

826NYC

FISCAL YEAR 2020

ANNUAL REPORT

IMPRESSIVE RESULTS INSIDE

Dear Friends of 826NYC,

I am so proud to share this annual report for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 2019 - June 2020). Despite the immense challenges of the last six months, 826NYC has been able to adapt to serve our students in new, extremely exciting ways. This has been made possible in no small part by the generous support of our community – from all of us at 826NYC, thank you.

2019-20 marked our 15th anniversary, and prior to COVID-19, we were on track for our most ambitious year to date. We expanded our in-school presence; our first-ever gala-style event, the 826NYC Story Soiree, raised over \$160,000; and we were projected to serve over 4,000 young people. Needless to say, like so many organizations and individuals worldwide, the pandemic threw a significant wrench in our plans. But it also offered us the opportunity to meet this milestone with all the creativity and transformation that lies at the heart of 826NYC.

With schools closed this spring, our regular programming was suspended. However, with the help of our superhero staff, teachers, and community, 826NYC quickly created a series of virtual programs. From weekly online writing workshops and remote literacy help to our “quaranTeen Voices” series, we were proud to find new ways to empower students to write the future from their very own homes. In June, we were deeply moved by our students’ writing in response to nationwide Black Lives Matter protests, and reiterated our commitment to amplify the voices of our young, Black, and unique authors.

As we kick off the 2020-21 school year, the format of our programs will continue to adjust, but their impact will remain the same. We even launched a new offering: the **826NYC Teen Writers’ Collective**, which provides a safe, creative space and leadership opportunities for high schoolers. The new shape and new names of our programs (which you can read about in more detail throughout this report) reflect our ongoing responsiveness to the needs of our students, not to mention the larger world circumstances. In this rapidly changing, uncertain time, we know that young people’s ability to express themselves is more important than ever before. Our community’s resilience, creativity, and hope throughout the pandemic have given us a renewed sense of purpose, and we remain more dedicated than ever to elevating youth voices – throughout this crisis and far beyond it.

We are so thankful for all of you who make all our work possible, from our board and funders to our staff, volunteers and students.

Here’s to 15 more years,



Joshua Mandelbaum
Executive Director

Tiger

BY SHENDANDOAH, AGE 7

I am a tiger
My voice is strong
I sound like a tiger
I sing with words from my guts
I hear with my strong tiger ears
I want to be a little more brave than I am
I think to push myself, even when it gets hard in life
I am a tiger, and I am fierce



Sugar Flyer

BY OPHELIA, AGE 9

Sugar flyer,
Sugar flier,
Look here!
In the briar.

Don't be afraid,
I'm not a big boa,
I am only a little cobra.
I see that you're unafraid,
Good! Cause, now I got it made in the shade!

Look.
I think that you want to eat me.
I know that cause
you've been known to cheat me
And other guys who live in the peach tree.

2019/20 SCHOOL YEAR STAFF

Joshua Mandelbaum, Executive Director
Aarti Monteiro, Director of Education
Chris Eckert, Store Manager
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Lauren Everett, Fundraising and Communications Coordinator
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Dave Eggers and Nínive Calegari

826NYC FOUNDERS

Scott Seeley and Joan Kim

Creative writing is crucial to youth development, both academically and socio-emotionally. Despite clear advantages, our education system rarely offers opportunities for students to explore their creative selves, instead prioritizing standardization, especially in underserved districts.

Students living near or below the poverty line lack many of the societal advantages of their more affluent peers, creating an unfair achievement gap. Over 840,000 students in New York City public schools are economically disadvantaged, the majority of whom are Latinx and African-American and have been marginalized by systemic racism. Of these students, 65% perform in the bottom third of English Language Arts proficiency testing; and among English Language Learners (ELLs), the number is closer to 90%.

**HERE ARE SOME CONCRETE WAYS
826NYC MET STUDENTS IN THIS GAP THIS YEAR:**



We provided in-school programming exclusively for Title 1 schools



Our Write After School and Teen Writers Collective programs serve only families who qualified for the Free and Reduced Lunch program



Write Away Workshops are free for students who qualify for our other programs.

Our Names Were Written in Stone

BY SARAH HARRELL, GRADE 10

September 2016, the sun shone bright that day. The school's basketball court was crowded with other seventh graders I didn't speak to. But I had my people, all eight of them. I remember taking the black Sharpie marker as half of us crowded around the cement bench. The trees rustled behind us, as the other half of us hung off the wired fence. We were staring down at the bench. The strong chemical odor mixed with the smell of summer flooded the air. Our names were scribbled on the left corner of the back side of the cement. We're forever immortalized together.

Six Word Memoir

BY NIKAY SMITH, 10TH GRADE

Blue, the most human, inhumane, color.

The Blood of Kings

BY E'NASIA SMITH, 12TH GRADE

America.
Stained with the blood of our kings.
Sweat dripping from their melanated skin
as they run from the boys in blue.
I can't breathe.
You're gonna kill me.
Mama.
1863.
Freedom!
No more whips or shackles.
Only batons and handcuffs.
I can't breathe.



JENNY HOLZER PARTNERSHIP

In fall 2019, 18 826NYC students had their writing incorporated into acclaimed artist Jenny Holzer's LED installation *For 7 World Trade*. Poems from students in our Park Slope, South Williamsburg, East Harlem, and Concourse Village programs were selected to be included in her permanent installation at 7 World Trade Center, which can be viewed publicly. 826NYC strives to create opportunities in the unexpected with unconventional approaches. Thank you, Jenny Holzer, for paving this exciting road for our young writers!



PASSAGES ACADEMY

In our Young Authors Publish program this year, we began an incredible new partnership with Passages Academy at Belmont, a school serving court-involved youth. For the month of November 2019, teaching

artists Vanessa Friedman and Emily Pollock led a memoir-writing residency using Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* as a source text. The residency culminated in a professionally published book of student writing titled *Everything I Been Through*. This is the first time 826NYC has worked with this vulnerable population, and we loved creating a platform for them to share their powerful stories.



UNDISCOVERED WORKS

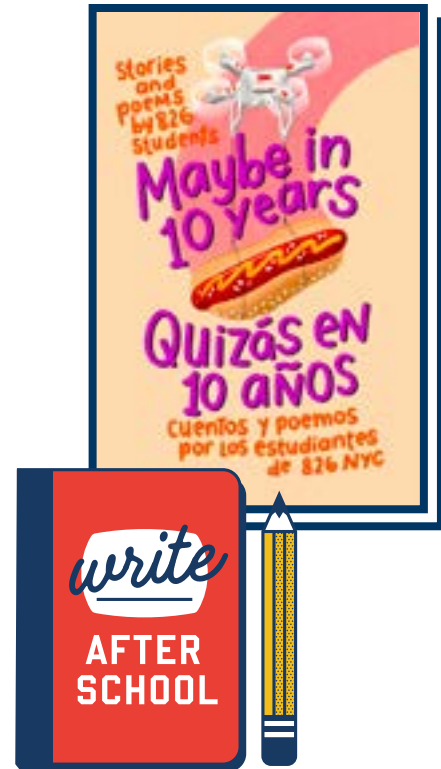
Young authors in our summer Monologue Write Away workshop partnered with Undiscovered Works, a theatrical storytelling organization and our newest community partner, to collaborate on the creative process, storytelling, and writing monologues. Our young authors were invited to join Executive Director Leah Abrams and the Undiscovered Works community to read their pieces. In September, three young authors had their writing performed by professional actors in Undiscovered Works' monthly storytelling series, "Find Your Inner Monologue." 826NYC has been chosen three times as Undiscovered Works' "non-profit of the month", which directs donations to us and raises awareness of the work 826NYC does in the community.



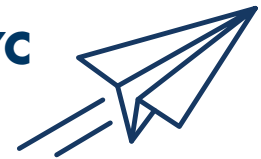
PROGRAMS & OUTCOMES

WRITE AFTER SCHOOL

Offering a combination of writing and literacy support, Write After School is a personalized, engaging, free program where students stretch their literary imaginations and strengthen their core communication skills. We invite elementary and middle-school students who demonstrate financial need to enroll in weekly sessions at our Park Slope center where they receive homework help and participate in writing exercises. Students also revise and share their creative work in a chapbook, published in English and Spanish and shared with families, volunteers, and community members at a celebratory reading. During the 2019-2020 school year, 826NYC held a combined 154 after-school sessions, reaching 76 students for either two or four sessions per week each and culminating in the publication of *Maybe In Ten Years*, a compilation of after-school student writing from fall 2019. During the COVID shutdown, we transitioned to an online model to continue providing consistent support to all current After-School students, ultimately offering 10 virtual sessions.



92% of students agreed that 826NYC makes writing fun.



WRITE AWAY WORKSHOP



Our upbeat, interdisciplinary Write Away workshops are designed to foster creativity by inviting students to explore a variety of subjects through writing. In any given Write Away workshop, students might write songs, a piece of climate justice sci-fi, or a nature guide. In 2019-2020, fall and winter workshops included Personal Statement Weekend (Grades 11-12); Create Your Own Superhero (Grades 1-5); Spoken Word Workshop (Grades 6-12); and Teenage Experience: Memoir Workshop (Grades 6-12). Then, during the COVID-19 shutdown this spring, we transitioned our 826NYC Workshops series to a virtual model, with two hour-long sessions on two different days each week. These 48 total sessions were extremely well attended, offering age-specific prompts that invited students to imagine, play, and express themselves during a unanimously hard time.

QUARANTEEN VOICES

If there was a silver lining to the suspension of regular in-person programming in spring 2020, it was quaranTEEN Voices. This new virtual program connects teens and professional authors from around the country to talk about writing, and share original work through a weekly open mic. Each week, teens were given two writing prompts created by the guest author. Then participants had the chance to meet the guest authors and work on prompts together during quaranTEEN voices virtual gatherings each Friday.

OUR GUEST AUTHORS IN SPRING 2020



J. COURTNEY SULLIVAN



JACQUELINE WOODSON



ISAAC FITZGERALD



AMANDA GORMAN



SPIKE JONZE



TIPHANIE YANIQUE



LILLIAM RIVERA



ARACELIS GIRMEY



CLAUDIA RANKINE



P. CARL



LISA KO

82%

of students said they were proud of their writing.



WRITE TOGETHER



826NYC hosts classes from all around New York City for Write Together, interactive writing experiences for school groups that encourage creative expression, explore the elements of storytelling, and strengthen writing skills. This program also provides a model for creative collaboration that teachers can take back to their classrooms. Elementary classes collaborate on picture books, middle schoolers Choose Their Own Adventure, and High Schoolers learn the art of Memoir during engaging 1.5 hour narrative programs. During the 2019-20 school year, 826NYC held 103 field trips, serving 2,160 students in-person and online.

100%

**of students reflected
that 826NYC helped
them improve their
grades at school.**



YOUNG WRITERS PUBLISH



Our Young Writers Publish residencies for Title 1 schools support classroom teachers through creative, impactful, curriculum-aligned projects that transform students into authors. Led by specialized teaching artists, residencies range in duration and frequency—from 6 weeks to a full school year—as well as subject. Residencies culminate with a professionally bound publication; an in-house publication such as a zine, newspaper, or a chapbook; a podcast; a performance of student-written plays; or even a class reading. All residencies conclude with a celebratory “publication party” for family and friends. In 2019-20 school year, we held residencies with the following schools:

OUR IN-SCHOOL FOOTPRINT

BRONX LEADERSHIP ACADEMY II

CONCOURSE VILLAGE,
BRONX

NYC LAB SCHOOL FOR COLLABORATIVE STUDIES

CHELSEA,
MANHATTAN

HIGH SCHOOL OF FASHION INDUSTRIES

CHELSEA,
MANHATTAN

UNCOMMON COLLEGIATE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

BED-STUY,
BROOKLYN

MS 88

PARK SLOPE,
BROOKLYN

PS 316 ELIJAH STROUD

CROWN HEIGHTS,
BROOKLYN

THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

CROWN HEIGHTS,
BROOKLYN

ACADEMY FOR YOUNG WRITERS

EAST NEW YORK,
BROOKLYN

PASSAGES ACADEMY AT BELMONT

BROWNSVILLE,
BROOKLYN

Best Day Ever

BY ZOE, TENISHA AND SHALA, AGE 11-12

Best Day Ever Schedule*:

**Teleporter required*

3 AM: Eat pancakes with chocolate chips

4 AM: Play our favorite video games

5 AM: Get a puppy

6 AM: Go to the park and play with the new puppy

7 AM: Go to the pool and swim with friends

8 AM: Draw and make up our own characters

9 AM: Watch our favorite movies and TV shows

10 AM: Ice cream break! Create a sundae bar with our favorite flavors (mint chocolate chip)

11 AM: Talk with our friends while eating the ice cream

12 - 1 PM: Go to the moon and take our dog. Build a neighborhood for all our friends.

2 PM: Lunchtime at the moon diner. Have burgers, fries, milkshakes, and salad (to keep it healthy).

3 - 4 PM: Coney Island comes to the moon. We get to ride all the rides and then, because it is the best day ever, we win all the biggest prizes.

5 PM: Power nap and cuddle with our puppy

6 - 10 PM: Rapid travel time!

Hang out on the beaches of Bora Bora

See our friends from Germany (play video games with them)

Go to the top of the Eiffel Tower in France

See animals in Australia

Have dinner in Italy (make your own pizza)

11 PM - 12 AM: End the day back on the moon with fireworks and a parade with all our friends, family, and travel buddies.



826NYC volunteers are at the heart of all 826NYC programs, and their service is a crucial component of what makes our programs possible.

Our volunteer corps are dedicated and passionate New Yorkers representing a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and skills. Volunteers tutor after-school students four days a week, and support 826NYC staff and teaching artists during all programs.

We believe that individualized support is the key to inspiring a student's imagination and maximizing engagement. We keep a low mentor-to-student ratio so that every student is heard, their needs are met, and their creativity flourishes. For our students, getting to know a volunteer over the course of a year or more offers a connection to their broader New York community that they may not otherwise have, providing a lens into different cultures, ways of life, and fields of work.



In the 2019-2020 school year, 185 volunteers (listed on pages 17-19) provided \$70,126 in indirect financial support. In addition to expanding our capacity to provide imaginative and intensely personal programs, they elevate the profile of our organization by introducing 826NYC's work to their extended communities. This year, our volunteers rose to the challenges of virtual programming, partnering with program staff to support during virtual workshops and remote homework help.

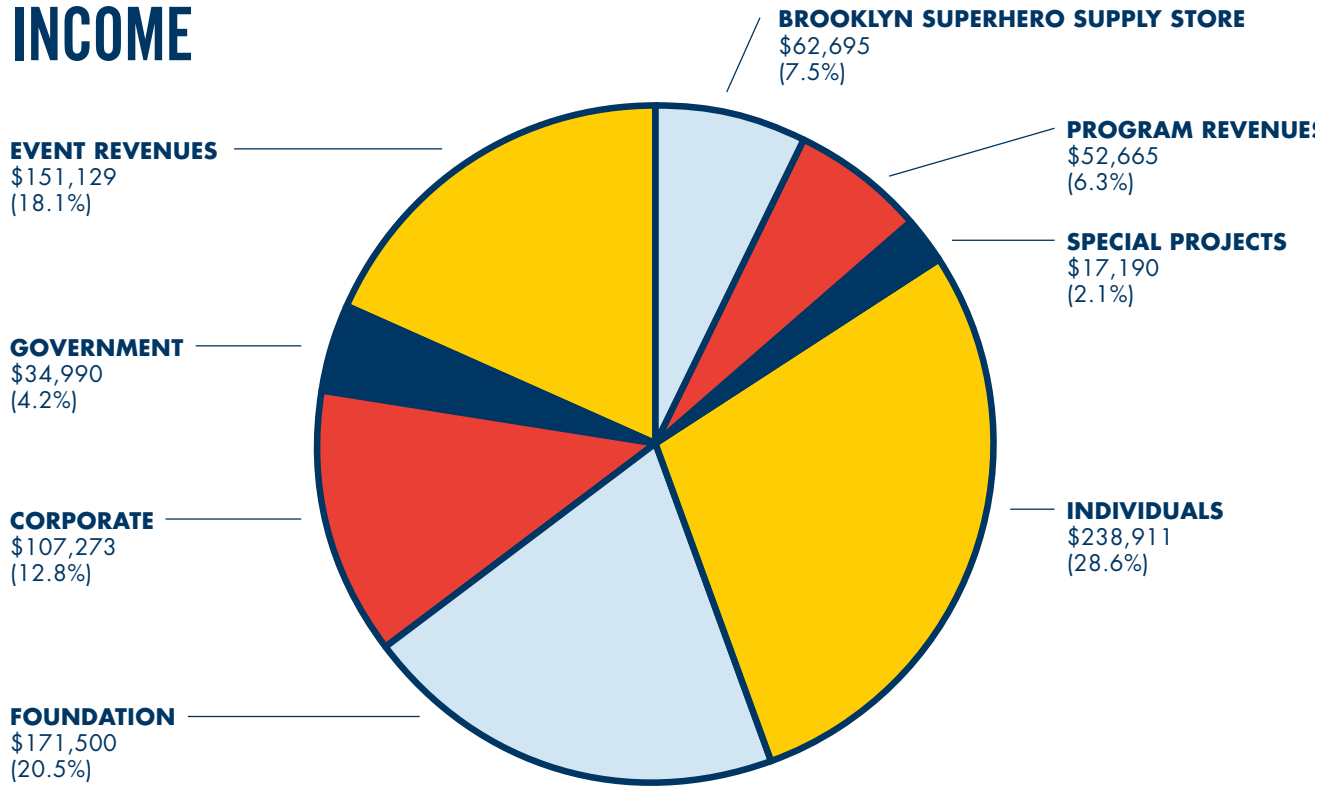
Lastly, we are grateful to have developed close relationships with a number of volunteers who in turn give back to 826NYC through donations from family foundations or connections with corporate sponsors or community partners.

100%

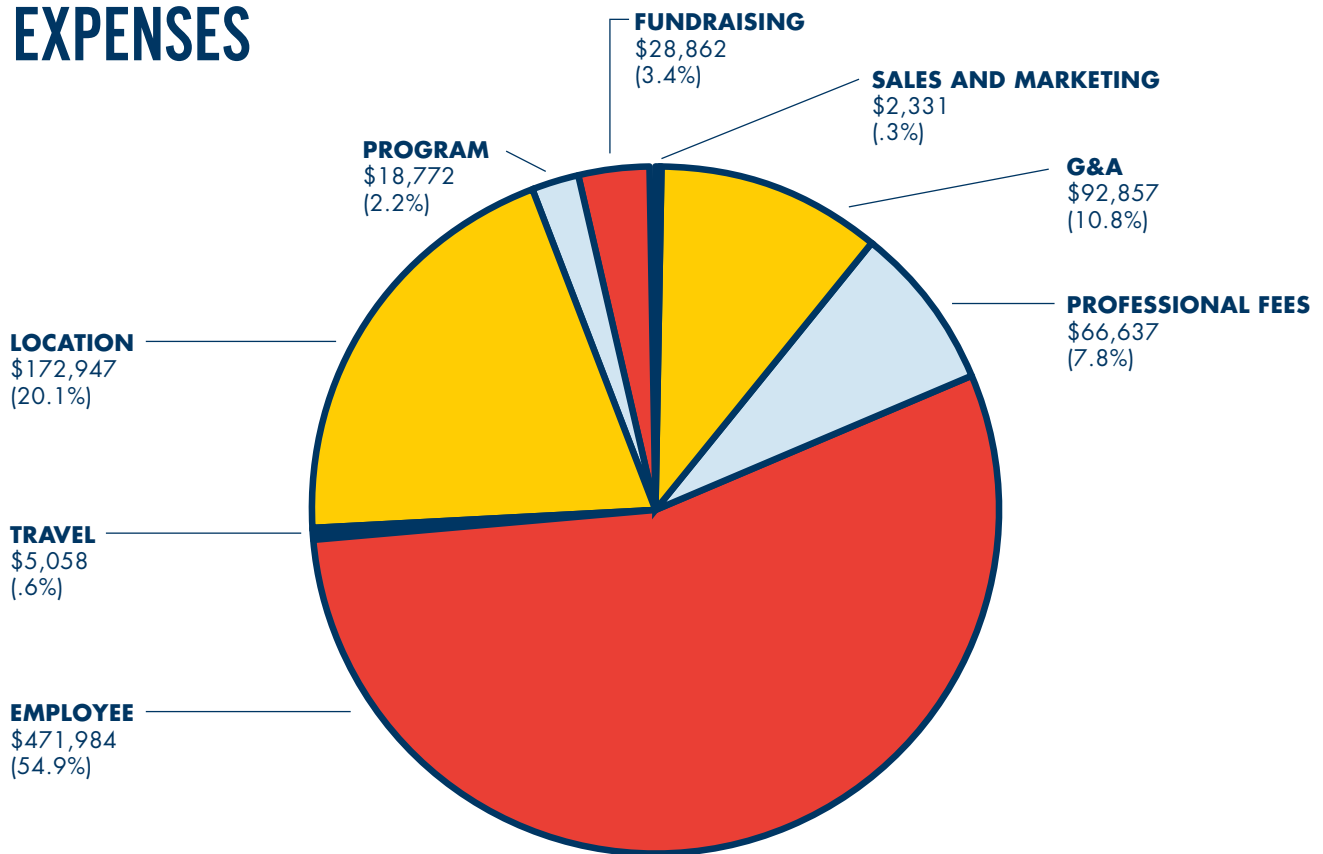
**of students said they
feel safe at 826NYC.**



INCOME



EXPENSES



In FY20, 826NYC was able to accomplish our mission thanks to the generosity of our institutional and individual supporters.

FOUNDATION, GOVERNMENT, AND CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

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Alamo Drafthouse	NYC Department of Cultural Affairs
Amazon Literary Partnership	New York Community Trust (Covid-19 Impact & Relief Fund)
AT&T Foundation	NY Transit Museum
Attion Consulting	Penguin Random House
Bagel World	Pfizer
Books Are Magic!	Polk Wealth Management
Broadway Dance Center	Postmates
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CBX	Rona Jaffe Foundation
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Inkhouse	Two Boot's Pizza
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During Quarantine

BY TOLANI ADEYEMI, 12TH GRADE

Should I or should I not, that is the question:

Whether 'tis better to start working out again or relax and enjoy the quarantine

As I lay there on my bed, phone in hand, staring at the empty space in the middle of my room

I think to myself, with this newfound free time, should I work on my body?

For Michael B. Jordan is who I wish to embody, but I feel shoddy

My arms are as flimsy as spaghetti and my beach body is not ready

Working out would solve this, but at what cost?

Forcing myself into strenuous acts I will begin to feel lost

But that's not the worst, for working out would take time from my Netflix

However, it would be unproductive to choose TV over athletics

Aye, there's the rub:

Does choosing desire make me a cub?

You know what, to hell with your criticism, whether or not constructive

I choose to enjoy my free time being unproductive.

