



Manasota ASALH Freedom School

Impact Report | 2024-2025 Program Year

Prepared by: Manasota Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)

Executive Summary

This report documents outcomes from the third academic session of the Manasota ASALH Freedom School (MAFS) and demonstrates continued progress toward our mission: to preserve and disseminate African American history while strengthening literacy, identity, and civic engagement among youth and families.

The 2024-2025 year reflects growth, innovation, and community trust. MAFS continues to stand as a model for culturally responsive education—where children not only learn history but see themselves reflected in it.



Purpose

This report provides donors, partners, and prospective funders with a clear account of MAFS's results, lessons learned, and near-term priorities. It also outlines the resources required to sustain and expand our impact as we prepare for broader after-school and community-based programming.

Highlights and Outcomes

Mission Continuity: MAFS sustained a high-quality, culturally responsive curriculum centered on truthful African and African American history. Lessons reinforced student pride, belonging, and historical understanding through literature, hands-on learning, and reflective dialogue.

Expanded Reach: Through combined Saturday sessions and an expanded summer footprint across three sites, MAFS reached 100 students representing multiple grade bands and schools across the region.

Partnership Growth: MAFS strengthened existing partnerships and established new ones—broadening access, deepening community trust, and creating additional entry points for youth and families.

Community Service: Regular learning sessions, family engagement opportunities, and a strong volunteer base continued to anchor MAFS as a valued community resource—linking generations through shared learning and cultural pride.

Student Voices: Reflections from the Freedom School

“I liked that we learned about Mae Jemison... She proved men that women could do some of the things that men can do, too. She was the first Black woman to go to space!” — **Re’nya**

“I liked the pipe cleaners, the clay, and reading. I enjoyed reading The Youngest Marcher. It was so cool—but it bothered me that adults put her in jail. She didn’t have to protest, but she did. It was literally the start of her consciousness.” — **Liam**

“I liked playing with the clay. Mae Jemison was actually the first Black woman to go to space! I liked learning about the lady that was like a computer.” (Referring to Dorothy Vaughn and the book The Computer Decoder.) — **Faith**

Lessons Learned

Delivery Model Fit: Feedback and attendance trends prompted a review of the Saturday model. Evidence suggests reallocating effort toward after-school formats may foster consistent attendance, particularly among high school students and families balancing weekend commitments.

Experiential Learning: Demand remains high for field experiences and hands-on activities that translate classroom lessons into lived understanding. Florida's deep African American history provides opportunities for place-based learning at every age level. Equitable funding for transportation, materials, and admissions is essential to maintain access.

What's Next

After-School Expansion: Launch and refine after-school programs with new partners to increase weekly engagement, strengthen retention, and align instruction with literacy, core subjects, and Florida standards for African American history.

Program Quality: Maintain core Saturday offerings while adapting lessons for flexible use across schools, libraries, and community centers.

Partnership Stewardship: Formalize roles, data-sharing, and scheduling with host sites to streamline after-school operations and track outcomes more consistently.

Funding Need

To sustain momentum and deliver equitable, high-impact learning, MAFS seeks increased, flexible funding to:

- Underwrite regular experiential learning activities (transportation, admissions, and materials) for all age groups
- Staff and operate after-school programs with partner sites
- Strengthen evaluation capacity to track attendance, literacy progress, and community impact
MAFS enters the next year with a tested model, growing partnerships, and a clear plan for expansion—ensuring more students learn accurate African American history, build literacy and academic skills, and see themselves as agents of change in their communities.

Community Recognition and Media Highlights

Extensive media coverage—including features in the Herald-Tribune, Sarasota Magazine, ABC7's Empowering Voices, WSLR Radio, and others—continues to amplify MAFS's community impact.

Additionally, Program Director **Edna Sherrell** was honored with the **Education Award** from the **Sarasota County Branch of the NAACP** at the **Annual Freedom Awards Banquet (Fall 2024)**—a testament to her dedication and the program's transformative influence.

Conclusion

The Manasota ASALH Freedom School remains a beacon of cultural education and empowerment in our community. Through collective commitment, continued partnership, and sustained investment, we are shaping a generation of students who know their history, value their identity, and lead with purpose.

