The Skill Development Program

- Aiming to support OPTIMAL learning and growth
- Sustaining an environment of mindful awareness and creativity
- Integrating skills, relationships and community

Proposal for Funding

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Project Abstract

Funding is sought to initiate and implement The Skill Development Program. This program, designed by Julie Geredien, is based on current research in the fields of Developmental Science and Arts Integration. Progress and outcomes will be analyzed and used to establish a stronger research base that will help to align educational practices with scientific findings on optimal human development. **The goal of the program is to develop and dynamically integrate skills involved in mindfulness, literacy, the arts, teaching and scientific accuracy.** Students in grades K-8 who live in the Robinwood Community and its vicinity may participate in the program. The Skill Development Program will be housed at the David H. Harris Community Center.

The program will be held 4 days a week. Students will be placed in one of two groups based on a combined consideration of biological age, present skill sets, and capacity for self-direction. There will be fifteen students in a group. Each group will meet twice a week.

The Primary Focus for Intervention :

- Establishing and sustaining *the highest quality learning environment* and *social and emotional interactions* for all participants to grow and thrive in.

Why has The Skill Development Program been created?

The Skill Development Program has emerged as an ethical response to the need for children to have a creative and mindful environment for their physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual growth to be valued and intentionally optimized.

When a child is deprived of the opportunity to develop skills required to express a talent or to integrate skills that allow for functional living, that child's most adaptive path of growth is thwarted. Storehouses of potential are submerged, and eventually the child will, to varying degrees, be numbed to the inner, life-affirming inclination towards health and intimacy. The perpetuation of these deficits in human development violates ethical codes of compassionate responsibility, threatens the moral fiber of a society and weakens the ability of its citizens to problem-solve and to seek excellence, beauty and efficiency in their work.

The complexity of our planet's problems and the need to integrate global and ecological awareness into our thinking requires that human beings apply the highest levels of critical thinking, research and compassion when designing educational opportunities for children. Helping a child to gain proficiency in isolated skill sets is no longer morally sufficient. *A range of inter-coordinated skills will need to be applied to generate the inter-disciplinary thinking that can encompass real-world problems. Skills of self-regulation and reflection need to be integrated with all other skills so that children are capable of their own independent investigation of truth.* **Commitment to optimal human development must be our goal, not only for the sake of the individual, but for the sake of our whole social body**.

The Skill Development Program was created to meet the need for children to experience an optimal learning environment and an integrative approach to developing complex systems of skills, as well as flexible access to the states of creativity and mindfulness.

How do the social sciences inform the design of The Skill Development Program?

Because our skills evolve through social interactions in the larger world, they are shaped by cultural conditioning and mostly unstated codes of behavior.

Due to the rigidity of many cultural norms and the mechanisms perpetuating institutional racism, classism and sexism, skill development in mainstream educational settings can feel disjointed and disassociated from a student's flexible, neurological intelligence, especially if that student self-identifies outside of the dominant culture. A separate set of adaptive 'underground' skills often emerges for a child's social and emotional survival, but these skills most often remain unacknowledged, blocking the process of holistic, individual development.

For example, students may develop heightened skills of empathy, inferential reasoning, oral timing, or physical movement in response to socially-constructed environments that insist upon linearity and adherence to the constraints of standardized form, and disallow nuanced states of interpersonal attunement and more holistic and process-oriented constructions of knowledge.

By focusing on ecology—the principles of environmental design, the balance of fluid and hierarchical teacher-student relationships, and the quality of interactions and intrapersonal communication—prior societal constraints affecting the student's development are loosened. ***When the student is further assisted in gaining the skills of self-aware reflection and mindfulness, a felt-experience of personal authority can be established in relation to his or her own learning.*** A new recognition of stability and interdependence will help to create a social framework from which to understand the ecological principle of sustainable growth. Experiencing sustainability in a living system allows biological needs for safety and survival to be met on a social and emotional level, and helps to eradicate inner fear-based barriers to achievement.

Related Concepts from Current Educational Research

Arts Integration- Integrative approaches to learning involve applying a wider array of thinking dispositions and mental processes to problem-solving. (*Research from Project Zero at Harvard University)* They also require appreciation of how skills involve whole systems of functioning, and how they develop through increasingly complex inter-participation with each other. For example, reading comprehension can be enhanced when the perceptual systems required for active mental visualization are activated. These same visualization skills can be applied to improve creative writing and to hold narrative structure in the process of oral storytelling. When systems involved in empathy, such as mirror neuron networks, are activated in role-play or in helping another student to read, the oral skills of speaking and listening can be developed and refined so that they are flexible enough to be functional in a much wider range of contexts. **When students integrate literacy skills with systems involved in building the skills required for mindfulness, emotional intelligence, teaching, artistic expression, and following written procedures, they are able to strengthen specific literacy skill sets as well as to develop more complex, integrated skills that have greater creative and adaptive potential.** As the inter-coordination of systems increases, through continued practice and broader application of skills, the intelligence required to conceptualize inter-disciplinary principles and theories emerges. The arts integration model for learning is therefore a very powerful tool to assist in brain development and synergistic thinking processes. *(dynamic systems theory, research in the field of developmental science -Kurt Fischer, Harvard University)*

Emotions and Learning- Emotional organization affects skill development and learning. **Emotions shape skill growth in the moment of learning and repeated emotions over time shape developmental pathways.** Positive, pro-social emotions, such as curiosity, anticipation, respect, joy and safety bias a student towards work and effort. In conventional school settings emotional life is often suppressed rather than recognized as inherent to the growth process and organization of skills and behavior. **In optimal environments there is careful focus on emotions as the underlying most important factor in shaping learning. Emotions are therefore analyzed and cultivated.** Students who acquire a foundation of knowledge about the biology of emotions, learn how to observe and name emotional states, how to narrate the development of their emotional thoughts and how to apply self-awareness in guiding choices for emotional well-being, will have a valuable skill set and information base to support their life-long development. (*Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and Antonio Damasio at University of Southern California Brain and Creativity Institute*)

General Background Information on Robinwood Public Housing and Its History of Outreach Programs:

Robinwood Public Housing is located on Tyler Avenue off of Forest Drive in Annapolis. It is managed by the Public Housing Authority of Annapolis, which is currently undergoing sizable financial cuts. All residents are living below the poverty line. **This community is among the poorest in the state of Maryland and, more notably, one of the most underserved**. The Head Start program held in the Robinwood Community Center lost funding and was terminated approximately six years ago and no similar government-funded early childhood, literacy, or parent training programs have taken its place since that time.

Without donated volunteer and monetary support from the larger community, it is not possible to implement organized programs in Robinwood that support human development. Below are listed entirely volunteer-based programs that have been successful in serving the K-8 population. All of the programs have been initiated and coordinated by Julie Geredien except for the Homework Help Program, which was established by Chris Wooleyhand, principal of Hillsmere at that time.

- ✓ Hillsmere Homework Help Program- 2006-2009
- ✓ The Start the Adventure in Reading Program (STAIR)- 2009-present
- ✓ Kids Help Kids and Reader's Theater Club--Summer 2012
- ✓ Rumpus in the Rainforest Theater Club-- Summer 2011
- ✓ Cooking and Nutrition Club-- Summer 2010

Upcoming programs for Summer 2013:

- ✓ Creating a Learning Environment- (grant $2,138- Unitarian Universalist Endowment Board)- students will apply math skills and principles of design in creating a new learning environment to transform the back room space of the Recreation Center that has been uncared for since it was left abandoned when the Head Start Program lost its funding approx. 7 years ago. A Design Council will learn the principles and elements of design, reflect upon the moral values aligned with the learning environment and apply conceptual levels of understanding in designing the new room.

- ✓ Educational Software- (grant $2, 735- Northrop Grumman) students will work progressively through levels of individualized educational software programs: Ticket to Read, Vocab Journeys, VMath. Progress and achievement will be monitored and acknowledged.

Evidence Supporting the Need for The Skill Development Program

A. Social Justice Issues Relevant to The Skill Development Program

- Of the over 100 children who live in Robinwood Public Housing, **all are living below the poverty level and depend on Free and Reduced Meals.**

- **no public money is currently available for on-site educational programs for residents** and The Head Start program in the community center has been defunct for over 6 years.

- Children in Robinwood also **do not benefit from the resources made available through Title 1 Public School funding**. Because of the larger affluent population that constitutes the student body of Hillsmere Elementary, the school does not qualify for the additional government aid used to bolster resources and academic supports for children in poverty. These supports include increased teacher-to-student ratios in the classroom, more enrichment and intervention programs, and after-school access to educational software.

- Many parents in this community **do not have regular access to automobile transportation** and this, in conjunction with severely limited financial resources, **limits opportunities for students to gain access to teacher and parent sponsored afterschool programs** that have been offered at Hillsmere such as the Nature Club, Drama Club or the Running Club. Students who live in Robinwood also **do not benefit from paid, private enrichment activities** that develop a greater range of skills in their more affluent peers, such as afterschool music classes, Tae-Kwon-Do lessons, or summer immersion programs in nature or the arts.

- In addition to the facts pointing to economic disparities that are affecting human development, there are **evidences of racial inequalities**. The Robinwood community **exists on a dead-end road, effectively a segregated ghetto with an entirely black population, except for an extremely small minority, which is white. The sector of affluent children in Hillsmere is conversely almost entirely white.**

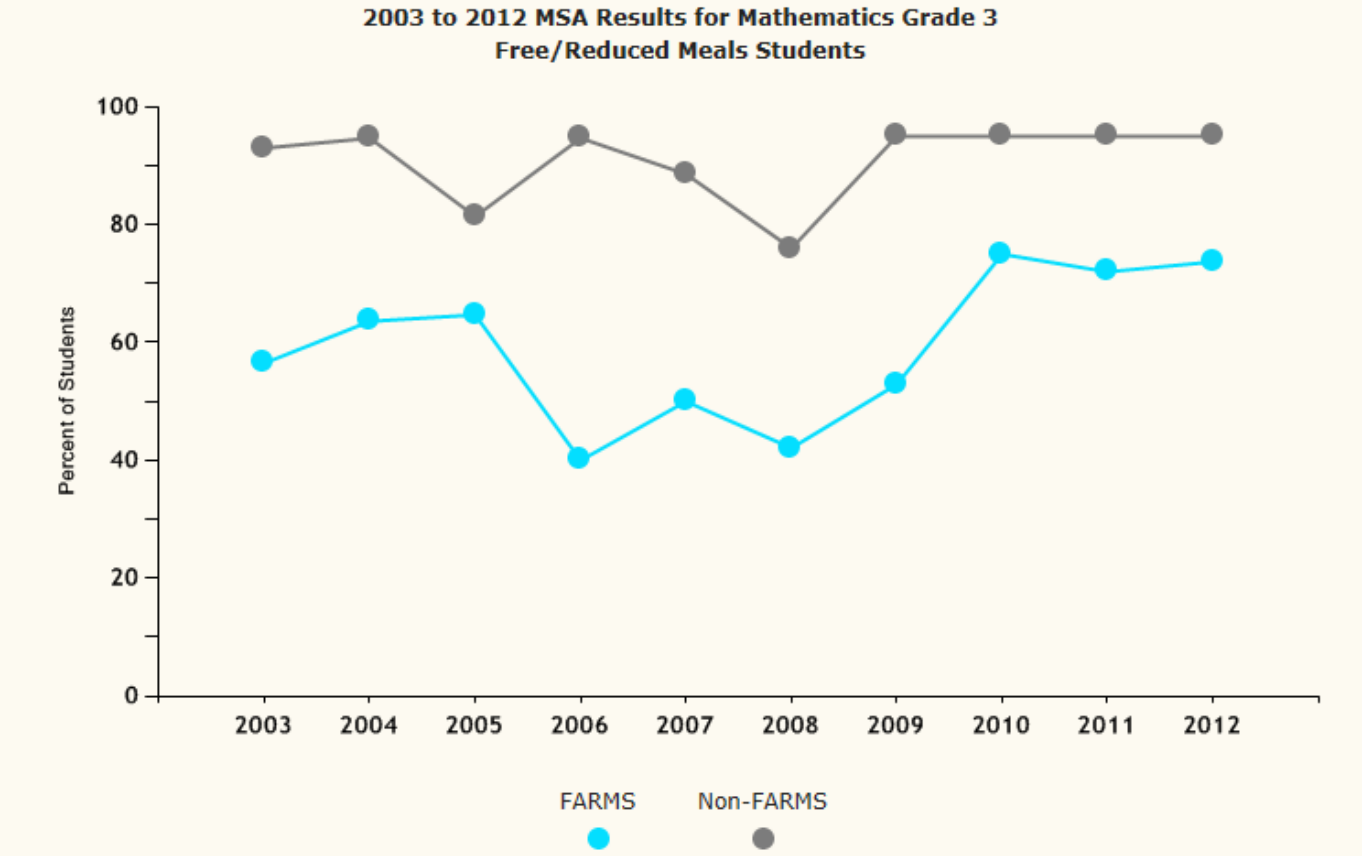
- **Problems arising from societal neglect and poverty** afflict this community and seriously affect its children, including: **gun violence, physical violence, high school drop-out, the buying, selling and use of drugs, imprisonment and unplanned pregnancy**. These problems can only be addressed through education and community-building efforts.

B. Achievement Gap Issues Relevant to The Skill Development Program

The Skill Development Program is not a remediation program for at-risk students. Rather the program focuses on optimal growth, inviting complexity and advanced application of skills. In the school setting, the black FARMS population living in the Robinwood Community is averaging one to two report card letter grades behind their peers, and one proficiency level below them on state tests. When students are placed in lower-performing homogenized clusters they may give up on higher expectations for themselves, accepting their level of skill, discipline and knowledge, unaware of the possibility for optimal growth.

Disparities in achievement between non-FARMS white students and FARMS black students, (those students living in the Robinwood community,) are evidenced in the Maryland State Assessments scores from 2009 through 2012. While many students living in Robinwood are achieving Proficient scores on this standardized test, they are not scoring in the same Advanced Proficient range as their white, non-FARMS peers. **The divide between Proficient and Advanced on test scores underscores the need for enrichment programs that** not only help to boost test scores, but more importantly, **encourage and challenge students to engage with their own intelligence and to realize their capacity for advanced learning and optimal human development.**

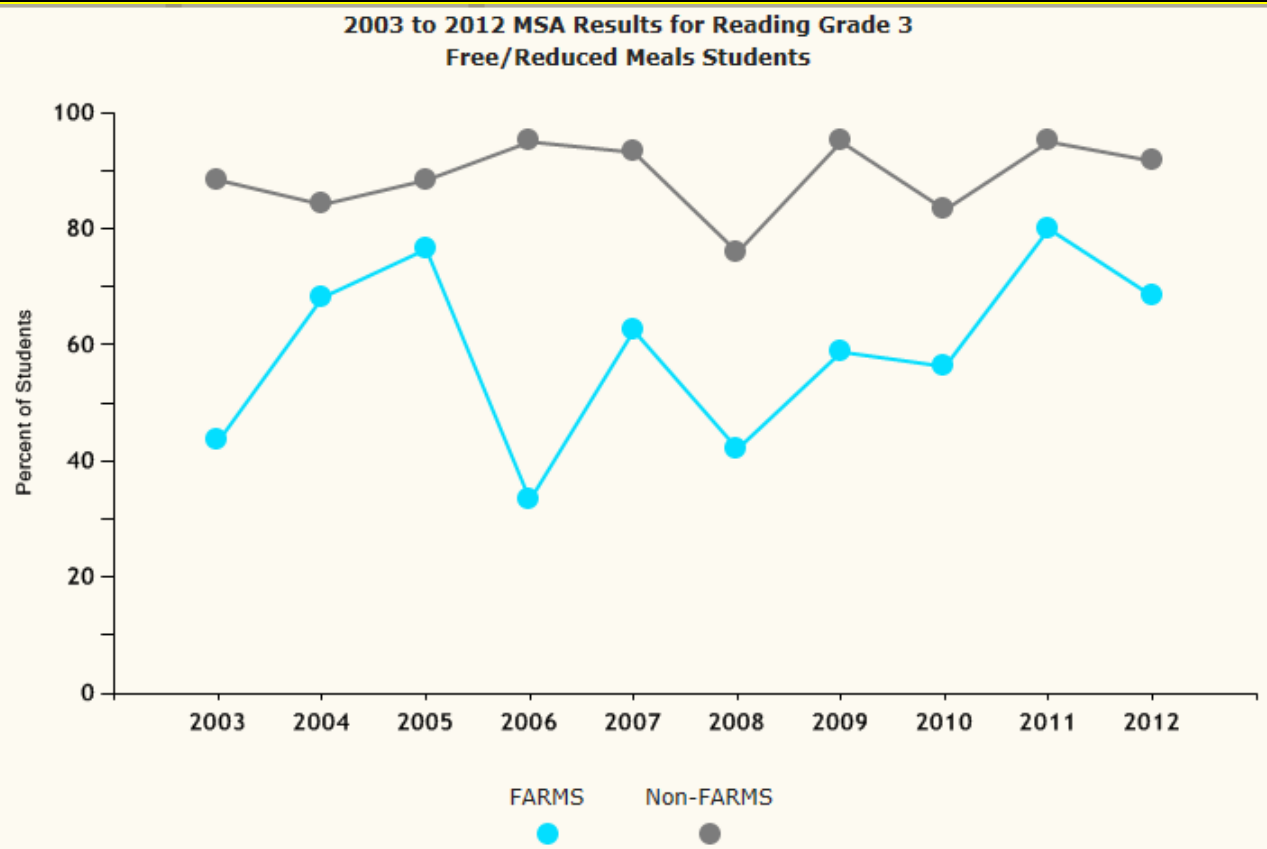
Comparison of 3rd Grade MSA Math--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students



2003 to 2012 MSA Results for Mathematics Grade 3 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	73.7	14/19
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2011		
FARMS	72.0	18/25
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2010		
FARMS	75.0	12/16
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2009		
FARMS	52.9	9/17
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*

Comparison of 3rd Grade MSA Reading --FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students

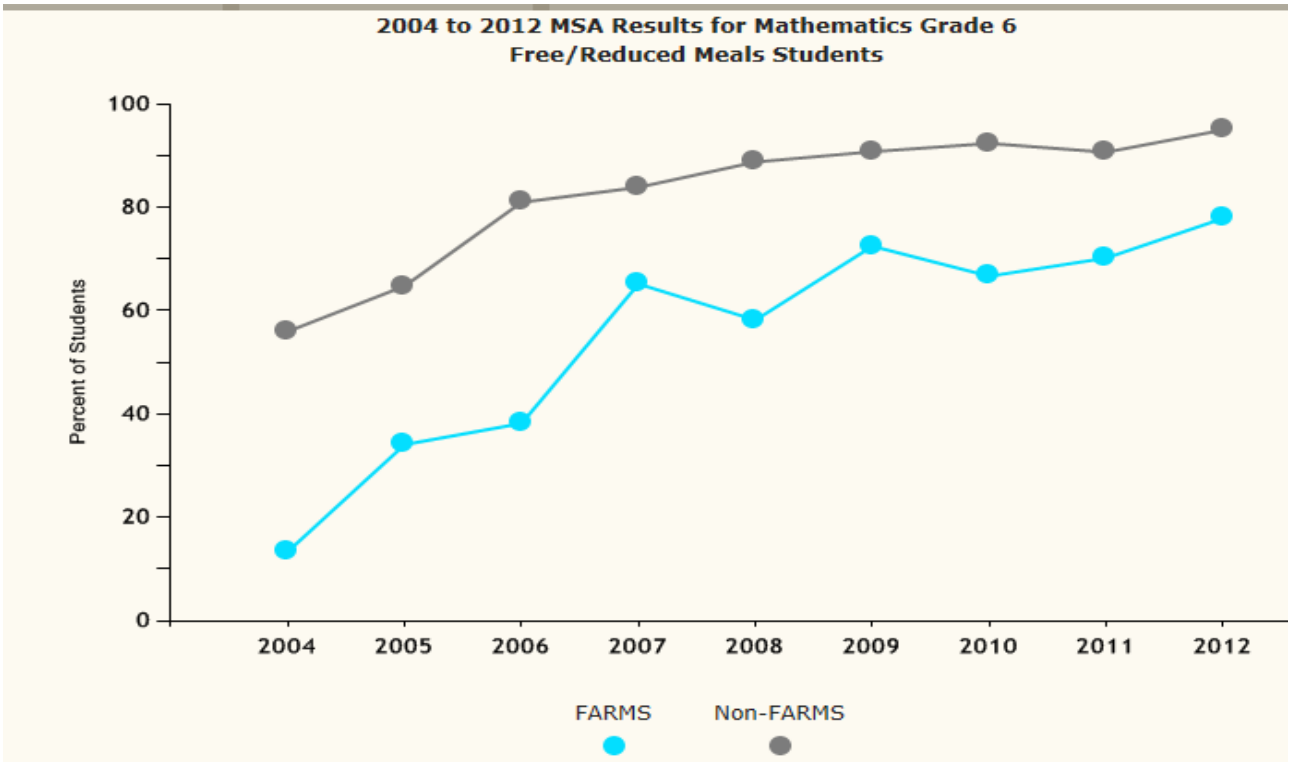


2003 to 2012 MSA Results for Reading Grade 3 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »

	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	68.4	13/19
Non-FARMS	91.7	44/48
2011		
FARMS	80.0	20/25
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2010		
FARMS	56.3	9/16
Non-FARMS	83.3	35/42
2009		
FARMS	58.8	10/17
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*

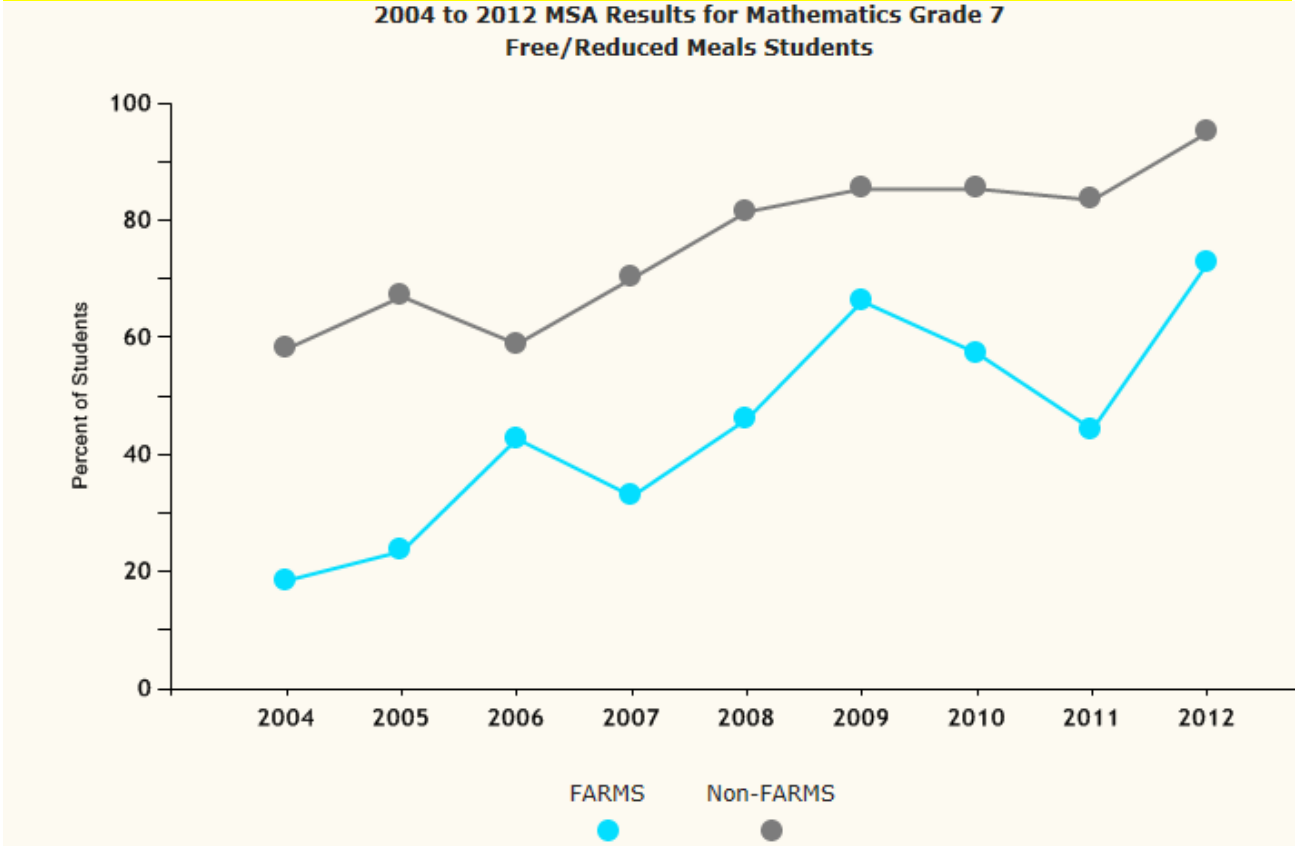
Comparison of 6th Grade MSA Math--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students



2004 to 2012 MSA Results for Mathematics Grade 6 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	77.9	81/104
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2011		
FARMS	70.2	80/114
Non-FARMS	90.7	88/97
2010		
FARMS	66.7	72/108
Non-FARMS	92.4	85/92
2009		
FARMS	72.5	58/80
Non-FARMS	90.8	89/98

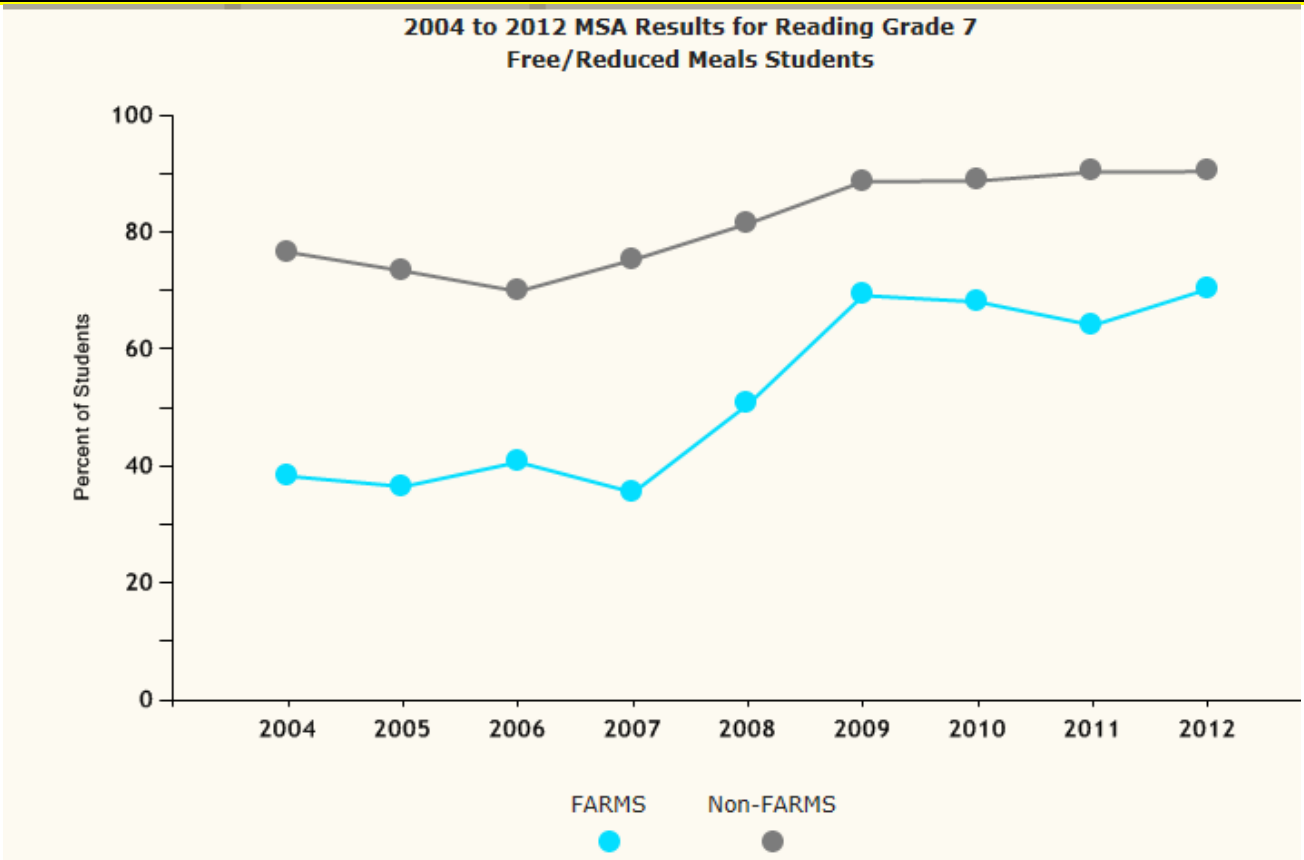
Comparison of 7rd Grade MSA Math--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students



2004 to 2012 MSA Results for Mathematics Grade 7 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	72.7	80/110
Non-FARMS	≥ 95.0	*
2011		
FARMS	44.3	47/106
Non-FARMS	83.5	86/103
2010		
FARMS	57.3	55/96
Non-FARMS	85.4	76/89
2009		
FARMS	66.2	43/65
Non-FARMS	85.4	82/96

Comparison of 7th Grade MSA Reading--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students

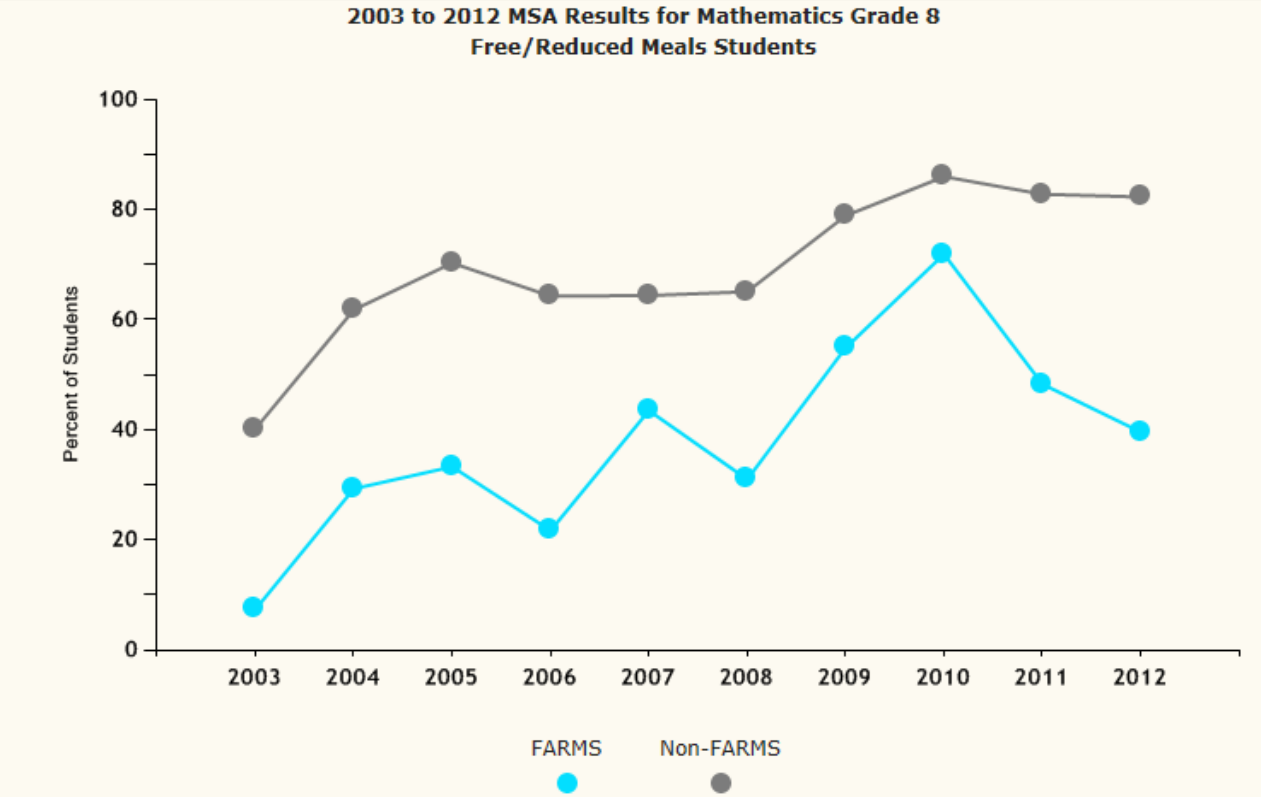


2004 to 2012 MSA Results for Reading Grade 7 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »

	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	70.3	78/111
Non-FARMS	90.4	85/94
2011		
FARMS	64.1	66/103
Non-FARMS	90.3	93/103
2010		
FARMS	68.1	64/94
Non-FARMS	88.8	79/89
2009		
FARMS	69.2	45/65
Non-FARMS	88.7	86/97

Comparison of 8th Grade MSA Math--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students

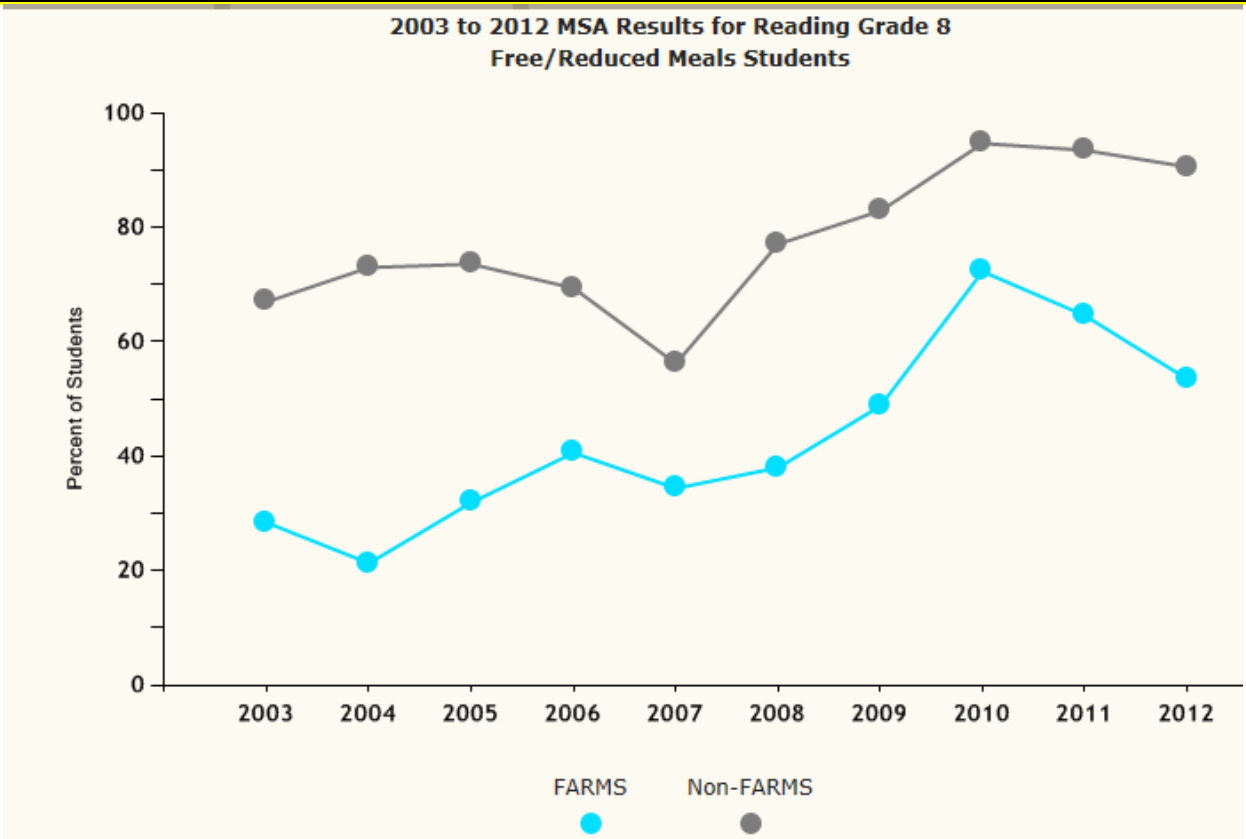


2003 to 2012 MSA Results for Mathematics Grade 8 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »

	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	39.6	40/101
Non-FARMS	82.3	79/96
2011		
FARMS	48.3	42/87
Non-FARMS	82.8	77/93
2010		
FARMS	71.9	46/64
Non-FARMS	86.0	80/93
2009		
FARMS	54.9	45/82
Non-FARMS	78.9	60/76

Comparison of 8th Grade MSA Reading--FARMS Black and Non-FARMS White Students



2003 to 2012 MSA Results for Reading Grade 8 | Free/Reduced Meals Students

Show # Descriptions »

	Advanced + Proficient %	Advanced + Proficient #
2012		
FARMS	53.5	53/99
Non-FARMS	90.6	87/96
2011		
FARMS	64.6	53/82
Non-FARMS	93.5	87/93
2010		
FARMS	72.3	47/65
Non-FARMS	94.7	89/94
2009		
FARMS	48.8	39/80
Non-FARMS	82.9	63/76

C. Community Integration Issues Relevant to The Skill Development Program

In addition to the physically- secluded design of this public housing community, the fear generated by **reports of the illegal buying and selling of drugs and sometimes deadly gun violence deters many members of the larger Annapolis community from engaging with Robinwood residents. The fact that there have been 8 suicide deaths in the past 2 years of residents from this community is an essentially ignored reality in the local and national mental health community.**

Although students who live in this development are in racially integrated classrooms at Hillsmere Elementary and Annapolis Middle School, sharp divisions remain within student interactions. For example, non-public housing elementary students rarely, if ever, invite public housing students to their homes for birthday parties or play dates. Evening events such as concerts, Math Night and Science Fair are disproportionately attended by non-public housing parents, with little to no concern by wealthier parents for supporting poorer students' attendance by inviting a child over afterschool and offering transportation home after the event, for example. **Close inter-racial friendships crossing the socio-economic divide are not actively encouraged and very rarely, if ever, emerge spontaneously within the culture of the school environment.**

In short, in the City of Annapolis **a communal sense of concern for the well-being and inclusion of children residing in Robinwood is not evident**. The county schools' and city and state government's lack of focused attention and material resources paid to the human development and empowerment of those living in poverty **has created a severe but disregarded social and cultural schism within the larger community, one that is representative of isolating divides taking place throughout our nation and world.**

The unconscious perpetuation of mechanisms of oppression, stemming from the same unexamined codes that enforced slavery, and from narrative structures and media images that biologically-reinforce fear and suspicion over reason, empathic connection and informed understanding, generates a numbing apathy within the broader community, and often a disempowering acceptance among those subjugated by these mechanisms. **The tolerance of severe disparities in the development of human potential preserves a state of imbalance that blocks the expression of vital levels of intelligence and**

prevents the complex integration of adaptive skills by those of lower socio-economic status.

When such a state of disunity or non-integration exists within a community it deprives its people of true social harmony. The formation of sincere relationships crossing social, economic, generational and cultural barriers is foremost in resolving problems of integration. As a community integrates and progresses towards social harmony, a deeper collective wisdom emerges and a stronger felt-sense of the worth of each individual is attained. The need to focus on individual optimal development is recognized as a requirement for collective health and advancement**.**

A four-day-a-week program would **bring at least 25 members of the larger community into the David J. Harris Center** where positive social-emotional relationships between volunteers, teachers, parents, recreation center staff and children would be purposefully nurtured. The Skill Development Program would also encourage additional students from outside of the Robinwood housing development to attend program sessions**. Bringing interested non-resident children into the center for classes has the potential to transform unspoken codes about the boundaries shaping students' social relationships and societal agreements about the conditions required for a sense of safety within a given environment**.

Work in Progress--Outcomes, Objectives and Measures of Success for The Skill Development Program organized by Julie Geredien, in need of collaborative review, research, consensus

Mindfulness Skills (Mind Up Curriculum)

Desired Outcome	Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives	Measures of Success
Increased knowledge and understanding of brain anatomy and function	TSW identify and define three parts of the brain: the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the prefrontal cortex (PFC).	TSW label the parts on a map. They will create a hand model of the brain and find the parts. They will point to the general regions by indicating on their skull. (*tutor observation, student work)*
Ability to analyze thoughts, feelings and behaviors of self and others in terms of brain region involvement	TSW analyze and reflect upon feelings, thoughts and actions in real life and by story characters to determine how the prefrontal cortex, amygdale and hippocampus are used to shape reactions, reflect on the past and future and to regulate present emotions.	TSW recall events from school, home and playground and to explain how their PFC functioned to help regulate their emotions and reactions in that circumstance (*filmed interview, observations from group discussion).* TSW write an original story in which a character struggles with fight or flight reactions but is able to reflect, to regulate emotions and to make positive decisions. (*assessed by student using rubric)* TSW participate in group discussions about how they and story characters access PFC

		choices. (*teacher observation*)
Improved impulse control	TSW will be able to identify impulsive behaviors and ways in which PFC awareness can help to inhibit them. They will create a personal chart of their own tendencies to impulsive behavior, a pro-con analysis of the behavior, and strategies using PFC thinking that they can apply as a counter-balance.	TSW demonstrate a consistent application of basic manners and social procedures including waiting for a turn, saying please, and raising one's hand in school, home and Skill Development Program. (*student reflection assessment*) TSW demonstrate improved wait-time and reduced movement during work sessions at the program and at school. (*teacher and volunteer observation sheet*)
Improved focused attention	TSW be able to define focused attention. They will be able to list the pros and cons of focused attention. They will be able to monitor and reflect upon their use of focused attention in a variety of situations.	TSW demonstrate improvement in time and caliber of focused attention (*tracking and observation sheets by teacher and tutor*) Students will compare and contrast their work habits when using focused attention and when not. Parents and teachers note specific areas of improvement. (*filmed interview, questionnaires*)

Access to a core mindfulness practice	TSW learn an exercise that combines listening and breathing to calm and focus their minds. They will discover the importance of practicing focusing exercises regularly.	TSW complete The Core Practice independently and lead a group of their peers in the practice. (*teacher observation, film*) They speak clearly about how the exercises are affecting their well-being and school habits. (*reflection during formal recorded interview*)
Metacognitive Skills		
Desired Outcome	**Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives**	**Measures of Success**
Increased capacity for mindful reflection	TSW be able to isolate specific emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and to think critically about their causes and effects. TSW be able to bring an awareness of the quality of their thinking into thoughtful decision-making and conclusion-drawing.	TSW write in journal about their thoughts and feelings, different points of view and their self-evaluations. They discuss these subjects with teachers, volunteers, and peers in group settings and one-to-one. *(student journals, teacher observation)*
Ability to generate questions about content and to question related lines of thinking	TSW be able to categorize types of questions using Costa's levels of questioning. TSW be able to ask questions requiring the integration of text, self and world connections.	TSW share appropriate level questions about a given subject when in group discussions and when teaching younger students. They generate and analyze their own questions during reflection periods. (*observations, filmed sessions)*

Ability to narrate thinking (to "think-aloud") processes that are usually unconscious and intuitive	TSW be able to share their comprehension of the narrative or factual information in a text by verbally explaining their inner meaning-making processes while they are reading.	TSW model independently a think aloud while reading a book aloud to fellow students. TSW identify key think-aloud phrases that the teacher models, such as 'this makes me remember… and helps me to infer that…" (*teacher observations of discussion, filmed sessions)*
Ability to evaluate critically one's own produced work and to make plans for improvement	TSW be able to use rubrics to guide self-assessment of work. TSW be able to use rubric and teacher and student feedback to complete written and oral reflections and plans for revisions and improvements	TSW complete rubrics and reflections. Specific signs of progress are evident between drafts and presentations of a product. (*student work*)
Emotional Intelligence Skills		
Desired Outcome	**Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives**	**Measures of Success**
Increased factual knowledge and understanding of emotions	TSW be able to define an emotion and to categorize emotions. Students will be able to identify moral and pro-social emotions	TSW name and describe emotions using thinking maps such as a tree map and bubble map. They will add to these maps as they read and perform stories throughout the year. (*student work*)
Improved self-awareness of emotions	TSW be able to identify their own emotions and those of characters in books and in their own creative writing.	TSW journal about their emotions during the school day and at home. TSW write plays that involve characters in strong

		emotional states. (*student work*)
Integrated understanding of how emotional states affect skill development	TSW be able to identify how different emotions help or hinder the learning process. They will be able to analyze how their own emotions toward their learning is affecting their progress.	TSW respond thoughtfully to questions about their emotional state before, during and after their work. They will participate in group discussions and tutor check-ins about the relationship between their current emotional state and their ability to develop their skills in that moment. (*tutor and coordinator monitor charts)*
Ability to define and recognize signs of learned helplessness and learned optimism	TSW be able to understand the gist of the concepts of learned helplessness and learned optimism, to define the terms and to correctly identify these mindsets in characters and in their own lives.	TSW define the terms and draw pictures to demonstrate their understanding. TSW consistently label these mindsets when they are observing character, self or peer behavior. (*student work evals, teacher observations*)
Ability to classify negative thoughts	TSW be able to identify types of negative thoughts such as overgeneralization and all or nothing thinking.	TSW correctly label their negative, limiting thoughts when they occur in group sessions. TSW keep a log with pictures of the most-recurring negative thoughts they encounter in themselves or others. (*journal and teacher-volunteer observation sheets)*

Ability to create and utilize personal affirmations to 'talk-back' to limiting thoughts and fear-based emotions	TSW be able to apply affirmations in a range of situations, including during skill development.	TSW apply positive affirmations as needed, with and without being coached to do so. They will create positive affirmations to display on our walls. (*student interviews, observations teachers and volunteer, parent feedback*)

Speaking and Listening Skills

Desired Outcome	Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives	Measures of Success

Interpretive and Expressive Skills

Creative Higher-Level Meaning-Making Skills

Desired Outcome	Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives	Measures of Success
Ability to identify morals and life lessons		
Ability to recognize		

and to create metaphors and similes		
Ability to assess the symbolic significance of an object, word or action.		
Ability to infer meaning of proverbs and idioms		
Ability to identify narrative structure within a story		
Ability to recognize similar themes and life lessons within stories and to create theme-based categorization systems for a range of stories, poems and plays from different cultures and time periods		
Ability to identify and evaluate turning points within a character's understanding of self or others.	TSW be able to define and recognize different types of internal and external conflicts that characters face. TSW be able to narrate a character's thinking as the character in conflict arrives at a new realization.	TSW highlight a character's turning point in thinking by performing a narration from the character's point of view, drawing a picture with a caption, or writing a poem about the realization. TSW discuss the inner thinking of characters

		during interviews. (*student work, filmed discussion)*
Writing Skills		
Desired Outcome	**Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives**	**Measures of Success**
Ability to edit text for grammar, punctuation and organizational structure.	TSW be able to mark up text with established editing signs. TSW be able to apply knowledge of grammar and paragraph separation when marking text for revisions.	TSW edit their own stories, poems and research papers, as well as the work of their classmates. They will create final copies of their work that are free from any error. (*student work*)
Ability to elaborate writing with details and examples.	TSW be able to identify and create sensory details that appeal to each one of the senses. They will be able to take a general statement and generate specific examples that support the statement.	TSW circle sensory details and supporting details in the poems and stories that they read. TSW write creatively and informatively on a range of topics including at least one example for every general statement and at least one detail for every description. (*student work*)
Ability to use thinking maps to organize ideas and knowledge	TSW be able to identify which thinking map is best to use when organizing information or ideas- sequence, compare and contrast, description, analogy, classification, brace map.	TSW create a range of large shared maps emerging from class discussion; these maps will be posted on walls. TSW create thinking maps independently. (*student work*)
Ability to evaluate, select and improve word choices	TSW be able to compare and contrast word choices in context, identifying which choice is more specific and best fits the tone of the writing. TSW be able to identify how the word choice affects	TSW create a word wall with descriptive word choices. TSW focus on improving word choices as part of their editing process when writing. TSW write original

	the formality and emotional impact of a text.	work with at least 5 high quality word choices. (*student work*)
Ability to write a cohesive paragraph to convey information	TSW be able to define the purpose and form of a paragraph. TSW be able to use templates to create well-structured paragraphs.	TSW edit writing to ensure proper indentation and content of a single paragraph. TSW write original paragraphs on non-fiction subject matter with or without help from a template. (*student work*)

Teaching Skills

Desired Outcome	**Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives**	**Measures of Success**
Ability to respect the level of learner and to provide developmentally appropriate instruction and support	TSW be able to identify ways in which their skills differ from the skills of their learners. TSW be able to modify their pace and language based on an understanding of the needs of their learner.	TSW help other students with lower skill attainment than them by explaining vocabulary words, giving helpful advice and addressing gaps in knowledge or understanding. (*teacher and volunteer observation)*
Ability to model beneficial behaviors and mindsets for learning	TSW be able to identify positive behaviors for learning such as using SLANT (sit up, lean forward, ask questions, nod head, take notes) and applying focused attention.	TSW demonstrate energized posture, positive facial expressions, expressivity and self-regulation when working with other students. (*student self-evaluation, teacher evaluation)*

Ability to communicate ideas clearly and to check for understanding frequently	TSW be able to explain content matter without use of distracting 'filler' words and off-topic digressions. TSW be able to express ideas in complete sentences and in the sequential order required for understanding. TSW be able to use questions, such as 'can you summarize what I just said?' 'what do you think I mean when I say…' to check if their learners have understood clearly.	TSW communicate effectively in front of their student groups of 2 or more to explain an idea or piece of information; when the listeners are questioned about the content they demonstrate understanding. TSW ask frequent questions according to prompts and suggestions they have been given by the supervising tutor. (*volunteer observation and filmed sessions*)
Ability both to affirm learner and to provide constructive feedback	TSW be able to apply specific praise to learners such as "I like the way you…" "When you…. it really helps you to…" and constructive feedback such as, "This is a good start! You can improve this part even more if you…"	TSW offer 3 to 5 affirmations and pieces of constructive feedback when assisting their younger partner student. (*student-self evaluation, teacher evaluation, filmed sessions)*
Ability to encourage and engage students in cooperative activities such as clean-up time and sharing resources	TSW be able to identify activities that require group cooperation and will be able to reason as to how the activity should be shared fairly. TSW be able to create a guiding script to use when directing classmates to complete a group activity.	TSW guide group cooperative activities such as clean-up and sharing resources successfully and without the intervention of adults. (*tutor observation, student self-reflection)*

Procedural Skills		
Desired Outcome	**Description of Specific, Measurable Objectives**	**Measures of Success**
Ability to follow directions in order to arrive at a specific outcome	TSW be able to identify each individual step in a procedure and to create a self-check system to be sure the procedure is followed in the correct sequence.	TSW follow exact procedures successfully to reach the expected outcome. Ex: for the lacto-fermentation of food and for producing bacterial cultures needed for yogurt. (*student and tutor assessment of successful ending product)*
Ability to follow a scientific procedure in order to test a hypothesis	TSW be able to follow their self-monitoring tools for following a procedure accurately and will be able to analyze the outcome of the procedure to determine if it matches their hypothesis. TSW be able to review their procedure to check for any inaccuracies that might have affected their result.	TSW verify or disclaim hypotheses based, in part, on the confirmed accuracy of their procedure-following skills. (*student post-reflection*)
Ability to recognize essential details in completing a procedure successfully	TSW be able to highlight key details involved in performing a procedure correctly. TSW be able to explain why that detail is important to accuracy.	TSW analyze procedures for different tasks and highlight important details. After completing the task TSW analyze how those important details affected the outcome. (*student work*)
Willingness to practice parts of a procedure in isolation	TSW be able to recognize steps in a procedure that may require aim, balance, fine motor skill, etc. and will	TSW demonstrate focused attention and positive mindsets while practicing individual parts

in order to achieve accuracy	practice those steps in isolation to prepare for the procedure.	of a procedure. (*student self-reflection, tutor observation)*
Ability to write detailed procedures for original recipes and for self-created science investigations.	TSW be able to create sequence flow maps to detail individual steps in a procedure and will create sub-boxes to describe details involved. TSW be able to use maps to create written procedures.	TSW complete their own detailed procedures and will have students attempt to follow the procedure to confirm if the procedure was written clearly. (*student maps and work, student reflection*)

Overview of Outcomes for Foundational Reading Skills

Phonological Awareness

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- identify and differentiate environmental sounds
- recognize rhyming words in spoken language
- understand the relationship between onset/rime in creating rhyming words
- demonstrate auditory discrimination to match rime/same beginning and ending sound
- demonstrate auditory discrimination of rimes/same ending sounds
- identify rhyme in poems and stories read aloud.
- repeat and produce rhyming words

Word Recognition

- Use a combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g. roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context
- Identify and know the meanings of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes

Fluency

- Adjust reading rate to purpose for reading.
- Engage in opportunities for daily independent reading of grade level text in order to build fluency.
- Demonstrate fluent reading in order to fully comprehend text by responding accurately

Vocabulary

- Identify clues within a sentence that help determine or clarify the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Access and connect prior knowledge and experiences to determine the meaning of words and phrases.
- Discuss words and word meanings daily as they are encountered in text, instruction, and conversation.
- Identify and explain purpose of glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital.
- Identify safe and unsafe online practices.
- Use the context in which words are used to choose among possible meanings.
- Strengthen writing by using reference material to revise for precise word choice.

Comprehension

Apply appropriate strategies **before reading, viewing, or listening to** a text:

- preview and survey the text
- access prior knowledge about the text
- formulate purpose-setting questions
- make predictions

Apply appropriate strategies to monitor understanding **when reading, viewing, or listening to** a text:

- reread as necessary
- determine main ideas of portions of the text
- periodically restate, retell, paraphrase, and/or summarize
- connect ideas within the text
- make, confirm, and/or modify questions, inferences, and predictions
- visualize

Demonstrate understanding, either orally or in writing, **after reading, viewing, or listening to** a text:

- determine and explain the main idea (explicit or inferred) of the text
- summarize the text
- identify what is directly stated in the text
- draw inferences and conclusions from the text
- confirm, refute, and/or make predictions about the text
- connect prior knowledge or experience to the text

Research Questions and Methodologies

Practice within the field of education should be indivisible from the most caring ethic of research, organized by deep moral concern for uncovering the specific ways in which the human learning process may positively affect environmental conditions for social body flourishing. Research in education should be guided by the most noble and high purposes of evolution: creative emergence of a natural, social order of world peace based on the attainment of conceptual, principled understanding within the individual and the felt, respectful consciousness of harmony across all beings of creation. Research should honor human dignity: the most elegant and sacred dimensions of the individual and the whole of the learning community will be the subject of study. Research should be guided by compassionate concern for well-being: the need to alleviate any potential unnecessary suffering, frustration, or limitation in the natural thriving development of a learner is the paramount goal. Gifts of inestimable utility and insight, which benefit all learners, are a natural offspring of this medically-inclined, interventionist focus of research.

1. Stability of Skills Across Contexts and Tasks

Guiding Questions: Why can a student with strong reading skills demonstrate understanding of the moral of a story when it is read orally in a positive environment, but not be able to articulate the message of that same story when reading it silently at school? Why can a student demonstrate focused attention and impulse control during one activity and not another? What challenges must students overcome in order to practice positive affirmation and self-talk in a context that may not be as nurturing to their emotional growth as the one in which this skill was first introduced?

Research Question: *What factors appear to affect the transfer of skills practiced in The Skill Development Program to other contexts and tasks? How can consciously strengthening a skill that is already demonstrated at a consistent level improve the development and inter-coordination of other weaker systems of skills?*

Background Information: A student is considered to have reached a new level of skill attainment when he or she is able to apply a skill, or system of skills, to different tasks and to demonstrate consistently a given skill in multiple contexts without scaffolding or support from a teacher or a form of technology. The high-support, enhanced learning environment of The Skill Development Program provides more intensive assistance for a student to practice new skills such as those of mindfulness, emotional awareness, creative higher-level thinking and speaking and listening. Researching a student's ability to demonstrate these new skills in other contexts, such as at home, on the

playground and in the school classroom provides important information about the student's level of development, the relative strength of one of their skill sets over another, **and also about unique elements within the environment of <u>The Skill Development Program</u> that are supporting and nurturing the growth of a fledgling skill.**

<u>Research Methodology</u>: The analysis of a range of different specific skills, and of a variety of different contexts in which these skills will be evaluated-- the program, home, school and playground settings—will necessitate an **in-depth study** of a handful of students rather than a broad study focused general observations about all students. **Quantitative and qualitative research methods will be employed**. Quantitative data will include **scores on timed readings and reading comprehension assessments** given at the program and at school as well as **questionnaires** completed by classroom teachers, parents, volunteers and program teachers. Qualitative data will include **written observations** completed by the program coordinator in the full range of contexts, as well as **interviews** with children, parents, and classroom teachers.

<u>Note on Subjects of Study</u>: *All students will have a student work portfolio, reflections, teacher-volunteer observation records, and parent questionnaires. All students will be included in broader conclusions about the stability of skills and will benefit from a more general analysis of the relative strength of their skills and of the larger patterns of variability found in their skills as demonstrated in different contexts and tasks. Five students will be the subject of in-depth study including full interviews and more extensive observations.* ***Factors considered when selecting students will be age, accessibility of past assessments, availability and interest of parents and school-year teachers, age and sex of child.***

2. <u>Micro-Development of Critical Thinking and Moral Reflection</u>

<u>Guiding Questions:</u> How do students learn to complete a 'think-aloud' about their comprehension process while reading a story? How do they learn to write a journal reflection or to answer verbally an open-ended question in a way that reveals their process of inference and the content of mental and emotional transitions in their reasoning?

<u>Research Question</u>: *Are there consistent patterns in the progression of mental processes that appear in all thorough reflection? Can a more finely-tuned awareness of this progression improve critical thinking and the substance of moral conclusions? How is a student's cognitive development affected by a more careful examination of the thinking process?*

<u>Background Information</u>: **Micro-development of thought and emotion refers to how simpler cognitive and affective psychological components actively organize**

over time into more complex realizations. By focusing intently on the content of distinct thoughts and feelings and the progress of the relationship between them, students can be guided toward consistently healthy patterns of reflection and eventually sustain private inquiry in a reliable and thorough manner. Micro-development of scientific thinking in response to unexplained events, or of pro-social emotions and moral conclusions in response to a life event or a story, can be studied through interviews, careful recorded observation during discussion, and through well-directed journal writes. As the micro steps in the evolution of particular thoughts and feelings are uncovered they can be compared across age and skill levels for stable patterns. Guided think-alouds and the creation of thinking maps can help a student to recognize these patterns and to apply them to their reflective practice.

Research Methodology: Qualitative methods will be used to gather information. Selected students will be asked to watch short video clips, to listen to short stories or to consider real-life scenarios and then to reflect on their thoughts and feelings using 'think-aloud' strategies taught in program sessions to arrive at their conclusions on the subject. Content will be reviewed and transcribed for analysis. Transition points within the mental process that reveal newly-attained levels of self-awareness will be noted and carefully analyzed to understand the support mechanisms for achieving the awareness and sustaining it through later parts of the reflection. Student journal-writes and inputs during informal discussion will also be analyzed. Students will receive feedback and direct instruction on the micro-development of thought and will be assessed throughout the year for changes in the quality and consistency of their reflections using a qualitative scaling system. Qualitative growth in student capacity for self-aware reflection and critical thinking will be graphed for selected students.

3. Skill Emergence and Transformation

Guiding Questions: What are distinguishing characteristics of emerging skills such as fluency? Are there specific practices that can help the inter-coordinating skills involved in fluency-- such as decoding, comprehension, diction, rhythmic pattern recognition and breath support-- to be strengthened and transformed into a more cohesive, higher-functioning skill system?

Research Questions: *Will application and analysis of the rules for transformation of skills result in more reliable growth patterns of development? What factors within an optimal learning environments appear to have the greatest influence in activating a more rapid emergence of a skill?*

Background Information: According to research published by Kurt Fischer and Thomas Biddell in their chapter, "Dynamic Development of Action, Thought and Emotion" from Theoretical Models of Human Development, all skills develop through sequences of many small steps in each domain rather than in jumps. However, in an

optimal development learning environment new skills often emerge in spurts with sharp, discontinuous, non-linear patterns of growth. Conversely, learning environments that focus only on functional development and the attainment of proficient skills show slow, continuous growth in skill emergence, sometimes with periods of stagnation; this gradual change is recorded using standardized quantitative assessments that cannot track inner processes and skill relationships. The dynamic nature of optimal development necessitates instead that qualitative changes in skill be tracked; a more closely-focused look at individual growth and the micro-fluid transformations within skill sets must be analyzed and utilized as essential information to guide instruction and the formation of new learning experiences.

There are four rules for the transformation of skills described by developmental scientists such as Fisher and Biddell. They are:

1. **Substitution**- the learner is asked to replace a slightly different object or event into an activity. For example, a student first reads a story aloud in their own voice; later, she is asked to substitute the tone and accent of their voice with one of a fictional character in the story.

2. **Compound**- the learner is asked to add a major component. For example, the student practices impulse control when practicing speaking and listening alone with a teacher; later, he is asked to compound this task by practicing impulse control when in a speaking and listening forum with five other peers.

3. **Shift back and forth between skills**- the learner is asked to juxtapose skills and to move toward integrating the two skills to form a new, more complete skill. For example, a student may practice the skills involved in reading procedural directions aloud to a group and also the skills involved in performing the procedure; later, she is asked to shift between the skills as she explains each step to her audience while also physically demonstrating each part of procedure.

4. **Differentiation-** the learner is asked to compare and strengthen skills that involve similar coordination of systems. For example, the student learns elements of analogistic reasoning when creating and interpreting similes. Soon after the student is asked to interpret idioms, which also involves analogistic reasoning but involves additional skills of contextual awareness and interpretation of kinesthetic images.

Research Methodology: Specific students will be selected who are at emerging levels of skill development in particular areas. Study will focus on one skill set per child. The growth and the transformation of these skills will be carefully recorded through the use

of observation and monitoring charts; the teacher or volunteer will be able to focus on specific transformation rules to be used in instruction and to chart progress. The progress of these students in areas such as reflection and focused attention will be compared to those of students of similar starting skill level who are not in the program.

CURRENT ESTIMATED PROGRAM BUDGET

Human Resources

Material Resources

- Healthy food-ex.: freshly cooked brown rice, olive oil, flax seeds, fresh fruit
  $2.50/student x 60 students x 35 weeks **$5,250**

- Permanent recycled plastic cups for water **$40**
- Compostable bowls (year supply) **$168**
- Oral skills supplies: Scripts, copying, sheet music and recorded music **$200**
- Visual skills supplies: semi-professional colored pencils, ink markers and paper **$300**
- Procedural skills supplies: science materials, food science materials
- Book publishing **$400**

Total Material Resources **$6,748**

Budget Analysis per Child

1 Child for year- $1,895

1 Child per hour -$21

Comparable Enrichment Program Costs

$21.00 per hour for group Tae Kwon Do class at South River Martial Arts in Edgewater

$29.00 per hour for group Science or Reading class through AACPS summer camp

$34.00 per session for group Art classes at Maryland Hall for Creative Arts in Annapolis

$37.50 per hour for small group Suzuki violin lesson

$45.00 + per hour private tutoring

Texts Supporting the Basic Principles of The Skill Development Program

From "Solitude of the Self"-1892 Address to U. S. Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage
by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, President of the National Woman Suffrage Association

Nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another. No one has ever found two blades of ribbon grass alike, and no one will ever find two human beings alike**.** Seeing, then, what must be the infinite diversity in human character, we can in a measure appreciate the loss to a nation when any class of the people is uneducated and unrepresented in the government.

We ask for the complete development of every individual, first, for his own benefit and happiness. Again, we ask complete individual development for the general good. It is sad to see how soon friendless children are left to bear their own burdens, before they can analyze their feelings; before they can even tell their joys and sorrows, they are thrown on their own resources. The great lesson that nature seems to teach us at all ages is self-dependence, self-protection, self-support. . . .

The chief reason for opening to every soul the doors to the whole round of human duties and pleasures is the individual development thus attained, the resources thus provided under all circumstances to mitigate the solitude that at times must come to everyone. . . .

From "A Parent, Community, and National Audit"
by Marian Wright Edelman, President of Children's Defense Fund

It is time for adults of every race and income group to break our silence about the pervasive breakdown of moral, family, and community values, to place our children first in our lives, and to struggle to model the behavior we want our children to learn. Our 'youth problem' is not a youth problem, it is an adult problem, as our children do what they see us adults doing in our personal, professional, and public lives. They seek our attention in negative ways when we provide them too few positive ways to communicate how to get the attention and love they need**.** *I urge every parent and adult to conduct a personal audit to determine whether we are contributing to the crisis our children face or to the solutions they urgently need.* Our children don't need or expect us to be perfect. They do need and expect us to be honest, to admit and correct our mistakes, and to share our struggles about the meanings and responsibilities of faith, parenthood, citizenship, and life. Before we can pull up the moral weeds of violence, materialism, and greed in our society that are strangling our children, we must pull up the moral weeds in our own backyards. So many children are confused about what is right and wrong because so many adults talk right and do wrong in our personal, professional, and public lives.

- If we think being American is about how much we can get rather than about how much we can give and share to help our children get a healthy, fair, and safe start in life, then we are a part of the problem rather than the solution.
- If we think it's somebody else's responsibility to teach our children values, respect, good manners, and work and health habits, then we are a part of the problem rather than the solution to parental neglect today.
- If we or our organizations are spending more money on alcohol and entertainment than on scholarships, books, tutoring, rites of passage, and mentoring programs for youths, then we are a part of the problem rather than the solution to ensuring positive alternatives for children.
- If we think we have ours and don't owe any time or money or effort to help those left behind, then we are a part of the problem rather than the solution to the fraying social fabric that threatens all Americans.