Three Years of Academic and Social Enrichment at the Village Learning Place

American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Annual Evaluation Report SY 2021-2024: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School and LINK Leaders School Year



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"The mind is not a vessel to be filled,
but a fire to be kindled."
- Plutarch

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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

ARP ESSER: American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
ELA: English Language Arts
LINK: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids
MSDE: Maryland State Department of Education
VLP: Village Learning Place

Executive Summary

Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School and LINK Leaders School Year are supported by the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) grant and provide an after-school 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 for all ages. This report summarizes results from the program's three-year cycle spanning from SY 2021 to SY 2024.

During the three-year cycle, the program sought to document academic achievement via demonstrated improvements in math and reading/ELA (English language arts); student-reported preparedness for the next school year, and college and career opportunities (including the development of future goals); improved social and emotional skills; engagement in service learning; parental engagement, and successful program implementation via site observations of academic and enrichment programming. In year three (SY 2023-24), of 45 students who enrolled in the LINK After School program, all 45 were tracked for detailed outcomes and attended the program for more than 30 days during the school year. Participants in the LINK Leaders School Year program were not consistently tracked for progress toward milestones, so the number of students tracked varies by indicator. In the final year of the three-year funding cycle, VLP successfully met six of its nine indicators. Of the goals and indicators outlined for the site, the evaluation team considered the following in Table 1. Table 1 also summarizes the results for each goal and indicator during the three-year cycle.

Table 1. Summary of Cycle Results SY 2021-2024

Goals	Indicators	Milestone Measure	Cycle Results
Goal 1: Integrate an educational component that will assist students in meeting academic requirements on grade level.	Indicator 1.1 Percentage of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in math performance and skills.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming cycle.
	Indicator 1.2 Percentage of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in ELA performance and skills.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming cycle.
Goal 2: Provided learning and enrichment activities that assisted students in achieving at or above grade level in the next school year; and exposed students to future learning and life opportunities.	Indicator 2.1 Percentage of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming cycle.
	Indicator 2.2 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report knowledge of career and college options.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in years one and two of the programming cycle. ✗Milestone was not met in year three.
	Indicator 2.3 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will create and achieve academic and life goals.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestone was met in year one of the programming cycle. ✗Milestone was not met in year two. Progress towards the milestone is undetermined for year three.
Goal 3: Enhance students' access to physical, social, and emotional support.	Indicator 3.1 Percentage of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming cycle.
	Indicator 3.2 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55% Year 3: 60%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming cycle.
	Indicator 3.3 Percentage of caregivers with children in grades K-12 attending ARP ESSER	Year 1: 50% Year 2: 55%	✓ Milestones were met in all years of the programming

	programming during the school year will participate in 2 parental engagement activities during the school year.	Year 3: 60%	cycle.
	Indicator 3.4 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will participate in 10 hours of service learning during the school year.	Year 1: 85% Year 2: 90% Year 3: 95%	✗Milestones were not met during the three-year cycle.

✓ milestone met ✗milestone not met N/A cannot determine if milestone was met

Opportunities

- The program has maintained a high level of program participation, with 96% of enrolled students attending 30 days or more in year two, and 100% of enrollees being regular attendees in year three. The program saw a 49% relative increase in its regular attendees since year one, which shows significant progress.
- Throughout the program cycle, VLP has consistently met its milestones for six out of nine (67%) of the assessed indicators.

Challenges

- The program struggled to collect data for all participants across indicators, which made it difficult to produce an analysis wholly representative of the students in the program.
- Given that VLP Is not the only afterschool program available to the students it serves, it is challenging to retain regular attendees throughout all three years of the program cycle for a meaningful comparative analysis of entire cycle participants.
- Due to competition with other afterschool programs and personal circumstances experienced by students, the program experienced a significant attrition rate in the final year of the program cycle.

Recommendations

+ Track and evaluate students in the LINK Leaders School Year program more closely to ensure that progress toward indicators is assessed more accurately and reflects the experiences of all students served.
+ Give more attention to fulfilling performance measure outcomes among the LINK Leaders School Year program (e.g., service learning, academic and life goal creation and fulfillment) to ensure all cycle goals are achieved.
+ Consider creating an exit survey for families to complete when withdrawing from the program. This may help the program gather constructive feedback to reduce its attrition rate in the coming years.

Introduction

Village Learning Place (VLP) is an independent non-profit library located in Charles Village that houses educational programs, enrichment opportunities, and informational resources. 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 2021-2024 cohort of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) program, a federally funded initiative managed at the state level through the Maryland State Department of Education. The funding supports VLP's ongoing after-school enrichment programs, Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) After School and LINK Leaders School Year. This report summarizes the results from the three-year cycle of activities of both programs.



Program Description

LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year are small community-based after-school programs offered at the Village Learning Place in the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. Both programs are offered free of charge and provide in-person programming in SY 2023-2024. LINK After School serves pre-kindergarten to 6th-grade students every day, Monday-Friday from 2:25-5:30 pm. During SY 2023-2024, the program was offered from October 2, 2023, to May 24, 2024. 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 Leaders serves 7th to 12th-grade students every day

during the school year, Monday-Friday, from 2:30-5:30 pm. During SY 2023-2024, the program was offered from October 2, 2023, to May 24, 2024. LINK Leaders supports learning while guiding middle and high school students to graduation and into college, technical training, and/or the workforce. Through their "Leaders Open Doors" curriculum, students are encouraged to seek out opportunities and new experiences. In addition, LINK Leaders aims to provide students access to dynamic learning and networking opportunities. The LINK Leaders program focuses on character-building and leadership training through hands-on education, workshops, and partnerships with community leaders. Community service is emphasized within the college and career-readiness curriculum.

The LINK Leaders program schedule differs from the preK-6th programming (LINK After School) in that it is less structured and daily attendance is not required. Instead, students can drop in as their schedule allows or sign up for the numerous workshops and enrichments that are available throughout the year. It is expected that all enrolled students will attend programming at least once a week throughout the school year. Each day starts with a self-guided period for study and transition time from 2:30-3:30 pm. Structured programming takes place from 3:30-5:00 pm each day featuring a variety of activities including enrichment workshops, college & career exploration, leadership development, and service learning. Dinner is served beginning at 5:00 pm.

Evaluation Overview

Dr. Amy Desai Graham and her team were engaged to assess descriptive goals and outcomes to satisfy external evaluation requirements throughout the 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 three performance goals to evaluate the effectiveness of the ARP ESSER grant programs. In the 2023-2024 school year, the LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year programs aimed to measure success according to the following indicators:

Goal 1– Integrate an educational component that will assist students in meeting academic requirements on grade level.

Indicator 1.1 By May 2024, 60% of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in math performance and skills.

Indicator 1.2 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in ELA performance and skills.

Goal 2 – Provided learning and enrichment activities that assisted students in achieving at or above grade level in the next school year; and
exposed students to future learning and life opportunities.

Indicator 2.1 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.

Indicator 2.2 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report knowledge of career and college options.

Indicator 2.3 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will create and achieve academic and life goals.

Goal 3 – Enhance students' access to physical, social, and emotional support.

Indicator 3.1 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.

Indicator 3.2 By May of 2024, 60% of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.

Indicator 3.3 By May of 2024, 60% of caregivers with children in grades K-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will participate in 2 parental engagement activities during the school year.

Indicator 3.4 By May of 2024, 95% of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming

during the school year will participate in 10 hours of service learning during the school year.

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 ARP ESSER programs.

1) To what extent was the program implemented as designed?
    - See results in the Program Quality section on pages 21-23, which summarizes the findings from the two site visits conducted during SY 2023-24. Also see Goal 2 (Indicators 2.1-2.3) on pages 17-18, which summarizes students' perceptions and Leaders' goal-setting achievements, as well as Goal 3 (Indicator 3.4) on pages 19-20, which summarizes Leaders' participation in service learning.

2) To what extent was academic success achieved for all students?
    - See results under Goal 1 (Indicators 1.1-1.2) on pages 15-16, which summarize academic achievement.

3) To what extent was the program able to engage and support caregivers in family literacy and related educational development?
    - See results under Goal 3 (Indicator 3.3) on pages 19-20, which summarizes caregiver and family engagement achievements and describes the engagement activities offered in SY 2023-24.

4) 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 Goal 3 (Indicators 3.1 and 3.2) on pages 19-20, which summarizes socio-emotional achievements for the year.

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 two occasions in the winter and spring of 2024. 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

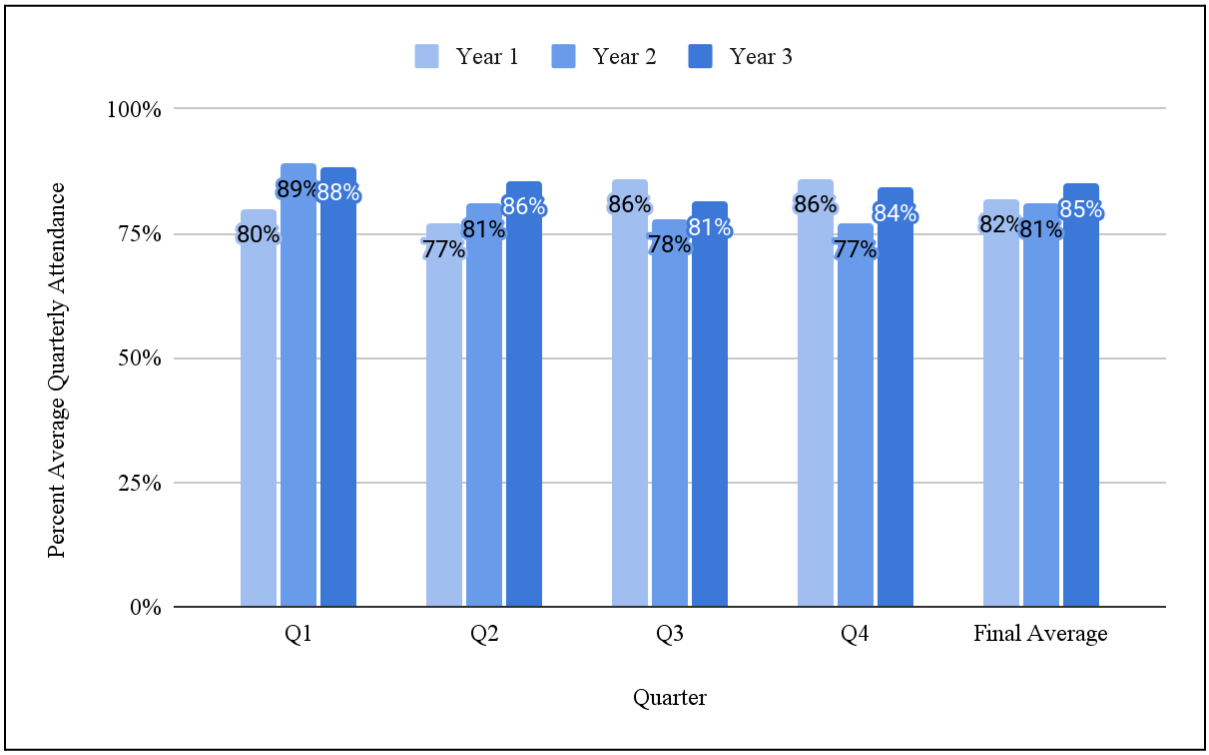
Attendance

Year three of programming for cycle 2021-2024 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. In the third year of the programming cycle (SY 2023-24) the program achieved an average annual attendance of 84%–the highest rate observed over the three-year cycle. Across the three years, the program averaged a yearly attendance rate of 82%. The program saw its highest level of attendance in year two, with an average of 48 regular attendees. However, the average attendance in year three was not far behind this three-year high, with an average of 44 students regularly attending throughout SY 2023-24. Between years one and three, the program saw an approximate 132% relative increase in its average attendance. Figure 1 illustrates the average monthly attendance by quarter for the 2021-2024 program cycle.

Table 2. Average Program Attendance by Month SY 2021-2024

Month	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2021-2022 (average N=19)	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2022-2023 (average N=48)	Monthly and Annual Average Daily Attendance 2023-2024 (average N=44)	Monthly and Annual Average Cycle Attendance (average N=37)
Oct	**78%**	**89%**	**88%**	**85%**
Nov	**88%**	**84%**	**86%**	**86%**
Dec	**74%**	**77%**	**84%**	**78%**
Jan	**74%**	**80%**	**88%**	**81%**
Feb	**85%**	**77%**	**77%**	**80%**
Mar	**86%**	**78%**	**83%**	**82%**
Apr	**85%**	**76%**	**84%**	**82%**
May	**88%**	**78%**	**85%**	**84%**
Annual SY	**82%**	**80%**	**84%**	**82%**

Figure 1. Average Program Attendance by Quarter SY 2021-2024



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 3 presents the data for LINK After School program participation based on the number of days in the program. During the 2023-2024 school year, 45 students enrolled in and attended at least one day of LINK After School programming. 100% of program participants were regular attendees in SY 2024–the highest program participation rate observed across the three-year cycle, and a 49% relative increase since the first year. The program saw its highest level of enrollment and participation in year two, with 57 students remaining enrolled in the program and 55 regularly attending. Still, there was a 50% relative increase in total program enrollment between years one and three. While 37 students enrolled in the LINK Leaders School Year during SY 2023-24, 19 attended 30 or more days and qualified as regularly attending participants. In SY 2022-23, 14 of 23 students enrolled in LINK Leaders were regular attendees, and in SY 2021-22, 8 of 20 LINK Leaders were regular attendees. Enrollment in the LINK Leaders program grew 85% across the three-year cycle, and regular attendance in the LINK Leaders program increased 138%. Although program enrollment has increased significantly since year one, it is notable that the program's attrition rate more than tripled in year three relative to year one. Unfortunately, the program faced challenges competing with school-based after-school programs in the area. Some students also experienced changes in their family circumstances that made it difficult for them to remain in the program. Although the program put forth efforts to recruit new students, some families were not a good fit for the program. The

program's staff attempted to offer restorative circle/parent meetings to find ways to support these students better, but their families instead chose to withdraw them from the program.

Table 3. LINK After Program Cycle Participation

Program Participation							
		SY 2021-22		SY 2022-23		SY 2023-24	
Days in Program		# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students	# Students	% Students
	Less than 30 days	10	33%	2	4%	0	0%
	30 Days or more	20	67%	55	96%	45	100%
Program Attrition Rate							
	Withdrawals	2	7%	5	9%	16	26%



Table 4 presents detailed data concerning the LINK After School participant demographics for the 2021-24 program cycle. In year three, among regular attendees, 9% were classified as English language learners–a relative decrease of 76% since year one–and 18% had special educational requirements–a relative increase of 157% since year one. During the first year of the program, participants were predominantly male (53%), however by year three participants were predominantly female (58%). In year one, the largest plurality of participants identified as Black or African American, and in year three the largest plurality of students identified as White.

Table 4. LINK After School Demographic Information for 2021-2024 Program Cycle

Demographics	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	Tracked Program enrollees	Tracked Program enrollees	Tracked Program enrollees
	N=30	N=57	N=45
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Descriptive Information:			
English Language Learners	37%	7%	9%
Special Educational Requirements	7%	11%	18%
Grade Level:			
preK	-	16%	22%
K	20%	11%	11%
1st	7%	12%	18%
2nd	17%	11%	9%
3rd	17%	16%	13%
4th	7%	11%	11%
5th	27%	11%	7%
6th	3%	14%	9%
Gender:			
Female	47%	56%	58%
Male	53%	44%	42%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:			
Black or African American	43%	49%	33%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	7%	19%	7%
White	40%	23%	42%
Other	10%	9%	18%

Results by Goal

For the following breakdown of evaluation outcomes throughout the 2021-24 program cycle, the data describes results collected from all program participants. All program participants refer to those who were regular attendees throughout the assessed year, regardless of whether they attended the program all three years of the program cycle. Notably, nine students were enrolled in the program across the entire three-year cycle–seven LINK After School students (grades preK-6) and two LINK Leaders (grades 7-12); however, three of the students in the LINK After School program later withdrew in year three and the two LINK Leaders students were not regular attendees in year three. Thus, the cohort of students who participated throughout the entire program cycle is too small to produce a meaningful comparative analysis.

Goal 1– Integrate an educational component that will assist students in meeting academic requirements on grade level.

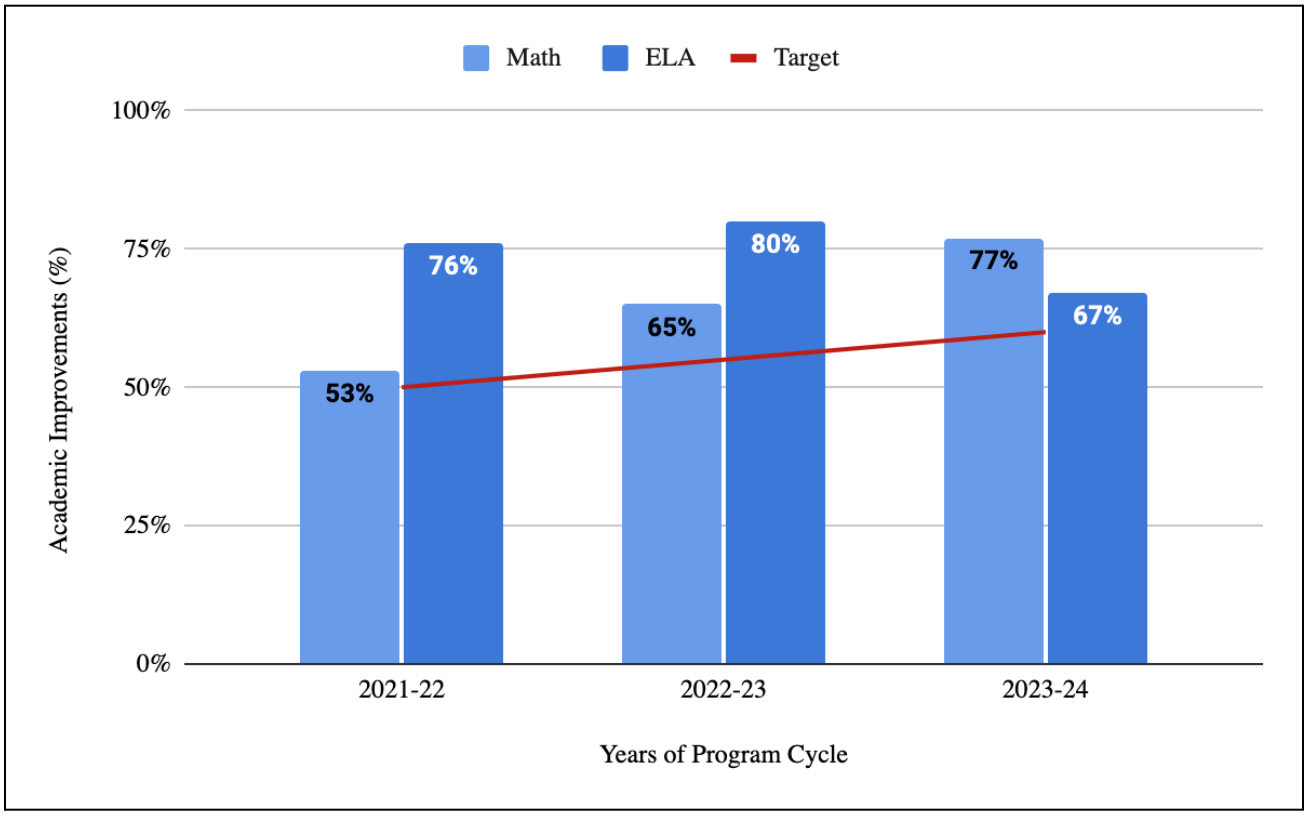
Table 5. Summary of Cycle Achievements: Academic Milestones

Cycle Milestone	Milestone Measure	Results
1.1.1 Percentage of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in math performance and skills.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **53% of grade K-5 students showed an improvement in math performance and skills.**
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **65%** of grade 1-6 students showed an improvement in math performance and skills.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **77%** of grade 1-6 students showed an improvement in math performance and skills.
1.1.2 Percentage of students in grades 1-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will show an improvement in ELA performance and skills.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **76% of grade K-5 students showed an improvement in ELA performance and skills.**
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **80%** of grade preK-6 students showed an improvement in ELA performance and skills.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **67%** of grade 1-3 students showed an improvement in ELA performance and skills. Progress towards the ELA performance and skills milestone is undetermined for grades 4-6.

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

In year three, 15 LINK After School students were assessed in the spring and fall of SY 2023-2024 to determine ELA, and 22 were assessed for math achievement and improvements resulting from the program. Across all three program years, the milestones for academic achievement for both ELA and MATH were achieved based on pre- and post-assessments conducted for students in grades preK-6 (Table 5, Figure 2). The program saw its highest rate of improvement in math performance and skills in year three (77%), representing a 45% relative increase since year one. The program saw its highest rate of ELA improvement in year two (80%), which was a 5% relative increase from the year prior.

Figure 2. Academic Improvements for Program Cycle SY 2021-2024



Goal 2 – Provided learning and enrichment activities that assisted students in achieving at or above grade level in the next school year; and exposed students to future learning and life opportunities.

Table 6. Summary of Cycle Achievements: School Year Preparedness, Career and College Options, and Goal Setting

Cycle Milestone	Milestone Measure	Results
2.2.1 Percentage of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **75%** of grade K-5 students reported feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **96%** of grade preK-6 students reported feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **90%** of grade preK-6 students reported feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year.
2.2.2 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will report knowledge of career and college options.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **100%** of assessed students reported knowledge of career and college options.
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **100%** of assessed grade 7-12 students reported knowledge of career and college options.
	Year 3: 60%	***X*** **55%** of assessed grade 7-12 students reported knowledge of career and college options.
2.2.3 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will create and achieve academic and life goals.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **83%** of grade 7-12 students created and achieved academic and life goals.
	Year 2: 55%	***X*** **50%** of grade 7-12 students created and achieved academic and life goals.
	Year 3: 60%	Progress towards the milestone is undetermined.

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

An End of Year Survey was administered to grades preK-6 students in the LINK After School program to assess students' perceptions, including their feelings of preparedness to succeed in the following school year. In year three, among the 30 students assessed, 90% (27 students) reported feeling prepared to succeed in the following school year. This figure represents a 20% relative increase in feelings of school-year preparedness among students since year one.

The grade 7-12 students were also administered an End of Year Survey. In year three, among the 11 students assessed, 6 students (55%) reported having more knowledge (compared to before the program) regarding career and college options. While the milestone for this indicator was not met in year three, 100% of students in grades 7-12 reported more knowledge of career and college options (compared to before the program) in years one and two.

For year three, progress toward LINK Leaders creating and achieving their academic and life goals remains undetermined. The program exceeded its milestone target in year one, with 83% of LINK Leaders creating and making progress toward achieving their academic and life goals. For each goal, program staff tracked actions taken, progress towards the goal, and the follow-up actions required. Although the program did not achieve its milestone in year two, it came close with 50% of LINK Leaders creating and progressing towards their academic and life goals.



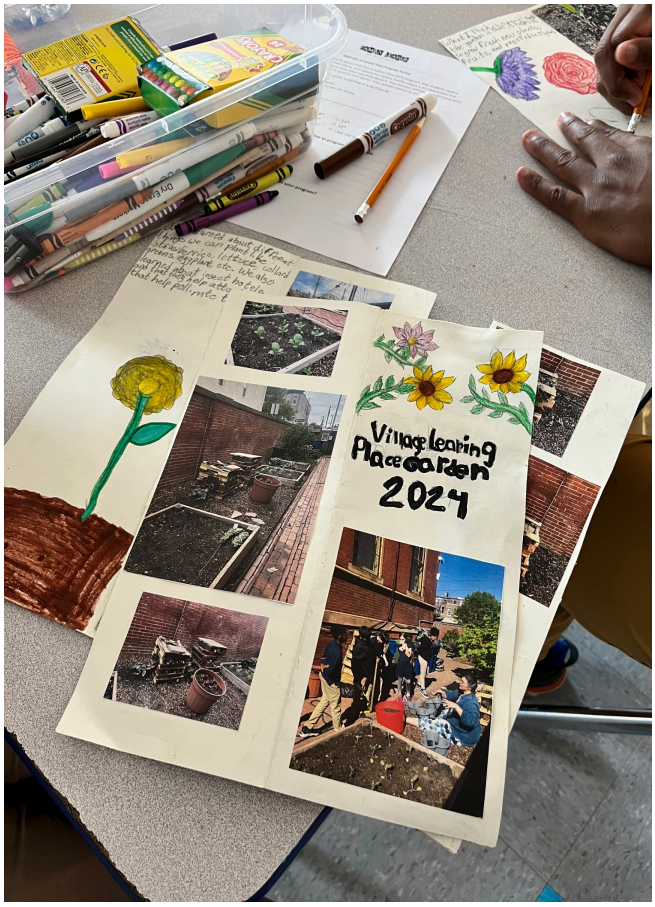
Goal 3 – Enhance students' access to physical, social, and emotional support.

Table 7. Summary of Cycle Achievements: SEL, Caregiver Engagement, and Service Learning

Cycle Milestone	Milestone Measure	Results
3.3.1 Percentage of students in grades preK-6 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **100%** of grade K-5 students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **92%** of grade preK-6 students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **97%** of grade preK-6 students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
3.3.2 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will demonstrate strong socio-emotional skills.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **100%** of assessed students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **57%** of assessed grade 7-12 students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **91%** of assessed grade 7-12 students demonstrated strong socio-emotional skills.
3.3.3 Percentage of caregivers with children in grades K-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will participate in 2 parental engagement activities during the school year.	Year 1: 50%	✓ **56%** of caregivers with children in grades K-12 participated in 2 parental engagement activities.
	Year 2: 55%	✓ **79%** of caregivers with children in grades K-12 participated in 2 parental engagement activities.
	Year 3: 60%	✓ **69%** of caregivers with children in grades K-12 participated in 2 parental engagement activities.
3.3.4 Percentage of students in grades 7-12 attending ARP ESSER programming during the school year will participate in 10 hours of service learning during the school year.	Year 1: 85%	✗ **0%** of students in grades 7-12 participated in 10 hours of service learning.
	Year 2: 90%	✗ **42%** of tracked students in grades 7-12 participated in 10 hours of service learning.
	Year 3: 95%	✗ **8%** of tracked students in grades 7-12 participated in 10 hours of service learning.

✓ milestone met ✗ milestone not met N/A cannot determine if milestone was met

An End of Year survey was administered to LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year students to assess their perceptions, including their socio-emotional skills. These programs focused on knowledge of conflict resolution strategies to demonstrate socio-emotional skills. In year three (SY 2023-24), among the 30 LINK students assessed, 97% (29 students) were able to recall two conflict resolution strategies to solve a problem–a 5% relative increase from the previous year (SY 2022-23). Eleven (11) LINK Leaders were assessed; 91% (10 students) were able to recall two conflict resolution strategies, indicating a 60% relative increase from the previous year (SY 2022-23).



During SY 2023-24, 45 families had children in the LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year programs, and 69% attended 2 or more parental engagement activities; 91% of caregivers attended at least one event. The program saw its highest level of caregiver engagement in year two, with 79% participating in at least two parental engagement activities. Nonetheless, parental engagement was 23% higher in year three relative to year one. There were a total of six engagement activities available to caregivers and families this school year. Village Learning Place hosted three family fun nights during SY 2023-24, which were celebrations with games and activities for children and families along with the provision of a meal. The family fun nights in SY 2023-24 included the Spooky Harvest, Spring Family Fun Night, and the End of Year Celebration. The Parent Meeting allowed caregivers to attend a restorative circle meeting with their children and children's teacher. In 2023, VLP hosted LINKsgiving, which was a family dinner prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The 529 Session in the spring allowed parents to learn how to create a Maryland 529 account to save for their children's college education.

The milestone for service learning hours completed by LINK Leaders was not met across the three-year program cycle. The program came closest to achieving its goal in year two when 5 out of 12 regularly attending Leaders (42%) completed between 11-23 hours of service learning each. In year three, 2 out of 25 tracked Leaders (8%) completed 11-17 hours of service learning each. While this milestone was not met, years two and three showed improvements from year one when no students completed 10 or more service learning hours.

Program Quality: Site Observations

Program quality was assessed using in-person observations. The evaluation team was able to observe the LINK After School and LINK Leaders School Year programs on two different occasions during the winter and spring of SY 2024: once on February 22nd and once on May 20th. The classes observed were grade preK-K, grade 1-2, grade 3-4, grade 5-6, and Leaders.

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

During the February 22nd visit, the ramp to the back exit of the program building was under construction so the program was held in the VLP Library for all classes. The preK-K and Grade 1-2 classes were in the basement classrooms and the Grade 3-4 and Grade 5-6 classes were on the main floor of the Library. During the May 20th visit, the back exit ramp was completed, and all classes were observed in the program building. All classes were in their own classroom for programming.

Activities

The Grade preK-K class was observed during recess and while working on their End of Year projects. During recess, students were escorted by two staff members onto the playground and played on the equipment. The End of Year project involved students learning the 50 states through the "Fifty Nifty United States" song. The Grade 1-2 class were also observed during recess and while working on their End of Year project. During recess, students also had supervised time on the playground to play with each other and the playground equipment. For their End of Year project, the Grade 1-2 class practiced singing "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars. The Grade 3-4 class was observed during an art activity and while working on their End of Year projects. Students participated in painting rocks to add to the VLP garden. Students chose from several paint colors based on their preference and experimented with different paint mixtures. The grade 3-4 students also completed their End of Year surveys and choreographed their own dance for the End of Year Celebration. The Grade 5-6 class was observed while working on an engineering project and preparing for the End of Year Celebration. Students designed and built model buildings to withstand a 7.0 earthquake. The class referenced building codes to inform the design of their buildings. The Grade 5-6 class also prepared a presentation of all the projects they worked on throughout the year (e.g., engineering, garden book, etc.) to present at the End of Year Celebration. The Grade 3-6 classes also participated in a Spanish language enrichment provided by The Language Project (Adventurers: Level 2 Spanish). The Leaders class was observed independently completing their homework. After completing their homework, the Leaders played card games. During the final observation, the Leaders did not have any formal work to complete, so they instead engaged in unstructured social time. During this time, the Leaders played video games and others had snacks. Despite not having a formal activity at that

time, the Leaders engaged in a wide range of projects throughout the year including a training and fitness program (MIssion Fit), 3D printing, cooking lessons, gardening, Run Club, etc.

Classroom Management

The class sizes were relatively small, allowing teachers to employ strong classroom management skills. For example, in the Grade Pre-K-K class, teachers provided reminders to the students regarding classroom boundaries; e.g., "let's listen", "sit on your bottom", "we are too loud and we can't hear our friends". In the Grade 1-2 class, teachers provided students clear instructions to ensure their song and dance routine to "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars remained coordinated. When students had a conflict, teachers effectively maintained order in the classroom. Additionally, teachers directed students to clean up their snack before playing ("Do you want your snack?", child responds "no", "Where should you put it?", child cleans up). In the Grade 5-6 class, two students had a disagreement and another had an outburst. The teacher pulled the students out of the classroom and spoke to them in the hallway to diffuse the situation. Afterward, the students were allowed to return to the activity and properly participate and engage in the class. In the LINK Leaders class, one student was excused from the day's activities after making an inappropriate remark.

Safety and Security

Program staff closely monitored students inside and outside the facility. For example, in the preK-K and Grade 1-2 classes, teachers closely monitored students and the two entrances/exits to the playground as the children played outside on the playground equipment. When students needed to use the restroom, one teacher would accompany them inside the library. The program building is locked, and all visitors must be buzzed in at the back entrance and are met by program staff. The VLP Library is usually a public space, but during the February 22nd visit, the program staff monitored all visitors entering the building and was closed to the public.



Student Engagement

During their recess time, the preK-K class and the Grade 1-2 class played well with their peers without conflict. The preK-K class remained highly engaged while

learning the "Fifty Nifty United States" song, and were excited to practice. The Grade 1-2 class had a lot of fun and was also engaged while practicing "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars. The Grade 3-4 class remained focused and embraced their creativity while completing their rock paintings. Students aptly followed their teacher's instructions, such as being quick to comply when asked to sit down or to put their sketchbooks away. The students enjoyed each other's company and cooperated well with each other. The students also remained engaged and focused while practicing their choreography for the End of Year Celebration. In the Grade 5-6 class, the teacher and assistant teacher provided lessons for the engineering activity, and students remained excited and engaged throughout the activity. The Grade 5-6 class remained attentive while working on their engineering project and compiling their presentation. The Leaders enjoyed each other's company and were engaged with each other during their downtime, playing games and conversing with one another. During their Spanish language enrichment, the Grade 3-6 classes were engaged, asking questions, and attentive during instruction and assignments.

Teacher-Student Interaction

Program teachers built positive, trustful relationships with their students throughout the year. For example, the Grade 1-2 and 3-4 classes looked up to their teachers for guidance as they choreographed their respective routines for the End of Year Celebration. In the Grade 1-2 class, the students worked independently and teachers circulated the classroom to provide assistance to students that needed help. During the rock painting activity, the grade 3-4 teacher continued to offer students guidance and encouragement about their creativity while they completed their rock painting projects. After completing their homework, the LINK Leaders group engaged in a card game with each other and their Intern Coordinator and enjoyed other unstructured social activities.

Utilization of Resources

The resources available to the program are well utilized. Classrooms and outdoor spaces served as meeting spaces for academics and enrichments. The program provided a vast array of resources for student use including whiteboards, craft supplies (e.g., rocks, paint, and paint brushes), educational toys, group games (e.g., decks of cards), individual desks, building supplies, handouts, computers, and books.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities



- The program has maintained a high level of program participation, with 96% of enrolled students attending 30 days or more in year two, and 100% of enrollees being regular attendees in year three. The program saw a 49% relative increase in its regular attendees since year one, which shows significant progress.
- Throughout the program cycle, VLP has consistently met its milestones for six out of nine (67%) of the assessed indicators.

Challenges

- The program struggled to collect data for all participants across indicators, which made it difficult to produce an analysis wholly representative of the students in the program.
- Given that VLP Is not the only afterschool program available to the students it serves, it is challenging to retain regular attendees throughout all three years of the program cycle for a meaningful comparative analysis of entire cycle participants.
- Due to competition with other afterschool programs and personal circumstances experienced by students, the program experienced a significant attrition rate in the final year of the program cycle.

Recommendations

+ Track and evaluate students in the LINK Leaders School Year program more closely to ensure that progress toward indicators is assessed more accurately and reflects the experiences of all students served.
+ Give more attention to fulfilling performance measure outcomes among the LINK Leaders School Year program (e.g., service learning, academic and life goal creation and fulfillment) to ensure all cycle goals are achieved.
+ Consider creating an exit survey for families to complete when withdrawing from the program. This may help the program gather constructive feedback to reduce its attrition rate in the coming years.