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Successful year

During the past school year, The Immokalee Foundation and Guadalupe Center — two organizations passionate about the education of Immokalee students — have been pleased to join forces in a pilot after-school program at Village Oaks Elementary.

The results are worth celebrating: We achieved a positive outcome for our organizations and donors and, most importantly, for the teachers at Village Oaks and the young students of Immokalee whose futures are now brighter.

Though our organizational missions are similar, we chose to talk — and listen — to each other and how our programs could best benefit the students. With help from Great Programs Synergizing — a Naples Children & Education Foundation's out-of-school time initiative consortium of education leaders assembled to develop responsive strategies — we combined our strengths to take the youngest students further on their educational journeys.

At Village Oaks, after-school programs that were once run separately were combined in a collaborative effort that best served the educational needs of students in kindergarten through second grade. Our individual concentrations on language literacy, homework help, writing, math and science became the basis for four-day-a-week sessions.

Through this collaboration, we were able to help 160 students in a more qualified program and for longer sessions each day.

The young students studied more and learned more — about more. Teachers have been reporting even greater educational gains than previous years.

The collaboration is proof of a commitment by both groups' boards of trustees to identify areas of similar interest, and also potential overlap, in order to enhance and expand our efforts. This successful pilot program has allowed us to demonstrate to our young students and their families that working together leads to greater accomplishments.
