Achievement at the Village Learning Place

Public School Opportunities Enhancement Program (PSOEP) Summer Evaluation Report 2024: Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) Summer and LINK Leaders Summer



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"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."

– Robert Collier

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Acknowledgments

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

Acronyms

PSOEP: Public School Opportunities Enhancement Program
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) Summer and LINK Leaders Summer are supported by the Public School Opportunities Enhancement Program (PSOEP) grant and provide a summer enrichment program at the Village Learning Place (VLP). VLP established five objectives relevant to the needs of the community focusing on the prevention of summer learning loss, character education, and family support.

Village Learning Place engaged Dr. Amy Desai Graham to conduct an assessment of the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer programs. This report summarizes results from the summer of the 16th year of program operation, summer 2024. The evaluator was provided self-report data from the program as well as access to a variety of data on LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer students.

During the four-year cycle, the program seeks to document academic achievement via demonstrated improvements in math and reading/ELA (English language arts), teacher-reported engagement in learning, demonstrated problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, events for caregivers with educational components, and improved assessments of program teachers. Of 57 students who enrolled in the LINK Summer program, 52 were tracked for detailed outcomes and attended the program for more than 20 days during the school year. A total of 26 participants in the LINK Leaders Summer program were also tracked for progress toward milestones. In the third year of the four-year funding cycle, VLP successfully met six of its nine indicators for the year; the remaining three indicators did not apply to summer programming.

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

Table 1. Program Indicators and Results Summer 2024

Performance Indicators	Year 3 Result
Indicator 1: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 1–5 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.	✓ Milestone met
Indicator 2: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 6-12 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.	✓ Milestone met
Indicator 3: By August 2024, 60% of youth in grades 1–12 participating in PSOEP during the summer who had a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year, will demonstrate an improved attendance rate in the current school year.	Not applicable
Indicator 4: By August 2024, (a) 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts on state assessments. (b) 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in math on state assessments.	Not applicable
Indicator 5: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts and math.	✓ Milestone met for ELA and math
Indicator 6: By August 2024, 100% of events offered to caregivers will have educational components incorporated into presentations and assessed by participants.	✓ Milestone met
Indicator 7: By August 2024, 60% of students grades 1 through 12 attending PSOEP programming during the summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year.	Not applicable
Indicator 8: By August 2024, 60% of students grades K through 12th attending PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills.	✓ Milestone met
Indicator 9: By August 2024, 80% of program teachers during the summer will demonstrate an improvement in (or maintain a high score on) assessments based on observations.	✓ Milestone met

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

Opportunities

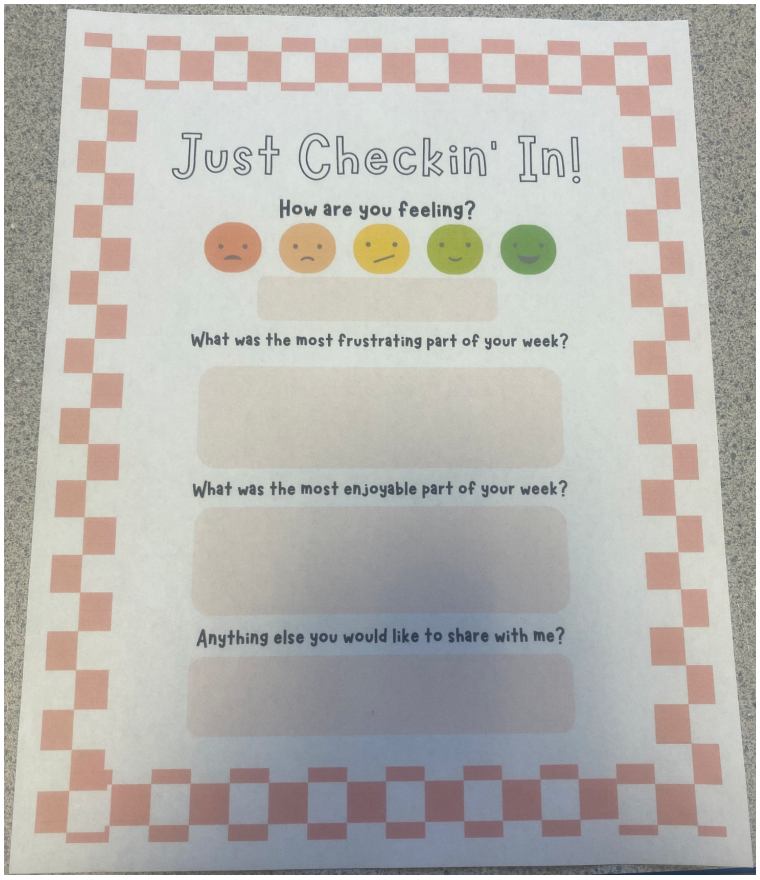
- The program maintained a very high level of engagement among Grade 1-6 students in the LINK Summer Program (91%). Despite the less structured nature of the LINK Leaders Summer Program, the program also maintained a high level of engagement among Grade 7-12 students (87%).
- The program met all (100%) program milestones that applied to summer programming. The improvements across most performance indicators compared to last year signals notable improvements in program implementation and data collection efforts.

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.

Recommendations

+ Track and evaluate students in the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer programs more closely, especially regarding program assessments, to ensure that progress toward indicators is assessed more accurately and reflects the experiences of all students served.



LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer Evaluation Overview

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 2022-2025 summer cohort of the Public School Opportunities Enhancement Program (PSOEP) grant, a federally funded initiative managed at the state level through the Maryland State Department of Education. The funding supports VLP's ongoing summer enrichment program, Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK) Summer and LINK Leaders Summer.

Program Description

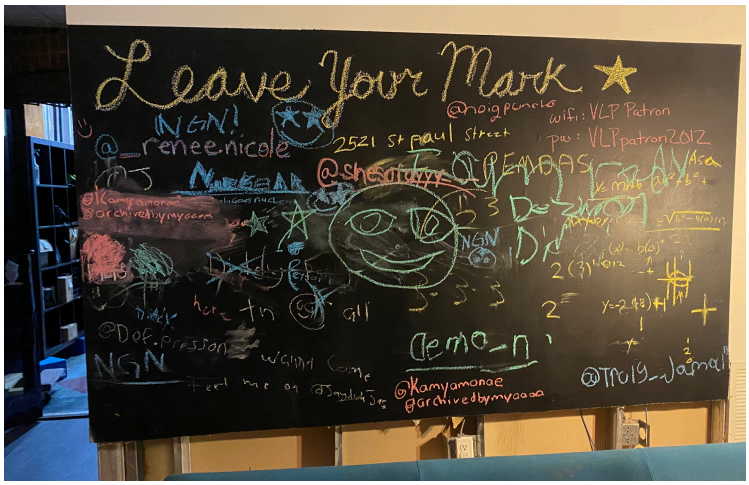
LINK Summer completed its sixteenth year of programming as a small community-based summer academic enrichment program serving pre-K to 6th-grade students from the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. The overall program is designed to prevent summer learning loss and to inspire creativity. In summer 2024, VLP continued in-person learning for both LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer.

LINK (Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids) Summer was held for a little over 5 weeks from July 1st through August 9th from 9 am to 4 pm for grades pre-K to 6th. 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 clay sculpting, mindfulness, fun fitness, visual art, theater, poetry, gardening, technology, etc. Learning was extended outside of the classroom into their garden, on community walks, and during Friday field trips. Students and program staff attended field trips to various sites including state parks and museums. 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. The program hosted a Family Breakfast mid-summer, a Summer Family Fun Night, and an End of Summer Celebration.

LINK Leaders Summer was held for about 5 weeks from July 1st through August 9th on Mondays through Thursdays at Village Learning Place, where Leaders participated in the program's updated curriculum including a focus on career and college planning, financial education, entrepreneurship, service-learning, enrichments, and movement time outdoors. Enrichments include a variety of activities such as art, STEM activities, cooking, athletics/dance/yoga, graphic arts, photography, etc. Fridays were reserved for field trips including the beach, college visits, business tours (to learn about career options), and sites throughout Baltimore to learn about its history.

Evaluation Overview

Dr. Amy Desai Graham and her team were engaged to assess descriptive goals and outcomes to satisfy external evaluation requirements during the third year of the current four-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 Indicators

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) identified performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the PSOEP grant programs. During the summer of 2024, the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer programs aimed to measure success according to the following indicators:

Indicator 1: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 1–5 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.

Indicator 2: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 6-12 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.

Indicator 3: By August 2024, 60% of youth in grades 1–12 participating in PSOEP during the summer who had a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year, will demonstrate an improved attendance rate in the current school year.

Indicator 4: By August 2024,

a. 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts on state assessments.
b. 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in math on state assessments.

Indicator 5: By August 2024, 60% of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts and math.

Indicator 6: By August 2024, 100% of events offered to caregivers will have educational components incorporated into presentations and assessed by participants.

Indicator 7: By August 2024, 60% of students grades 1 through 12 attending PSOEP programming during the summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year.

Indicator 8: By August 2024, 60% of students grades K through 12th attending PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills.

Indicator 9: By August 2024, 80% of program teachers during the summer will demonstrate an improvement in (or maintain a high score on) assessments based on observations.

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 PSOEP grant programs.

1) To what extent did students demonstrate improvement in school engagement?
    - See the summary of results for Indicators 1-3 on page 13 and Tables 4 and 5.

2) To what extent was academic success achieved for all students?
    - See the summary of results for Indicators 4 and 5 on page 14 and Table 6.

3) To what extent was the program able to engage and support caregivers in educational development?
    - See the summary of results for Indicator 6 on page 15 and Table 7.

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 the summary of results for Indicators 7 and 8 on page 16 and Table 8.

5) To what extent did program staff improve (or maintain high levels) of effectiveness?
    - See the summary of results for Indicator 9 on page 16-17 and Table 9

6) To what extent was the program implemented as designed?
    - See results in the Program Quality section on pages 17-21, which summarizes the findings from the site visit conducted during Summer 2024.

Evaluation Design & Methods

Dr. Amy Desai Graham was selected as the external evaluator for LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer in May 2023 for the four-year funding cycle (2022-2025). The evaluation plan was designed to help VLP report program progress accurately to fulfill the PSOEP funding requirements.



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 one occasion in the summer 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 performance indicators.

Evaluation Results — Findings

Participants

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 20 days or more). Table 2a presents the data for LINK Summer program (grades preK-6th) participation based on a number of days in the program. During summer 2024, 57 students enrolled in and attended at least one day of LINK Summer programming. A total of 91% of program participants were regular attendees in Summer 2024. Compared to last year, there was an almost 10% relative increase in the proportion of students who attended 20 days or more and qualified as regular attendees.

Table 2a. LINK Summer 2024 Program Participation

Program Participation			
Days in Program		# Students	% Students
	Less than 20 days	5	9%
	20 Days or more	52	91%
Program Attrition Rate			
	Withdrawals	3	5%

Table 2b presents the data for LINK Leaders Summer program (grades 7-12th) participation. Of 30 students enrolled in LINK Leaders Summer, 26 students attended 20 or more days and qualified as regularly attending participants.

Table 2b. LINK Leaders Summer 2024 Program Participation

Program Participation			
Days in Program		# Students	% Students
	Less than 20 days	4	13%
	20 Days or more	26	87%
Program Attrition Rate			
	Withdrawals	0	0%

Table 3a presents detailed data concerning the LINK Summer participant demographics. Among enrolled participants, 8% have special educational requirements. About 55% of enrolled participants were female. The majority of participants identified as Black or African American.

Table 3a. LINK Summer 2024 Demographic Information

Demographics	Enrolled Program Participants	Attended 20 Days or More
	N=60	N=52
	(%)	(%)
Descriptive Information		
English Language Learners	0%	0%
Special Educational Requirements	8%	8%
Grade Level		
Pre-K	10%	12%
K	8%	8%
1st	7%	8%
2nd	9%	10%
3rd	7%	6%
4th	9%	9%
5th	9%	8%
6th	9%	6%
Gender		
Female	55%	54%
Male	45%	46%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:		
Black or African American	58%	56%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	5%	6%
Other	12%	12%
White	25%	27%

Table 3b presents detailed data concerning the LINK Leaders Summer participant demographics. Among enrolled participants, 13% have special educational requirements. About 57% of enrolled program participants were female. The majority of participants identified as Black or African American.

Table 3b. LINK Leaders Summer 2024 Demographic Information

Demographics	Enrolled Program Participants	Attended 20 Days or More
	N=30	N=26
	(%)	(%)
Descriptive Information		
English Language Learners	0%	0%
Special Educational Requirements	13%	12%
Grade Level		
7th	23%	27%
8th	37%	35%
9th	30%	31%
10th	7%	8%
11th	3%	0%
12th	0%	0%
Gender		
Female	57%	58%
Male	43%	42%
Race/Ethnicity - Identify as:		
Black or African American	93%	92%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	3%	4%
Other	3%	4%

Results by Evaluation Question

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

Table 4. Summary of Student Engagement for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
1	By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 1–5 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.	✓ **80%** of Grade 1-5 students demonstrated growth in teacher-reported engagement in learning.
2	By August 2024, 60% of students in grades 6-12 participating in PSOEP programming in the summer will demonstrate an improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning.	✓ **97%** of Grade 7-11 students demonstrated improvement in teacher-reported engagement in learning. Data is **unavailable** for Grade 6 students.

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

To determine progress toward student engagement in learning milestones, program teachers assessed each student at the end of summer programming. The program met the milestone for both Grade 1-5 and Grade 7-11 students, with 80% and 97% demonstrating improvements in teacher-reported engagement in learning, respectively. Notably, data was not collected for Grade 6 students, so their improvements are undetermined. The program also did not have 12th graders enrolled this summer. Table 4 provides the indicator and year three results.

Table 5. Summary of School Attendance for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
3	By August 2024, 60% of youth in grades 1–12 participating in PSOEP during the summer who had a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year, will demonstrate an improved attendance rate in the current school year.	**Not applicable** for summer programming.

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

The assessment of school-day attendance rate is not applicable to summer programming. Further, school-based data is not available for students in summer programming. Table 5 provides the indicator and year three results.

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

Table 6. Summary of Academic Achievements for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
4	By August 2024, a. 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts on state assessments. b. 60% of students in grades 4-8 participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in math on state assessments.	**Not applicable** for summer programming.
5	By August 2024, 60% of students in grades K-3rd and/or 9-12th participating in PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate growth in reading/language arts and math.	✓ **83%** of assessed Grade 9-11 students demonstrated growth in ELA. ✓ **100%** of assessed Grade 9-11 students demonstrated growth in math. Data is **unavailable** for Grades K-3.

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

Assessment of academic achievement in program students is determined by state assessments and program assessments. State assessments did not apply to summer programming; therefore, they were not obtained. Pre- and post-program assessments were administered for reading/language arts (STAR Early Literacy) and math (STAR Math). This summer the program hired a new staff member to conduct program assessments. However, despite this increase in program capacity, data remains unavailable for Grade K-3 students, thus their progress toward math and ELA improvements remains undetermined. A total of 12 Grade 9-11 students were assessed for outcomes in math and ELA. Of these 12 students, 10 demonstrated growth in ELA and all 12 demonstrated growth in math. As a result, the program met its milestone, with 83% and 100% of assessed Grade 9-11 students demonstrating growth in ELA and math, respectively. The program did not serve any 12th-grade students during Summer 2024. Table 6 provides the indicators and year three results.

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent was the program able to engage and support caregivers in educational development?

Table 7. Summary of Caregiver Engagement for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
6	By August 2024, 100% of events offered to caregivers will have educational components incorporated into presentations and assessed by participants.	✓ **100%** of events offered to caregivers had educational components and were assessed by participants.

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

During summer 2024, the program provided four different opportunities for family engagement: a Family Breakfast, serving as a chaperone, a Summer Family Fun Night, and the End of Summer Celebration event. The program's relationship with the families they serve is warm and open, and parents and caregivers provide feedback at all events (Table 7). While this year the program used informal methods to collect parent and caregiver feedback, the program intends to formalize engagement event feedback surveys in the coming year. The two family fun nights Village Learning Place hosted (i.e., the Summer Family Fun Night and the End of Summer Celebration) included games and activities for children and families along with the provision of a meal. The family breakfast event invited families to eat breakfast with their students, mingle with other families, and spend time with summer staff. When caregivers chaperone, they join the class for the field trip. This typically involves riding on the bus, escorting a small group of students around at the site of the field trip, and keeping kids safe and on schedule. All four events had participation from caregivers: 24 caregivers attended the family breakfast, 18 caregivers volunteered as chaperones, 38 caregivers attended the Summer Family Fun Night, and 35 caregivers attended the End of Summer Celebration. As a result, the caregiver engagement milestone was met. Table 7 provides the indicator and year three results.

Evaluation Question 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?

Table 8. Summary of Behavior and SEL Achievements for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
7	By August 2024, 60% of students grades 1 through 12 attending PSOEP programming during the summer will experience a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year.	**Not applicable** for summer programming.
8	By August 2024, 60% of students grades K through 12th attending PSOEP programming during the summer will demonstrate conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills.	✓ **81%** of assessed Grade K-11 students demonstrate conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills.

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

In-school suspensions did not apply to summer programming; therefore, data on this milestone was not obtained. Students in the LINK Summer program completed an End of Summer Survey in which they were asked to describe ways of solving a problem without fighting. Among the 63 students that were assessed, 51 students identified at least one problem-solving skill. As a result, 81% of assessed Grade K-11 students could provide a conflict resolution solution, exceeding the milestone for year three. Table 8 provides the indicator and year three results.

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent did program staff improve (or maintain high levels) of effectiveness?

Table 9. Summary of Teacher Achievements for Summer 2024

Indicator	Indicator Description	Year 3 Result
9	By August 2024, 80% of program teachers during the summer will demonstrate an improvement in (or maintain a high score on) assessments based on observations.	✓ **100%** of program teachers demonstrated improvements in assessments based on observations.

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

Program staff observed and assessed teachers during a lesson at the start and end of summer programming to determine improvements in teacher performance. Teachers were evaluated on their ability to help children connect the current activity to their prior knowledge, ensure materials for lesson activities were available for each student, engage all students in intentional reflection on what they have done, initiate opportunities for student feedback on activities, and clearly link activities to specific skill-building or learning objectives. The program met its

milestone, with all five (100%) program teachers demonstrating improvements in these observational assessments. Table 9 provides the indicator and year three results.

Evaluation Question 6: To what extent was the program implemented as designed?

Program Quality: Site Observations

Program quality was assessed using an in-person observation. The evaluation team was able to observe the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer programs on one occasion on July 15, 2024. The classes observed were Grade pre-K-K, Grade 1-2, Grade 3-4, Grade 5-6, and Leaders.

Facility

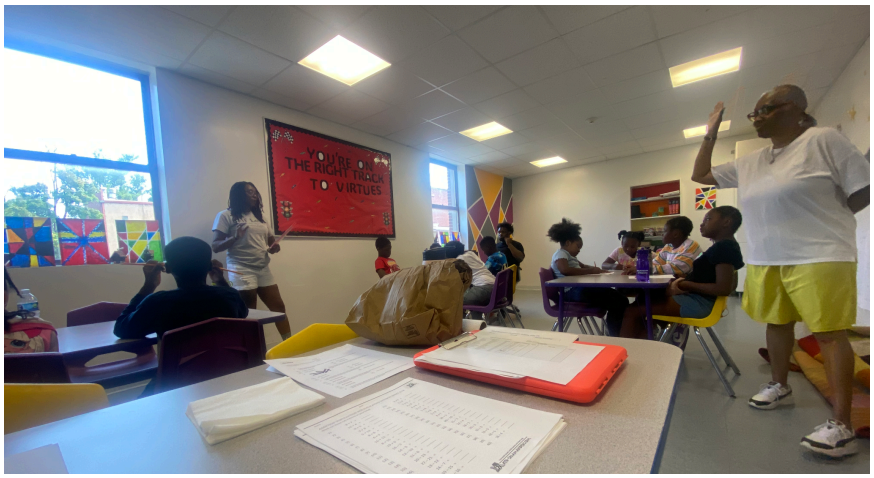
Programming is provided to students in two buildings during summer programming. Students in LINK Summer (grades preK-6th) meet in the VLP office building, directly across the street from the VLP Library. All classes had their own classroom for programming. The LINK Leaders program (grades 7th-12th) is housed in the VLP Library. Students have access to the main floor of the library and the basement.

Activities

The preK-K class was observed during the end of their Circle Time activity and the beginning of their indoor recess. At the end of Circle Time, the students sat quietly on the rug surrounding their teacher as she completed a lesson on national parks. Afterward, the students were released to recess, where they eagerly grabbed bins filled with toys, mostly building blocks, from the shelves to play with. The students immediately gathered around the toy bins together on the rug and began playing and building together without conflict. The students were also very eager to play with their instructors, who joined them on the rugs and built with them. The Grade 1-2 class was observed during their Circle Time activity, in which they discussed what elements they would change or add to the summer program if they could. The students sat together on the rug in the classroom around their teacher and waited eagerly to be called on and share their ideas one by one. The Grade 3-4 class was observed during their In My Skin enrichment activity. The students completed a worksheet titled "Just Checkin' In", which asked how the student felt that morning. Students had the option of five emotions to choose from at the top of the page (represented through emoticons), followed by a section to write about the most frustrating aspect of their week, the most enjoyable aspect, and anything else they would like to share. The students then engaged in a discussion about their feelings and how to express them constructively. After the Just Checkin' In activity, students moved into making gratitude lists. The Grade 5-6 class was



observed during their Circle Time activity. The students eagerly participated in an activity called Random Numbers. The students received a worksheet with the numbers 1-100 listed in 'random' order and had one minute to circle all the numbers in consecutive order. The students were instructed to attempt to identify the pattern being repeated. After one minute ended, each student shared the highest number they reached, and a student who successfully identified the pattern went around to his peers, explaining his observations. The LINK Leaders (grades 7-12) were given the option to participate in martial arts instructed by Charm City MMA or yoga instructed by Bold Yoga. The martial arts group participated in warm-up exercises including jumping jacks, 'champion push-ups' (students go down, say "I'm a champion!", and push themselves back up), and partnered sit-ups. The students also did a series of group activities such as various crawling exercises (e.g., crab crawls, army crawls, and bear crawls) and cartwheels before learning various self-defense techniques. The yoga group laid on yoga mats placed between the library bookshelves. Their instructor sat in the middle, guiding them through meditation and self-affirmations. After this meditation, the students regrouped and engaged in a discussion about the different chakras, how they affect their lives, and tools for dealing with difficult feelings (e.g., using nature to ground yourself when anxious, using self-affirmations to build self-esteem).



Classroom Management

Teachers used positive techniques to manage the classroom. Throughout the classes, it was clear that teachers upheld certain expectations that their students respectfully adhered to. For example, in the preK-K class students sat quietly and attentively during their Circle Time lesson and raised their hands patiently to share ideas. Similar behavior was observed in the Grade 3-4 classroom. In these classes, students did not engage in disruptive or distracting behaviors, so the teachers did not have to employ classroom management techniques to keep the class on task. In the Grade 1-2 class, students were asked to raise their hands and take turns speaking. In moments where the students became excitable and lost focus, the teacher employed multiple strategies to reign in the classroom, including ringing a bell, asking students to show her their 'quiet coyotes', and blowing a whistle as a last resort. After employing these strategies, students were able to complete their Circle Time discussion and transition into their indoor recess, where they worked together and independently. In the Grade 5-6 classroom, students raised their hands

and waited to be called on to respond to questions posed by their teacher. When the class began to get off track, the teacher employed strategies such as clapping and having the students respond with the number of times he clapped.

Safety and Security

Students appeared to be well-monitored and teachers kept all students in sight during transitions. The Grade preK-K, 1-2, and 3-4 classrooms had a teacher and a student assistant to supervise students at all times. The Grade 5-6 classroom had at least one instructor in the classroom at any given time. The proximity of the classrooms also allows teachers from other classes to monitor students in the hallway and quickly check in with students who may be distracted. The LINK Leaders group (grades 7-12) was also well supervised. The students were divided into two groups, and at least two instructors were with each group at any given time. The facilities housing the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders programs remained locked throughout the day, making them inaccessible to unapproved guests.

Student Engagement

Throughout all the classes observed, it was very clear that the students were highly engaged and excited about the activities they participated in. In the Grade preK-K class, students sat quietly on the carpet around their teacher as she completed the discussion on national parks. Afterward, these students were excited to share their ideas with their peers and their teachers. During their indoor recess, students played and worked together to build towers and other artifacts with the available materials. In the Grade 1-2 class, the teacher asked students during Circle Time to share their ideas about the question she posed. The students raised their hands to be called on and enthusiastically responded to the remarks of their peers. Throughout the conversation, it was clear that these students were often overcome by an uncontrollable desire to share their thoughts and ideas about the activity with their peers and teachers, sometimes forgetting to take turns speaking. In the Grade 3-4 class, students responded to their teacher's prompts by sharing their feelings and their experiences of frustration or excitement throughout the week with their peers. In the Grade 5-6 class, students raised their hands to respond to their teacher's questions and in some instances posed follow-up questions to their teacher. The students diligently completed their Random Numbers activity and were happy to receive insight from their peers to reveal the pattern in the worksheet. In the LINK Leaders groups, students followed instructions and offered words of encouragement to their peers. Students in the martial arts group eagerly completed exercises with their partners and held each other accountable for following the assigned activities through to completion. The students in the yoga



group engaged in a fruitful and positive conversation with their instructor about the chakras and coping techniques.

Teacher-Student Interaction

Teachers in both the academic and enrichment programming have clearly developed a positive rapport with students: calling students by name, giving positive reinforcement, and engaging with students in an excited and motivated manner. Students demonstrated a desire to interact with their teachers and clearly felt supported by their teachers and other staff. For example, in the Grade preK-K class, teachers talked to students about the artifacts they built and gave positive reinforcement. Students in this group were also excited to display their knowledge from previous lessons. For example, one student began singing the song "Fifty Nifty United States" they had learned during the previous weeks, and the instructor joined in, encouraging the student to continue reciting the states in alphabetical order. During the indoor recess, the teacher and classroom assistant sat with the students, helping them with their activities, and offered words of encouragement to students excited to show them their work. In the Grade 1-2 class, students had a clear admiration and desire to assist their teachers. For example, at the beginning of Circle Time, the teacher remarked on how the classroom library was disorderly. Two students immediately got up and began cleaning/picking up the books without being asked, and the teacher thanked them for this. Later in their discussion about things they would change or add to the program, one student commented "I would kick out all the adults so we can do whatever we want!" to which another student responded "Don't get rid of Ms. Bekki!" and hugged their teacher. Another student remarked that he would "add a one to five-minute break for the teachers," further displaying the care the students have for their instructors. In the Grade 3-4 class, the teacher prompted students to share their feelings and encouraged quieter students to share their thoughts. The students openly shared their emotions with their teacher and shared experiences of negative emotions with their class. The teacher validated her students, making the room a safe place for emotional vulnerability. In the Grade 5-6 class, the teacher started the day by checking in with his students. As the class discussed current events, the teacher asked thought-provoking questions to make students think more deeply about the opinions and viewpoints they hold. The teacher also asked students for their feedback on things such as program field trips. The students were unafraid to be completely candid about their opinions, further displaying a deep comfort between students and instructors. During their



Circle Time activity, the teacher handed out worksheets and gave students step-by-step instructions as to how the activity should be completed. The students followed the instructions, and afterward one of their peers aided the class in identifying the pattern in the worksheet (as instructed by the teacher). The teacher offered words of encouragement to students who felt embarrassed about not getting as far in the activity as others. In the LINK Leaders groups, students were given instructions for how to do a certain activity, and instructors modeled these exercises to the students before they did them. Instructors also offered robust words of encouragement to students who raised their hands to share their ideas or felt uncertain about their ability to perform different activities. The LINK Leaders students were also often seen joking with their teachers and classmates, further suggesting a strong sense of comfort within their environment.

Utilization of Resources

The resources available to the program are well utilized. Classrooms served as meeting spaces for academics and enrichments and students also had access to the playground and garden. The program provided an array of resources for student use including worksheets, blocks and other toys, clay and crafting materials, books, education tools, exercise and yoga mats, individual desks, computers, and internet.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

Opportunities

- The program maintained a very high level of engagement among Grade 1-6 students in the LINK Summer Program (91%). Despite the less structured nature of the LINK Leaders Summer Program, the program also maintained a high level of engagement among Grade 7-12 students (87%).
- The program met all (100%) program milestones that applied to summer programming. The improvements across most performance indicators compared to last year signals notable improvements in program implementation and data collection efforts.

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.

Recommendations

+ Track and evaluate students in the LINK Summer and LINK Leaders Summer programs more closely, especially regarding program assessments, to ensure that progress toward indicators is assessed more accurately and reflects the experiences of all students served.