

Building Minds... Changing Lives

ADVANCEMENT JOURNAL
SEPTEMBER 2023



SUMMER CAMP **↑ IMPROVES** READING AND MATH SCORES

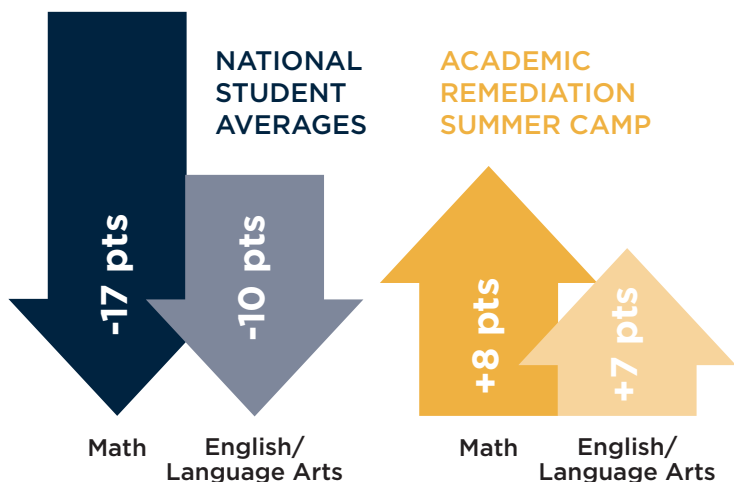
One of the biggest challenges students face is recovering from learning loss over the summer, which is more persistent among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are already at risk for academic failure. To help children recover and catch up, our schools conduct an “Academic Remediation Summer Camp” with intensive tutoring to improve reading and math skills.

At the end of the school year, students who aren’t meeting academic standards are required to attend the summer camp as a prerequisite to returning to school and advancing to the next grade level. The camp focuses on improving reading and math proficiency, which is tested again at the end of the summer. In total, 250 students attended the camp.



Last summer, the camp was successful in minimizing the typical summer learning loss. For reference, national math averages found student achievement declined up to 17 points over the summer. As for our camp attendees, students improved by 8 percentile points. As for English/Language Arts performance, national averages found students decreased by 10 percentile points, but camp attendees increased by 7 percentile points.

The camp expenses total more than \$300,000, which includes food, compensation for teachers and instruction, and materials. We are grateful to the many donors that support this important program, including The Ackerman Foundation, The Brave Heart Foundation, The Ray Charles Foundation, The Indianapolis Foundation, and The Lilly Endowment.



Meet Allen Mills

Allen Mills is a 5th & 6th grade science teacher at Avondale Meadows Middle School. He was born in St. Louis but his family moved to Hayti, Missouri where he attended high school. Allen's mother raised five children and struggled to make ends meet. Because she believed that a college education was the best way to improve one's educational opportunities and overall well-being, she insisted that her children graduate from college.

Allen was an excellent student and excelled in sports. After graduating from high school, he accepted a football scholarship at Mississippi Valley State and studied mathematics with a particular interest in accounting and actuarial science. During college he asked a professor why he decided to go into teaching, and the professor said, "I decided to teach in order to give back to my community. I want to be somebody else's reason to succeed." That resonated with Allen, and he decided to become a teacher as well.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Allen started a masters program in data science at Truman State University. After completing the first year of the program, Allen and his girlfriend decided to move to Indiana to be closer to both of their families. About Indianapolis, Allen said he loves the weather, the lack of traffic, and the ability to be closer to family and friends.

Allen is in his second year teaching at AMMS. In addition to teaching, he coaches volleyball, football, and baseball. He believes that coaching helps him to be a better teacher. "Coaching helps to build relationships with students outside the classroom, and to better understand what the kids really need, and I've matured as a teacher as a result," he said.

Allen is looking forward to this year's Circle City Classic, an annual American football game featuring two historically black colleges/universities and played in Indianapolis. This year's game will be held on September 23, 2023 at Lucas Oil Stadium between his alma mater Mississippi Valley State and North Carolina Central University. Allen would like to take a group of students to the game. If you're interested in making a donation to help purchase tickets for students, please email Sean Dunlavy at sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org.

“Coaching helps to build relationships with students outside the classroom, and to better understand what the kids really need, and I've matured as a teacher as a result.”



STUDENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE: IREAD REPORT

The Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination, or IREAD, is an assessment program to evaluate the reading skills of students in 3rd grade. The purpose of IREAD is to ensure students are proficient in reading before advancing to 4th grade. IREAD measures students' abilities in areas such as vocabulary, comprehension, phonics, and fluency and is designed to identify students who may need additional support in reading and provide interventions to help them improve their skills. Students who do not achieve a passing score on the IREAD are provided with remediation opportunities and are then retested to demonstrate their reading proficiency.

At the end of the 2023 school year, only 50% of our 3rd grade students achieved a passing IREAD score—but a closer look at the numbers revealed a different story.

18% of all our 3rd grade students are exceptional learners or students requiring specialized educational programs, strategies, and support to help them reach their full potential. It's not surprising that only 20% of exceptional learners passed IREAD. In addition, 23%

of our 3rd graders were new to our schools, and only 31% of these new students passed IREAD. For those 3rd grade students that have attended our schools since kindergarten, 65% passed IREAD. This compares favorably to other public schools that achieved an IREAD pass rate of 43%.

This is encouraging news that validates our belief that, through well-coordinated support, a strong partnership with families, and close attention to results, our students will consistently meet and exceed academic standards, ensuring their success as future college graduates and lifelong learners.

65%

OF 3RD GRADE STUDENTS WHO
HAVE ATTENDED USI SCHOOLS SINCE
KINDERGARTEN PASSED IREAD





United Schools of Indianapolis
3980 Meadows Drive,
Indianapolis, IN 46205
317-608-0485
unitedschoolsindy.org



AVONDALE MEADOWS | VISION ACADEMY

AVONDALE MEADOWS ROBOTICS TEAM

Last year, Avondale Meadows Academy started a robotics team. The 12-member team competed in the Education & Competition Foundation Vex IQ Challenge, which was sponsored by the REC Foundation and Vex Robotics. The competition involves designing, building, and programming robots to complete specific tasks or challenges on a themed playing field.

This year, the robotics team received a **\$1,500 sponsorship from INvestEd Indiana**, a not-for-profit organization that provides students and their parents with solutions to help put higher education within reach. Their efforts focus on providing friendly, free, expert financial aid help to students, families, and counselors. Funds received from INvestEd and other sponsors will help provide additional robot/challenge hardware, competition entry fees, and team t-shirts.

AMA students work on self-led teams in which they learn teamwork, critical thinking, problem

solving, and STEM-related skills. The total cost of the program is **\$5,000 per year**. If you would like to help sponsor the robotics team, please contact Sean Dunlavy at sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org.

