 2025-26 Tracked Program Enrollees N=36
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Descriptive Information			
English Language Learners	10%	7%	3%
Special Educational Requirements	20%	9%	6%
Grade Level			
PreK	18%	15%	0%[2]
K	10%	21%	11%
1st	15%	13%	28%
2nd	11%	19%	17%
3rd	13%	9%	19%
4th	15%	4%	14%
5th	7%	13%	11%
6th	11%	6%	0%
Gender			
Female	54%	54%	44%
Male	46%	46%	53%
Gender nonconforming	0%	0%	3%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:			
Asian	0%	7%	14%
Black or African American	43%	22%	11%
Hispanic	13%	7%	3%
Multiracial	0%	13%	3%
Other	13%	0%	11%
Prefer Not to Say	0%	2%	0%
White	31%	50%	58%

Commented [MP2]: note preK students were not tracked for demographics and other program info bc they were not enrolled in LINK until midyear

[1]Descriptive Information, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity data is unavailable for one enrolled program participant.
[2] PreK students were not tracked for demographic and other program data (except for attendance) during SY 2025-26 due to these students not being enrolled in LINK until midyear.

Table 4b presents LINK Leaders School Year program demographics for SY 2023-24 through SY 2025-26. Because LINK Leaders was not offered during SY 2025-26, no demographic data are reported for the current school year. In the two prior school years, the majority of LINK Leaders participants identified as Black or African American (68% in SY 2023-24 and 77% in SY 2024-25), and most participants were in Grades 7-8.

Table 4b. LINK Leaders School Year 2025-2026 Demographic Information

Demographics	2023-24 Tracked Program Enrollees N=37 (%)	2024-25 Tracked Program Enrollees N=48[3] (%)	2025-26 Tracked Program Enrollees N=0 (%)
Descriptive Information			
English Language Learners	14%[4]	3%	0%
Special Educational Requirements	26%	3%	0%
Grade Level			
7th	41%	28%	0%
8th	54%	48%	0%
9th	3%	13%	0%
10th	0%	10%	0%
11th	3%	0%	0%
12th	0%	0%	0%
Gender			
Female	51%	39%	0%
Male	49%	61%	0%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:			
Black or African American	68%	77%	0%
Hispanic	24%	17%	0%
Other	0%	6%	0%
White	8%	0%	0%

[3] Data is not available for all participants. Some participants joined the program for a short time as a 'trial' but left the program as it was not a good fit for them. Descriptive Information and Grade Level data are reflective of 39/48 participants. Gender data is reflective of 38/48 students. Race/Ethnicity data is reflective of 35/48 participants.
[4] Descriptive Information and Gender data is unavailable for 2 out of 37 students.

Table 4c presents detailed data concerning LINK Summer participant demographics for summer 2024 through summer 2026. Among tracked program enrollees in summer 2026, 4% were English language learners and 7% had special educational requirements. About 39% of participants were female, 57% were male, and 2% were gender nonconforming. The largest share of participants identified as White (42%), followed by Black or African American (33%).

Table 4c. LINK Summer 2026 Demographic Information

Demographics	2023-24 Tracked Program Enrollees N=60 (%)	2024-25 Tracked Program Enrollees N=63[5] (%)	2025-26 Tracked Program Enrollees N=46 (%)
Descriptive Information			
English Language Learners	0%	3%	4%
Special Educational Requirements	8%	8%	7%
Grade			
Pre-K	10%	8%	24%
K	8%	19%	13%
1st	7%	14%	20%
2nd	9%	13%	17%
3rd	7%	10%	7%
4th	9%	13%	17%
5th	9%	16%	2%
6th	9%	8%	24%
Gender			
Female	55%	46%	39%
Male	45%	54%	57%
Gender nonconforming	0%	0%	2%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:			
Asian	0%	0%	7%
Black or African American	58%	53%	33%
Hispanic	5%	12%	7%
Multiracial	12%	12%	2%
Other	0%	0%	6%
White	25%	24%	42%

[5] Data for the categories of Descriptive Information, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity is unavailable for four participants. None of these students were attended the program for20 days or more.

Table 4d presents LINK Leaders Summer participant demographics for summer 2024 through summer 2026. Because LINK Leaders Summer was not offered in summer 2026, no demographic data are reported for the current summer. In the two prior summers, the vast majority of participants identified as Black or African American (93% in summer 2024 and 92% in summer 2025).

Table 4d. LINK Leaders Summer 2025 Demographic Information

Demographics	2023-24 Tracked Program Enrollees N=30 (%)	2024-25 Tracked Program Enrollees N=26[6] (%)	2025-26 Tracked Program Enrollees N=0 (%)
Descriptive Information			
English Language Learners	0%	0%	0%
Special Educational Requirements	13%	12%	0%
Grade			
7th	23%	31%	0%
8th	37%	27%	0%
9th	30%	31%	0%
10th	7%	12%	0%
11th	3%	0%	0%
12th	0%	0%	0%
Gender			
Female	57%	60%	0%
Male	43%	40%	0%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:			
Black or African American	93%	92%	0%
Did Not Disclose	0%	4%	0%
Hispanic	3%	0%	0%
Other	3%	0%	0%
White	0%	4%	0%

[6] Data is only available for 25 of 26 participants in the categories of Descriptive Information, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity.

Results by Evaluation Question

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent did students demonstrate improvement in school engagement?

Table 5. Summary of Student Engagement Outcomes for SY 2025-2026

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result	
		Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Regular Attendees
1: Percentage of students in grades 1–5 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ **80%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in SY 2023-24. ✓ **100%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants (1 student) demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in summer 2024.	***X* 50%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in SY 2024-25. ✓ **60%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in summer 2025.	✓ **80%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in SY 2025-26. ✓ **75%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in summer 2026.	✓ **69%** of Grade 1-5 regular attendees demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in SY 2025-26. ✓ **62%** of Grade 1-5 regular attendees demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in summer 2026.
2: Percentage of students in grades 6-12 participating in 21st CCLC programming in the school year and summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning by August.		**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 6-12.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have regular attendees in Grade 6-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming; program did not have regular attendees in Grade 6-12.

✓ **milestone met** **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 5 summarizes student engagement outcomes across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants, as well as year 3 results for SY 2025-26 and summer 2026 regular attendees. Entire cycle participants are defined as students who participated in school year and/or summer programming for all three years of the cycle. There were 20 students who participated in school year programming for all three years and were identified as entire cycle participants, as well as 8 students who attended all three

years of summer programming. Because Year 1 and Year 2 results reflect entire cycle participants, they may differ from the regular attendee results presented in prior annual reports.

During SY 2025-26, 16 Grade 1-5 regular attendees in the LINK After School program were assessed for teacher-reported engagement in learning. The program met its Year 3 milestone of 60%, with 69% of these students demonstrating improvements. During summer 2026, 26 Grade 1-5 LINK Summer regular attendees were assessed, and 62% demonstrated improvements, also meeting the milestone.

Among entire cycle participants, the program met the teacher-reported engagement milestone during the school year in two of the three years of the grant cycle. In SY 2023-24, 80% of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants demonstrated improvements, exceeding the Year 1 milestone of 50%. In SY 2024-25, 50% of these students demonstrated improvements, falling just short of the Year 2 milestone of 55%. In SY 2025-26, 80% demonstrated improvements, exceeding the Year 3 milestone of 60%. The program met the milestone during each summer of the cycle. In summer 2024, the one entire cycle participant in Grades 1-5 demonstrated improvement. In summer 2025, 60% of these students improved, and in summer 2026, 75% improved.

Indicator 2 could not be assessed this year. Because LINK Leaders was not offered during SY 2025-26 or summer 2026, the program did not serve any Grade 6-12 students, and none of the program's entire cycle participants were in Grades 6-12.

Table 6. Summary of Attendance Achievements for SY 2025-2026

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result	
		Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Regular Attendees
3: Percentage of youth in grades 1–12 participating in 21st CCLC during the school year and summer who: (1) Have a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year, and (2) Demonstrated an improved attendance rate in the current school year by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ **100%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants with an attendance rate of 90% or lower during the previous SY demonstrated improved attendance in SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	✓ **100%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants with an attendance rate of 90% or lower during the previous SY demonstrated improved attendance in SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	✓ **67%** of Grade 1-5 entire cycle participants with an attendance rate of 90% or lower during the previous SY demonstrated improved attendance in SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	***X* 40%** of Grade 1-5 regular attendees with an attendance rate of 90% or lower during the previous SY demonstrated improved attendance in SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer programming.

✓ milestone met **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 6 summarizes student attendance achievements across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants and regular attendees for during year 3. During SY 2025-26, the program retrieved school-day attendance data for 32 Grade 1-5 regular attendees. Of these students, five had an attendance rate at or below 90% during the previous school year (SY 2024-25), and two (40%) of them demonstrated an improved attendance rate during the current school year. As a result, the program did not meet its Year 3 milestone of 60%.

Among entire cycle participants, the program met its attendance milestone in each year of the grant cycle, although the number of qualifying students was small. In SY 2023-24 and SY 2024-25, one entire cycle participant had a prior-year attendance rate at or below 90%, and that student demonstrated improved attendance in each year. In SY 2025-26, two of three qualifying entire cycle participants (67%) demonstrated improved attendance. School-day attendance does not apply to summer programming.

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent was academic success achieved for all students?

Table 7. Summary of Academic Achievements for SY 2025-2026

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result	
		Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Regular Attendees
4: Percentage of students in grades 7-8 and 10-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer with a prior-year unweighted GPA less than 3.0 will demonstrate an improved GPA by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 7-8 or 10-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 7-8 or 10-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 7-8 or 10-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 7-8 or 10-12. **Not applicable** for summer programming.
5: Percentage of students in grades 4-8 participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will (a) demonstrate growth in reading /language arts on state assessments, and (b) demonstrate growth in math on state assessments by August.		**Not applicable** for school year programming; program did not have entire cycle participants in Grade 4-8 during SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	Progress toward the milestone is **undetermined** for SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	Progress toward the milestone is **undetermined** for SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	***X* 20%** of Grade 4-8 regular attendees improved on state ELA assessments during SY 2025-26. ***X* 33%** of Grade 4-8 regular attendees improved on state math assessments during SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer programming.
6: Percentage of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will demonstrate growth in		✓ **50%** of K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA	***X* 54%** of K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA	✓**93%** of K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA	✓**95%** of K-3 regular attendees demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA program assessments during SY 2025-26.

reading/language arts and math by August.		program assessments during SY 2023-24. ***X* 20%** of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during SY 2023-24. Progress toward the milestone is **undetermined** for summer 2024.	program assessments during SY 2024-25. ✓ **69%** of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during SY 2024-25. ✓ **88%** of K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA program assessments during summer 2025. ***X* 25%** of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during summer 2025.	program assessments during SY 2025-26. ✓ **86%** of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during SY 2025-26. ***X* 25%** of K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA program assessments during summer 2026. ***X* 33%** of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during summer 2026.	✓ **77%** of Grade K-3 regular attendees demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during SY 2025-26. ***X* 43%** of K-3 regular attendees demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on ELA program assessments during summer 2026. ***X* 40%** of Grade K- regular attendees participants demonstrated growth or maintained a score at/above benchmark on math program assessments during summer 2026.

✓ milestone met **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 7 summarizes academic achievements across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants and regular attendees for during year 3. Indicator 4 could not be assessed this year. Because LINK Leaders was not offered during SY 2025-26, the program did not serve any regular attendees in Grades 7-8 or 10-12. In addition, none of the program's entire cycle participants were in these grade levels during any year of the grant cycle. GPA improvements do not apply to summer programming.

Regarding state assessment data, matched MCAP results for SY 2024-25 and SY 2025-26 were available for only a small number of Grade 4-5 regular attendees. These data are sourced directly from the

partner schools, and some schools did not have matched results available. Of the five regular attendees with matched MCAP ELA data, one (20%) demonstrated growth. Of the three regular attendees with matched MCAP math data, one (33%) demonstrated growth. As a result, the program did not meet its Year 3 milestone of 60% for either subject. Given the small number of students with available data, these results should be interpreted with caution.

Progress toward this state assessment milestone could not be determined for entire cycle participants in any year of the grant cycle. In SY 2023-24, no entire cycle participants were in Grades 4-8. In SY 2024-25 and SY 2025-26, one and four entire cycle participants, respectively, were in Grades 4-8, but none had matched state assessment data for the current and previous school years. State assessment growth does not apply to summer programming.

During SY 2025-26, 22 Grade K-3 regular attendees were assessed in reading/language arts using STAR Early Literacy and STAR Math program assessments. The program exceeded its Year 3 milestone of 60% in both subjects. Ninety-five percent (95%) of students demonstrated growth or maintained a score at or above benchmark in reading/language arts, and 77% did so in math. During summer 2026, the program did not meet its milestone in either subject. Of the 23 Grade K-3 regular attendees assessed in reading/language arts 43% demonstrated growth or maintained a score at or above benchmark during summer 2026. Of the 15 regular attendees assessed in math, 40% demonstrated growth or maintained a score at or above benchmark during summer 2026.

Among entire cycle participants, school-year results in reading/language arts improved over the course of the grant cycle. The share of Grade K-3 entire cycle participants who demonstrated growth or maintained a benchmark score rose from 50% in SY 2023-24 to 54% in SY 2024-25 and 93% in SY 2025-26. The program met the milestone in Year 1, fell just short of it in Year 2, and exceeded it in Year 3. School-year math results showed a similar upward trend: 20% in SY 2023-24 (milestone not met), 69% in SY 2024-25, and 86% in SY 2025-26 (milestone met in both years). Summer results were more mixed. Grade K-3 data were not collected during summer 2024. In summer 2025, entire cycle participants met the milestone in reading/language arts (88%) but not in math (25%). In summer 2026, they did not meet the milestone in either reading/language arts (25%) or math (33%).

Commented [MP3]: pick up here

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent do students demonstrate social-emotional benefits, as well as positive behavior change over the course of their participation in the program?

Table 8. Behavior Achievements for SY 2025-2026

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result	
		Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Regular Attendees
7: Percentage of students grades 1 through 12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year and summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year by August.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ **100%** of entire cycle participants experienced zero in-school suspensions in SY 2023-24. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	✓ **100%** of entire cycle participants experienced zero in-school suspensions in SY 2024-25. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	✓ **100%** of entire cycle participants experienced zero in-school suspensions in SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer programming.	✓ **100%** of regular attendees experienced zero in-school suspensions in SY 2025-26. **Not applicable** for summer programming.

✓ **milestone met** **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 8 summarizes behavioral achievements across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants and regular attendees for during year 3. The program met its behavior milestone during SY 2025-26, with 100% of regular attendees experiencing zero in-school suspensions during both the current and previous school year. Entire cycle participants likewise experienced zero in-school suspensions in each year of the grant cycle. In-school suspension data does not apply to summer programming.



Evaluation Question 4: To what extent was the program able to engage and support caregivers in family literacy and related educational development?

Table 9. Parental Engagement Achievements for SY 2025-2026

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result	
		Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Entire Cycle Participants	Regular Attendees
8: Percentage of caregivers with children in grades preK-12 attending 21st CCLC programming during the school year will participate in 2 or more parental engagement activities by August.	Year 1: 60% Year 2: 65% Year 3: 70%	✓ **94%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during SY 2023-24. ✓ **86%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during summer 2024.	✓ **71%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during SY 2024-25. ✓ **86%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during summer 2025.	✓ **94%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during SY 2025-26. ***X* 43%** of caregivers for entire cycle participants in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during summer 2026.	***X* 54%** of caregivers for regular attendees in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during SY 2025-26. ***X* 50%** of caregivers for regular attendees in Grade preK-12 attended 2 or more parental engagement activities during summer 2026.

✓ **milestone met** **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 9 summarizes parental engagement achievements across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants and regular attendees for during year 3. During SY 2025-26, 35 families had children who were regular attendees in the LINK After School program, and 54% attended two or more parental engagement activities. As a result, the program did not meet its Year 3 milestone of 70%. All (100%) caregivers attended at least one event. Program staff reported that funding constraints limited the number of family engagement activities offered this year. For example, the program was unable to host its annual LINKsgiving dinner. There were a total of three engagement activities available to caregivers and families during the school year, including the Spooky Harvest Night in October 2025, the Parent Meeting, and the End of Year Celebration in May 2026.

During summer 2026, 32 families had children who were regular attendees in the LINK Summer program, and 50% attended two or more parental engagement activities. The program therefore did not meet its milestone for the summer. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of caregivers attended at least one event. Summer engagement activities included a midsummer Family Fun Night in July, field trips to the Baltimore Museum of Art, Turkey Hill Dairy, Gunpowder Falls State Park, and the End of Summer Celebration in August.

Among entire cycle participants, caregiver engagement remained strong during the school year throughout the grant cycle. Caregivers of 94% of entire cycle participants attended two or more activities in SY 2023-24, 71% in SY 2024-25, and 94% in SY 2025-26, meeting the milestone each year. Summer engagement among these caregivers met the milestone in summer 2024 and summer 2025 (86% each year) but declined to 43% in summer 2026.

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent was the program implemented as designed?

Table 10. Partner Communication Achievements

Indicator	Milestone	Year 1 Result	Year 2 Result	Year 3 Result
9: Increase communication and partnerships with stakeholders statewide.	Year 3: 50%	**Not applicable**; indicator assessed in Year 3 only. Partnership data were not collected during SY 2023-24 or summer 2024.	**Not applicable**; indicator assessed in Year 3 only. Program identified 8 partner organizations during SY 2024-25 and summer 2025, which served as the baseline.	✓ Program maintained partnerships with 5 of 8 (63%) partner organizations identified in Year 2 and established 6 additional partnerships in SY 2025-26.

✓ milestone met **X milestone not met** **N/A cannot determine if milestone was met**

Table 7 summarizes partner communication achievements across the three-year cycle for entire cycle participants and regular attendees for during year 3. Indicator 9 measures the program's progress in increasing communication and partnerships with stakeholders statewide. This indicator was designated for assessment in Year 3 of the grant cycle only. Because the milestone requires comparison with prior partnership activity, data from earlier years were used to establish a baseline. Data on partner communication and partnerships were not collected during SY 2023-24 or summer 2024. During SY 2024-25 and summer 2025, the program identified eight partner organizations, which served as the baseline for assessing this indicator. In SY 2025-26, the program maintained communication and partnerships with five (63%) of these eight organizations, meeting the 50% milestone. The program also expanded its network by establishing partnerships with six additional organizations, bringing its total number of active partners to 11. Among these new partners was the 29th Street Community Center, which provided program space for the Grade 3-5 class during summer 2026 and has become a significant partner as VLP works to secure long-term program space.



Program Quality: Site Observations

Program quality was assessed using in-person observations. The evaluation team was able to observe the LINK After School program on two different occasions during the fall and spring of SY 2025: once on December 10th and once on April 20th. The classes observed were Grade preK-K (spring only), Grade 1-2, and Grade 3-5. The evaluation team also observed the LINK Summer program on one occasion on July 16, 2026. The classes observed were Grade Pre-K/K, Grade 1-2, and Grade 3-5.

Program quality was assessed using an in-person observation conducted by the evaluation team. Data was collected regarding the following indicators: facility, types of activities, classroom management, safety and security, student engagement with activities, teacher-student interaction, and utilization of resources.



Facility

Program spaces changed over the course of the year. Due to funding constraints, VLP gave up the additional space it had been using across the street and consolidated programming in the VLP Library. At the time of the December visit, the Grade 1-2 class had already moved to the library, while the Grade 3-5 class remained in the VLP office building across the street. By the April visit, the Grade 3-5 class had also moved to the library and was using its first floor as a classroom. The Grade 1-2 and Grade PreK-K classes each occupied a separate room in the library basement. Programming also extended to the library garden, which was the focus of a student-led beautification project, and to outdoor space near the library such as a nearby playground when weather permitted it.

During summer 2026, the Grade PreK-K and Grade 1-2 classes stayed in their two rooms in the library basement. The Grade 3-5 class was housed at the 29th Street Community Center, where students also had access to a gym and an outdoor playground for recess. The library's first floor remained open for typical community use and programming during the summer. Classrooms observed across the year included tables for group work, reading areas, and wall displays such as educational posters, classroom rules, photos of students, and a "student voice and choice" display in the Grade 3-5 classroom.

Activities

School Year Observations

In December, the Grade 1-2 class was observed during homework and snack time, followed by circle time. Students worked on homework and worksheets at their tables while the teacher and a teaching assistant provided support. Students who finished their homework moved on to reading or drawing. One student read in the classroom reading corner and was asked by the teacher to read five pages and then tell her about them. Others drew with paper, pencils, markers, and stencils, showing one another how they drew trees and comparing their work.

Once all students had finished their homework, the class moved to circle time, which began with a guided meditation video. A student circle leader then led a feelings check-in, in which students used a thumbs signal to show how their day was going. The leader also rolled a question die to select a discussion prompt about where students would like to travel. Students passed a stuffed owl to show whose turn it was to speak. Their answers ranged from visiting other countries to time travel and entering a favorite video game or movie. The teacher then shared class news, including an upcoming Friday science session at which each student would receive a science kit to take home. The class then cleaned up and went to recess. In April, the Grade 1-2 class, led by a substitute teacher, was observed during quiet reading time before joining the Grade PreK-K class for a combined story time.

The Grade 3-5 class was observed in December during snack and homework time, followed by a STEM activity. Students without homework practiced on a keyboard fitted with headphones or learned to play chess with their teacher. According to the teacher, he brought the keyboard in because several students take piano lessons and had recitals coming up. The teacher also reported that students had taken turns leading circles and teaching lessons to the class throughout the year, on topics such as dinosaurs and bracelet weaving. After homework time, students moved on to their STEM activity. Two teams competed to build small go-kart-style vehicles, which they planned to race once both were finished.



In April, the Grade 3-5 class was in the third week of a six-week project to beautify the library garden. According to the teacher, the project was funded through a grant the class had won from the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), and students wrote approximately 80% of the grant application. The project included creating concrete mosaics, building birdhouses, painting concrete slabs and rocks, building an archway, and planting more vegetables. Outside experts were scheduled to help with the mosaic and archway work in weeks five and six. Students were also planning a celebration for the garden's opening on May 20th and were expected to write the final report to the grant funders after the project ended.

During the visit, several students volunteered to speak about the project at an upcoming event. They talked about drafting their remarks at home and combining them into a single shared piece. Students also volunteered to record the class's weekly video update for project volunteers. When the teacher asked how they would deal with rats in the garden, students brainstormed answers aloud. The class then moved to circle time and played a "quiet counting" game, in which the group counts to a target number one person at a time without speaking over one another. After snack, students with homework had 20 minutes to complete it. The class then spent one hour on project work. Students who had already primed their concrete slabs began sketching and outlining their mosaic designs, which they had

planned in an earlier session. Other students mixed concrete for new slabs, and the rest primed their slabs outdoors.

The Grade PreK-K class was observed in April while drawing, before cleaning up for a combined story time with the Grade 1-2 class. The session was led by the president of the VLP Board of Directors, who also works on the VLP garden. She introduced the garden and its pollinator trail, showed students existing garden signs and had them read the signs aloud, and talked about the different "insect friends" that visit the garden. She then read a book about monarch butterflies and milkweed. Afterward, students brainstormed new garden signs meant to make visitors curious to come in, and the substitute teacher wrote down their ideas. Student ideas included "Everyone is welcome," "Look for butterflies," "Guess the flower," and "Respect the garden." Students then made their signs on cardstock with markers, stencils, and other drawing supplies, and the signs were to be laminated and placed in the garden. Students who did not want to make signs could return to the Grade PreK-K room.

Summer Observations

In July, the Grade 1-2 class was observed during physical activity and an art lesson. Some students took part in a teacher-led exercise session on the rug that included push-ups and mountain climbers. The session continued with yoga poses (e.g., butterfly, frog, and tree poses) and a jumping activity in which students tested how far they could jump. Other students chose to draw, color, or read at their tables. The class then moved to an art lesson on Andy Warhol. The teacher showed examples of his artwork, shared background on his life and studio, and introduced a pop art activity. Students brainstormed everyday subjects for their artwork (e.g., tacos, Pop-Tarts, chicken nuggets) and drew and colored items such as cheeseburgers, popsicles, cups of coffee, and pizza. Students who finished then played a Warhol-inspired dice game, in which each roll decided which lines and shapes they added to a drawing, before moving on to drawing or reading.

The Grade PreK-K class was observed as students moved from rest time to a craft activity. Students used half of a paper plate as a bowl and construction paper as scoops to make paper ice cream. They decorated the scoops with glitter, glitter glue, rhinestones, and markers. As students finished, they placed their artwork on a drying rack and picked a coloring page before moving to snack time.

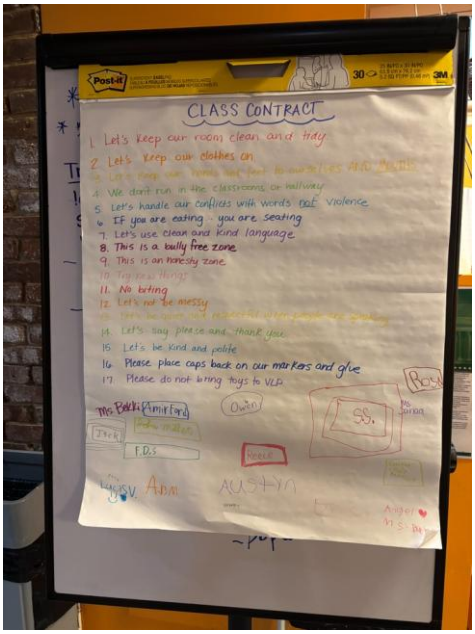
The Grade 3-5 class was observed during recess in the community center gym, followed by snack and free time in the classroom. During free time, students, teaching assistants, and the teacher played Uno together until caregivers arrived for pickup. Staff also described the class's main summer project: a short film titled *Show In, Show Out* about bullying, graffiti, and helping immigrant neighbors. According to staff, the project was developed with support from Wide Angle Youth Media and others. As part of the project, students interviewed members of the Church of the Guardian Angel about its program supporting immigrants in the community, and students wrote the film's script and narrative arc. Because the film project was described by staff rather than observed directly, the evaluation team was not able to assess how it was carried out.



Classroom Management

School Year Observations

Teachers used a variety of attention cues and routines to manage their classrooms. In the Grade 1-2 class in December, the teacher used clapping call-and-response, a bell, and verbal cues (e.g., "flat tire—shhh") to quiet students. She explained that quiet was needed so classmates could focus on their homework and had students nod to show they understood. A posted rule chart helped reinforce expectations. For example, when a student left snack trash on the table, the teacher pointed him to the classroom rules and he threw it away. Before circle time, the teacher polled the class to confirm that everyone had finished their homework. During circle time, the stuffed owl served as a talking piece, and the teacher reminded students to respect whoever was holding it. The class was notably energetic and easily distracted, and the teacher needed several cues to regain attention. However, students cleaned up and moved to recess promptly when asked.



In the Grade 3-5 class, the teacher used the SODA method (Stop, Observe, Detach, Assess), a self-regulation strategy the class was learning. When the room grew loud, he called out "SODA," and students froze and quieted down. When students disagreed about whose turn it was at the keyboard, he wrote a queue on the board. During the December visit, the Grade 3-5 teacher managed the class independently while still making time to provide one-on-one support to a student who needed additional help.

In April, the Grade 3-5 teacher used positive narration (e.g., "I'm so proud of [student name]") to highlight students who were meeting expectations, and other students followed suit. He also waited for silence before starting the circle game. Some students tested expectations during this visit, behavior typical of the age group. One student declined to stand for circle time, another stayed at a table reading while the activity went on, and two siblings argued over who would say the first number in the counting game. Later in the session, a group of students ran toward the back of the library. They stayed within view of staff, and the teacher and teaching assistant quickly settled them and brought them back to the front.

In the Grade PreK-K class, the teacher gave clear instructions before transitions. She also dealt directly with an incident of pushing in line: the student apologized to their peer and was moved to the back of the line. During the combined story time, the Grade PreK-K teacher reminded students not to talk during the reading. When a student started talking to a classmate, the session leader refocused him by pointing out something in the book.



Summer Observations

In the Grade 1-2 class, the teacher asked students to return to their assigned spots on the carpet so they would not accidentally hit each other during exercise. She also reminded students to stay quiet out of consideration for the Grade PreK-K class next door, which was having rest time. To start transitions, she used the prompt "show me you're ready." When dice kept ending up on the floor, she asked the class to recall the expectation and explained that the dice would be collected if it continued, since otherwise there would not be enough for everyone. Two teaching assistants helped monitor the room. The Grade PreK-K teacher used a call-and-response cue ("PreK/K, can I get your attention!") before giving clean-up instructions. She also gently redirected a student who started playing with toys outside of centers time, offering him a book to read until toys were available. In the Grade 3-5 class, a teaching assistant stepped in to redirect students who were roughhousing during recess.

Safety and Security

School Year Observations

Both school-year program spaces had controlled entry. In December, the Grade 3-5 classroom in the VLP office building was located behind the staff office space. To reach it, visitors had to pass through two sets of doors, and the first set could not be opened from the outside without a staff member letting them in. During the school year visitors of the library were not admitted during program hours unless they called to be let in, and students were supervised by multiple staff members at all times.

In December, the Grade 1-2 class was supported by a teacher and a teaching assistant, and the Grade 3-5 class was supported by a single teacher. By April, the Grade 3-5 class had moved to the library and had both a teacher and a teaching assistant. When students left the group area, the two worked together to bring them back. The Grade PreK-K teacher responded immediately to physical contact in line and told students that putting hands on others is unacceptable. Before the transition, she also had students pick up coloring sheets from the floor and put away scissors and pencils. Staff took a head count before dinner was served.

Summer Observations

During the summer, the library's first floor was open to the public. The Grade PreK-K and Grade 1-2 classes stayed in the basement, which could be reached only by passing through multiple doors, and

staff supervised both the upstairs and downstairs areas. At the 29th Street Community Center, visitors had to be buzzed into the building and were met by a staff member before entering. Grade 3-5 students were supervised by a teacher and two teaching assistants at all times, and Community Center staff were often present in the building as well.

Staffing levels supported close supervision in all classes observed in July. The Grade 1-2 class had one teacher and two teaching assistants. The Grade PreK-K class had one teacher and two assistants, and the site manager also came in to assist during the observation. The Grade 3-5 class had one teacher and two teaching assistants.

Staff paid attention to physical safety during activities. The Grade 1-2 teacher spread students out on the carpet to prevent accidental contact during exercise. She also checked with a student wearing a hand brace before he demonstrated a mountain climber. When drinks were spilled, staff had students wipe up the spill and gave them new materials. In the Grade PreK-K class, the teacher helped a student who had spilled colored pencils set the caddy on the floor so the pencils would not keep falling. A student also handed out hand sanitizer before snack. In the gym, a teaching assistant redirected students who were roughhousing during recess. Grade 3-5 students stayed under staff supervision until caregivers arrived for pickup.

Student Engagement

School Year Observations

Students were generally engaged across activities, though focus varied by class and activity. In December, Grade 1-2 students responded eagerly when the teacher jokingly offered copies of the *Baltimore Sun*, and several jumped up to volunteer to read one. Students who finished their homework drew together, sharing techniques and comparing their work. During circle time, every student shared an answer to the discussion prompt, and students asked the teacher whether she had any news to share. Grade 3-5 students were highly engaged in the go-kart building activity, working in competing teams and coming to the teacher for help finding parts they needed. Other students practiced the keyboard or learned chess, and one asked whether the keyboard had a built-in metronome.

In April, Grade 3-5 students showed considerable ownership of the garden project. Several students volunteered to speak at an upcoming event and to record the weekly volunteer video. Students also readily brainstormed ways to deal with rats in the garden. According to the teacher, students had also written most of the grant application and were helping to plan the garden opening celebration.

Grade PreK-K and Grade 1-2 students were attentive and responsive during the combined story time. They correctly identified the butterfly on the session leader's hat as a monarch and joined in the movement and sound prompts tied to the story. They also raised their hands to explain how milkweed seeds are spread by the wind, came up with a wide range of ideas for garden signs, and actively participated in the creation of new signs. One Grade PreK-K student also asked to help with dinner.

Summer Observations

Students were engaged in the activities observed in July. Grade 1-2 students in the exercise session readily tried each movement and the jumping activity. The class contributed ideas for their pop art and took part in the dice game, and one student was excited to relate the teacher's story about blueberry

cheese to her own experience. Physical activity was optional. Students at the tables mostly chose to keep drawing, coloring, or reading, although two joined the jumping activity when invited.

Grade PreK-K students were absorbed in their ice cream crafts and moved their finished work to the drying rack on their own. Grade 3-5 students played actively during recess, shooting basketballs, playing tag, and talking with one another, and they played Uno with staff at the end of the day. One student started a conversation with a teaching assistant about having demonstrated Newton's first law the day before, a concept he had read about in a book. The Grade 3-5 teacher reported that two to three students who had taken part in the school-year garden project took on leadership roles in the summer film project and showed growing confidence.

Teacher-Student Interaction

School Year Observations

Staff interactions with students were generally warm and responsive. In the Grade 1-2 class, the teacher used humor to engage students and praised them for following along during meditation. When a student reported that a classmate had not done her homework, the teacher suggested the classmate may not have had lined paper rather than responding with criticism. When the class broke into "Happy Birthday" for a classmate, the teacher stopped the song and explained that he had asked not





to receive that kind of attention and that his wishes should be respected. This modeled respect for individual preferences.

In the Grade 3-5 class, the teacher noticed a student sitting alone and looking upset. He sat with her and validated her feelings as she explained what was wrong. When she later became frustrated and began crying over her homework, he comforted her, encouraged her, and continued helping her work through the assignment. When a student asked about the keyboard's metronome, the teacher promised to help him after the current activity. The

teacher also kept a means of direct communication with a caregiver who had expressed concern about her child's homework completion.

In April, the Grade 3-5 teacher wished students good luck on a school test the next day and told them he knew they were all capable of doing well. He relied consistently on positive reinforcement to guide behavior. During the combined story time, the Board President kept students engaged by asking questions, prompting them to move (such as swaying like milkweed in the wind), and inviting them to make sound effects tied to the story. She also welcomed students' ideas for the garden signs and encouraged them to write their words large so the signs would be easy to read.



Summer Observations

Summer sessions showed similarly positive interactions. The Grade 1-2 teacher praised students' efforts during physical activity and invited students at the tables to join without requiring them to. When drinks were spilled, she calmly walked students through clean-up and replaced their materials. She also built rapport through personal conversation: she shared her experience with a cheese a student recognized, and the student shared her own, different experience.

Grade PreK-K staff affirmed students' work often, telling them they loved their creations or calling them amazing. The teacher was gentle with students waking from rest. She greeted one with "good morning" and invited her to join the activity, and she let another student continue resting. She also reinforced manners by thanking a student for saying "thank you." When a student did not want snack, she asked whether he did not like it or was simply not hungry, and offered him a book in the meantime.

In Grade 3-5, the teacher reported that a student with limited English proficiency had become noticeably more involved in the program since working with a Spanish-speaking teaching assistant. Staff also joined students in games at the end of the day and talked with them about their interests, including one student's description of Newton's first law.

Utilization of Resources

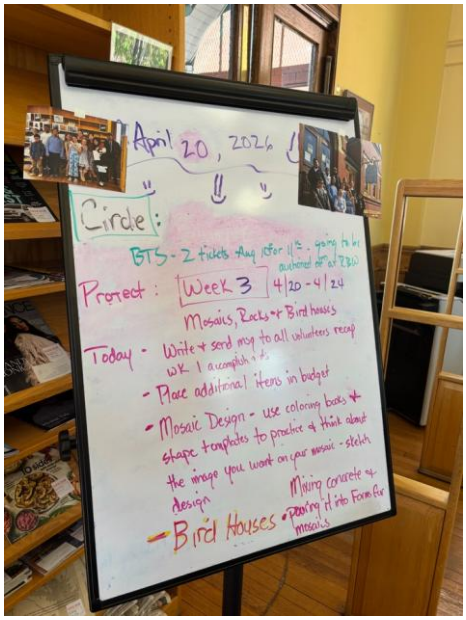
School Year Observations

The program made good use of the spaces and materials available to it. Classrooms, the library, the library garden, and nearby outdoor space were all used for academics and enrichment. Students had access to worksheets, paper, pencils, markers, and stencils, as well as books and a classroom reading corner. Play and enrichment materials included Magnatiles, Legos, board games, a keyboard with headphones, chess sets, and STEM building materials. Circle time drew on a meditation video, a question die, and a stuffed-owl talking piece, and students received take-home science kits. Snacks and dinner were also provided.

The Grade 3-5 garden project drew on resources beyond the classroom, including grant funding that students helped secure, outside experts, project volunteers, and the garden itself. The garden project materials included concrete, primer, paint, mosaic supplies, and birdhouses. The combined Grade PreK-K and Grade 1-2 story time drew on VLP leadership and used garden signs, a picture book, cardstock, and drawing supplies, with the finished signs to be laminated and installed in the garden.

Summer Observations

The program used library classrooms and the 29th Street Community Center's classroom and gym for academics, enrichment, and recreation. In the Grade 1-2 class, students used rug space for exercise, printed examples of Andy Warhol's artwork, paper, coloring supplies, dice, and a printed dice game. The Grade PreK-K class used construction paper, glue, glitter and glitter glue, rhinestones, and paper plates for crafts, along with headphones, a drying rack, and cubbies. Grade 3-5 students used basketballs in the gym and a games closet stocked with card and board games. Snacks were provided in all classes. Staff also reported that the Grade 3-5 film project drew on community partnerships with Wide Angle Youth Media and the Church of the Guardian Angel.



Additional Highlights

Library Garden Beautification Project

During spring 2026, students in the LINK After School Grade 3-5 class led a six-week project to beautify the VLP Library garden. The garden is a long-standing community asset. VLP describes it as a former run-down parking lot that was transformed into a community garden. The garden is open to the public during library hours, hosts many of the library's cultural and educational programs, and includes a youth garden along its south wall that VLP uses to teach students about plants, food, and life cycles.

The project was funded through the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) Youth Grant Opportunities for FY 2026. On April 1, 2026, Village Learning Place received a $979 award for the project, which students titled "VLP's Famous Project that Will Go Down in History and Help Many." The Maryland General Assembly established MYAC in 2008 to give young people a voice in policymaking. MYAC's youth grants support projects that are youth-led and adult-supported, that serve communities where more than 20% of children live in poverty, and that align with at least one of the Council's focus areas, which include education and resource equity and safe school and community spaces. Consistent with this youth-led model, the class's teacher reported that the 17 students in the class wrote approximately 80% of the grant application. Students developed the project concept, drafted the application's core details, and built the project budget. They continued this work even though school closures cost the class three to four days of grant-writing time. Students also prepared a 10-minute

presentation for the MYAC panel and answered the panel's questions online as part of the selection process. VLP grant-writing staff then helped finalize the application.

The project combined art, hands-on construction, and gardening. Over six weeks, students created concrete mosaics, built birdhouses, painted rocks, planted vegetables, and installed a new archway entrance to the garden. Students completed every planned component. One element was revised during the project. The original plan called for a double archway entrance, with one archway for adults and one for children, but it was changed for safety reasons. The final design is a single archway entrance with a student "secret barrel entrance" beside it. A local ironworker built the archway, which includes a sign in English and Spanish. When the evaluation team observed the class during the project's third week, students were working on different stages of their mosaics. Some were mixing concrete for new slabs, others were priming slabs outdoors, and others were sketching designs they had planned in an earlier session.



Volunteers and community members played a substantial role in the project. Two Master Gardeners, a VLP parent, and the VLP Board President, guided the garden work. A mosaic artist supported the mosaic component. Twelve students from Johns Hopkins University's Alpha Phi Omega service organization helped with the mosaics and mulching, and a sixth-grade student also volunteered. Program resources also supported the work: Johns Hopkins University classroom assistants helped in the Grade 3-5 classroom, and VLP office staff and the VLP Director helped with logistics for the grand opening celebration. Students also worked to secure resources beyond the grant. They talked with families about donating items the grant did not cover and helped raise additional funds. Five community and family donors contributed mulch and food for the celebration, and donations made through VLP's Read Between the Wines fundraiser raised $677.

Students also led the project's communication and closing activities. They wrote all of the weekly updates sent to project volunteers during the six-week project. These updates, with photos from each week, were included in the final report submitted to the state, and VLP completed the financial report. Students were fully responsible for conceiving, planning, and running the project's Community Celebration on May 20, 2026. They prepared posters and invited VLP families, community members, volunteers, and MYAC representatives. Students had planned for rain, so when it rained, the celebration moved inside the VLP Library as planned.

The project also connected to the garden-related learning of younger LINK After School students. In a separate activity during the spring, Grade PreK-K and Grade 1-2 students worked with the VLP Board President to design multilingual signs for the garden and its pollinator trail, and the signs have since been installed. According to the Grade 3-5 teacher, the older students are expected to work with these younger grades to help maintain the garden now that the project is complete.

The garden project gave Grade 3-5 students authentic opportunities to practice skills that typical afterschool activities rarely offer. These included grant writing, presenting to a state youth council, budgeting, collaborative planning, fundraising, event planning, and reporting to a funder, along with applying art and construction skills to a permanent community space. Because the garden is open to the public, the students' work also contributes to a shared neighborhood resource. The Grade 3-5 teacher reported that two to three students who took part in the garden project went on to take leadership roles and show greater confidence during the LINK Summer film project.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

Opportunities

- The program had strong retention and attendance in SY 2025-26. Of the 47 students enrolled in LINK After School, 46 (98%) were regular attendees. No students withdrew, down from 10 withdrawals (18%) in SY 2024-25 and 16 withdrawals (27%) in 2023-24. Average daily attendance rose to 91% from 87% the previous year. The average number of students attending each day also grew from about 31 in Q1 to 41 in Q4 as the program reinstated Grade PreK-K. These results suggest the program has largely resolved the attrition concerns identified in prior years.



- Despite major funding, staffing, and space disruptions, the program met several core school-year indicators and improved on others. Among regular attendees, 69% demonstrated improved teacher-reported engagement in learning (Indicator 1), up from 46% in SY 2024-25, meeting a milestone the program missed last year. K-3 students exceeded the academic growth milestones by a wide margin: 95% showed growth in reading/language arts and 77% in math (Indicators 6a and 6b). No students had in-school suspensions in either the current or previous school year (Indicator 7). The program also met the engagement milestone during summer 2026, at 62%. Students who participated across all three years of the grant cycle met every applicable school-year milestone in 2025-26.
- Youth-led projects and new community partnerships gave students leadership opportunities and helped the program through a year of transition. Grade 3-5 students won a Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) grant to renovate the library garden. They completed most of the initial application on their own and presented their proposal to the Council. Staff reported that several of these students went on to take leadership roles in the summer film project. VLP also secured summer funding from 21st CCLC, Family League, and the Summer Collaborative Fund. It used space at the 29th Street Community Center and worked with community partners, including Wide Angle Youth Media and the Church of the Guardian Angel. Together, these

efforts give the program a model of student voice to extend to other grade levels and a base of partnerships for future programming.

Challenges

- Funding constraints significantly reduced the program's scope and stability this year. VLP did not offer LINK Leaders programming and served no Grade 6-12 students, so it could not assess Indicators 2 and 4. Grade PreK-K ran as paid childcare until it was reinstated as free LINK programming in January 2026. The program also gave up its additional classroom space and moved fully into the library, which had to close to the public during afternoon program hours. Securing long-term program space remains an ongoing concern as the program continues to lean on its partnerships with the local school, a neighborhood church, and the 29th Street Community Center.
- The program operated with reduced staff capacity for most of the year. The Director of Youth Programs left in November 2025, and the position was not refilled. The Deputy Director took on direct oversight of LINK, while teachers and library staff absorbed other duties. Program staff reported having no backup coverage when teachers were absent, frequent call-outs among classroom assistants, and difficulty keeping up with reporting, trainings, and team meetings.
- Several outcomes remain difficult to achieve, and family engagement declined. Among regular attendees, 40% of students with prior-year attendance at or below 90% improved their school-day attendance (Indicator 3), compared with 50% in SY 2024-25. Growth on state assessments also remained below the milestone (Indicators 5a and 5b), although matched MCAP data were available for very few students. With fewer family events because of funding constraints, 54% of caregivers attended two or more engagement activities during the school year (Indicator 8). That falls short of the 65% milestone, after the program met it in SY 2024-25 at 68%. The summer rate was 50%. Summer academic growth among K-3 students also fell below the milestones, at 43% in reading/language arts and 40% in math.

Recommendations

+ Reestablish family engagement with low-cost strategies that make the most of existing activities. Staff could turn student showcases into engagement opportunities, such as celebrations for the garden and film projects, end-of-program events, and volunteer roles for caregivers, without adding large standalone events. Partner sites such as the 29th Street Community Center may also be able to host events. Tracking each caregiver's participation by mid-year would help staff find families who have not yet attended two events and reach out to them before the year ends.
+ Formalize the shared leadership structure the program developed after the Director of Youth Programs departed, and create a written coverage plan. The plan should document who owns each responsibility, especially data collection, classroom assistant supervision, and family communication. It should also name backup staff or substitutes for teacher absences. Working with the classroom assistants' university partner to set attendance expectations and schedules could further reduce call-outs. These steps would make the program less reliant on a single administrator and keep operations steady through future transitions.

+ Use the end of the grant cycle to stabilize space, partnerships, and data systems for future programming. Formal agreements with partners such as the 29th Street Community Center could secure longer-term space, especially if they address the transportation and access concerns families raised. If VLP's application for continued 21st CCLC funding is approved, the program should work with MSDE to align its performance indicators with the grade levels it expects to serve.