

School name:

Merrick Academy-Queens
Public Charter School

Location:

Queens, NYC

Teacher:

Latoya Black

Family:

Family of Chloe Mills

Partnership type:

Springboard Summer

Case study

“From the beginning, Chloe was a storyteller,” Mrs. Latisha Black said of her Springboard student, second-grader Chloe Mills. Chloe is a bright student who joined Merrick Academy in March of 2021 and participated in Springboard Summer in June and July of 2021.

Over the course of seven weeks with Springboard, Chloe made significant progress in her reading. “She’s been able to grasp and learn so much in that time period,” Mrs. Black said. Chloe’s parents also learned to partner with Mrs. Black to support Chloe’s learning and help her blossom as a reader.

Learning in the classroom

Merrick Academy has worked with Springboard since 2020, participating in Springboard’s fully managed and light-touch program models. According to Springboard Program Director Nicole Orzetti, the summer 2021 Springboard session at Merrick Academy was a success because of its staff, who stayed solutions- and action-oriented throughout the program even with the ongoing challenges of navigating remote learning.

Due to the pandemic, it was necessary to adjust the program for hybrid learning, combining in-person and remote sessions. Despite these obstacles, the dedication of school-based and Springboard staff enabled families and teachers to form meaningful connections. By the session’s end, teachers, families, and students worked together to bridge the gap between home and school.

Mrs. Black found the focus on specific reading and writing skills to be particularly important. “I feel like sometimes, as teachers, we overlook [the] small things that we think that students should automatically know.” During Springboard programming, teachers and families work together to identify an area of growth for each student, set a relevant learning goal, and develop an action plan to reach that goal. Identifying and focusing on what the student is struggling with—parts of speech, grammar, punctuation, etc.—helps the teacher figure out a good next step.

Mrs. Black also found value in Springboard’s “toolkit-style” curriculum, which contains “tricks” and skills to help students figure out unknown words. Before Springboard, if Chloe encountered a word she didn’t know, she would try to sound it out once before moving on. Now, Chloe’s mother (Mrs. Latoya Mills) reports that Chloe is more determined as a reader to figure out new vocabulary. “She’s not afraid of breaking the word down into syllables, ... and she is not moving on until she gets that word,” Mrs. Mills said.

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-Mrs. Mills, mother of Chloe Mills



Learning at home

When training families during a Springboard family workshop, teachers act as “coaches,” helping families learn techniques they can use to support their child’s learning at home. This framework helps families learn skills and build habits that endure long after Springboard programming has ended.

Though Chloe was already a sharp reader before Springboard, Chloe’s father (Mr. Dervin Mills) noted that she was more expressive and seemed to enjoy reading more after the program. Chloe herself was also excited about her reading independence. “When I go on the street or I’m in the car, and I see a note on the store, I read it!”

Family workshops

Mrs. Black commended Chloe’s parents for attending every Springboard family workshop. She found the instructional skill videos Springboard provided to be especially helpful in guiding Chloe’s parents, as well as other families in the program. She even uses many Springboard techniques at home with her own children.

Chloe’s parents expressed a similar sentiment, saying that the one-on-one meetings with Mrs. Black were “awesome” and helped them keep track of steps they might didn’t previously know about.

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After the summer

In total, 117 Merrick Academy students participated in the Springboard Summer 2021 program. Merrick participants achieved an astounding 90.9% attendance rate for family workshops. By the end of the program, more than 100 families like Chloe’s learned to coach reading at home and built strong relationships with their child’s teacher.

“I love Mrs. Black, she’s a great teacher,” Chloe said. Chloe’s family plans to enroll her for Springboard programming at Merrick in the fall, where she will be able to continue instruction with Mrs. Black.

Mrs. Black also expressed excitement for the longer, evening sessions during the school year, which will allow more flexibility for working parents and more time for reading practice.

“I’m just so elated about this program, and I could go on and on,” Mrs. Mills said. “But we see huge improvement, and I’m excited.”