

826NYC ANNUAL REPORT

20 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
INSIDE



FISCAL YEAR 2024

Dear Friends,

The 2023-2024 school year was a landmark year for 826NYC. As we celebrated 20 years of inspiring young writers across New York City, we also reflected on the growth of our programs, the strength of our partnerships, and the impact our students made through the power of their words.

This year, we reached 3,600 students across all five boroughs, continuing our prioritized enrollment for those from historically marginalized and under-resourced communities. Our programs continued to expand, with 61 school partnerships and 15 student publications showcasing the incredible creativity of our young authors.

At our Youth Writing Center, our Write After School program flourished, providing elementary and middle school students with a space to develop their storytelling and communication skills. Our Write Away Workshops and Write Together field trips led students through imaginative journeys—from ghost stories to interstellar adventures. Meanwhile, the Teen Writers’ Collective fostered a supportive community where teens refined their craft and found new platforms to amplify their voices. Students connected with professional writers across programs, including through a career-oriented panel for our teens and a special workshop series led by beloved children’s book author Adam Rubin for middle grades.

We also deepened our partnerships with schools and community organizations. Our Extended Day program, a key pillar of our five-year strategic plan, expanded to bring writing programs directly into after-school programs across the city, ensuring that even more students had access to 826NYC’s transformative approach to writing education. Through our Young Writers Publish residencies, students worked alongside educators to develop personal narratives, science fiction stories, and food writing projects, demonstrating the wide range of stories young people have to share.

The impact of our work was clear: 96% of students agreed that they could be creative and take risks in their writing with us, and 88% reported that 826NYC helped them improve their writing skills. Beyond the numbers, the true measure of our success was in the confidence and passion our students brought to their work. As one parent shared, “That class gave her confidence in her own words, even if they are unwritten and just in her head.”

None of this would have been possible without our dedicated volunteers, supporters, and partners. This year, 240 volunteers contributed over 3,400 hours of service, ensuring that every student who walked through our doors received the mentorship and encouragement they needed to thrive. Our generous funders and donors, from foundations to individuals, invested in the power of youth storytelling, allowing us to grow and innovate in ways we never imagined 20 years ago.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to expanding our reach and impact, ensuring that more young people across the city have access to the resources, support, and inspiration they need to share their voices with the world. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

With Gratitude,



Rebecca Darugar, Executive Director

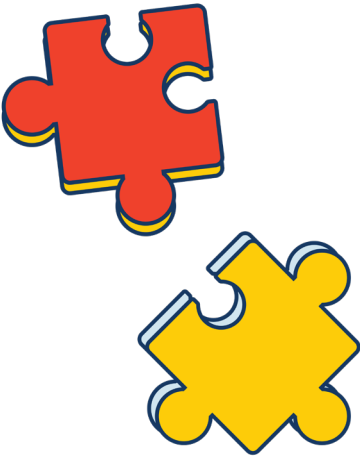
THE PUZZLE

By Katelyn P., 7th grade

I am flexible
I wonder who I am
I hear other people describing who I am
I see myself in the mirror
I want to know who I truly am, am I as sweet as jam?
Am I as stubborn as a bull?
Am I as fragile as a glass?
I am someone.

I pretend to be confident, bold, and reliable
I feel like a multicolor palette
I touch others’ hearts unintentionally whenever they’re down
I worry others see me as too flexible
I cry for those who feel as confused as I do
I am an unfinished puzzle.

I understand almost everyone once I know them,
A bittersweet curse of empathy
I say words of reassurance to friends
I dream for the day I am fully confident in who I am
I try to put together pieces that don’t fit together
I hope the puzzle will be finished someday
I am Katelyn.



“She found her superpower, and I saw her in a completely new light. That class gave her confidence in her own words, even if they are unwritten and just in her head. They gave her the confidence to know that they carry meaning which can be shared and enjoyed in the world.”

— PARENT OF A 4TH GRADE WORKSHOP STUDENT



2023-2024 PROGRAM LOCATIONS



- 1 826NYC'S YOUTH WRITING CENTER
PARK SLOPE
- 2 HIGH SCHOOL OF FASHION INDUSTRIES
CHELSEA
- 3 ACADEMY FOR YOUNG WRITERS
EAST NEW YORK
- 4 P.S. 316 | PROSPECT HEIGHTS
- 5 BROOKLYN COLLABORATIVE STUDIES
COBBLE HILL
- 6 I.S. 171 | CYPRESS HILLS
- 7 P.S. 1 | SUNSET PARK
- 8 THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM
PROSPECT HEIGHTS
- 9 CONEY ISLAND PREP | CONEY ISLAND
- 10 P.S. 144 | FOREST HILLS

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Rebecca Darugar, Executive Director
Naomi Solomon, Director of Education
Janna Cisterino, Development & Communications Manager
Chris Eckert, Store & Operations Manager
Danny Kim, Volunteer & Programs Manager
Summer Medina, Volunteer & Programs Coordinator
Amani Nephew, Programs Coordinator
Stella Raffle-Wax, Senior Store & Communications Associate
Hunter Julo, Store Associate

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Dave Eggers & Nínive Calegari

826NYC FOUNDERS

Scott Seeley & Joan Kim

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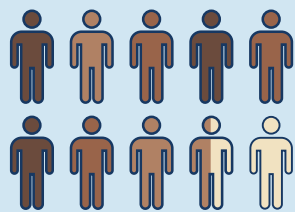
OUR IMPACT

EXPLORING ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES
THROUGH THE POWER OF WRITING

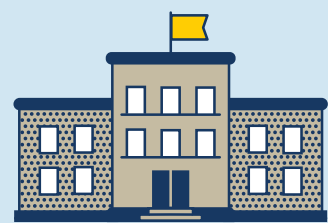
The young authors of 826NYC span the five boroughs, with youth from marginalized and underserved communities prioritized in enrollment. Our free after school programs are exclusively for families who demonstrate financial need, and we reserve 60% of spots in our weekend programs for students who would not otherwise be able to attend. Our partner-based programs focus solely on schools and community partners that serve under-resourced youth.



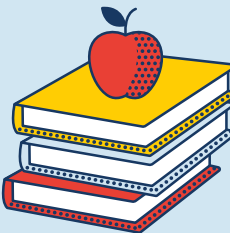
3,600
STUDENTS



80%
STUDENTS
OF COLOR



61
SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS



15
STUDENT
PUBLICATIONS

Whether we are publishing a book in a Title 1 school, leading after school writing sessions, hosting a field trip, or bringing together students from around the City at a workshop, 826NYC programs encourage student voice, foster creativity, and develop the skills that lead to academic, professional, and personal success.



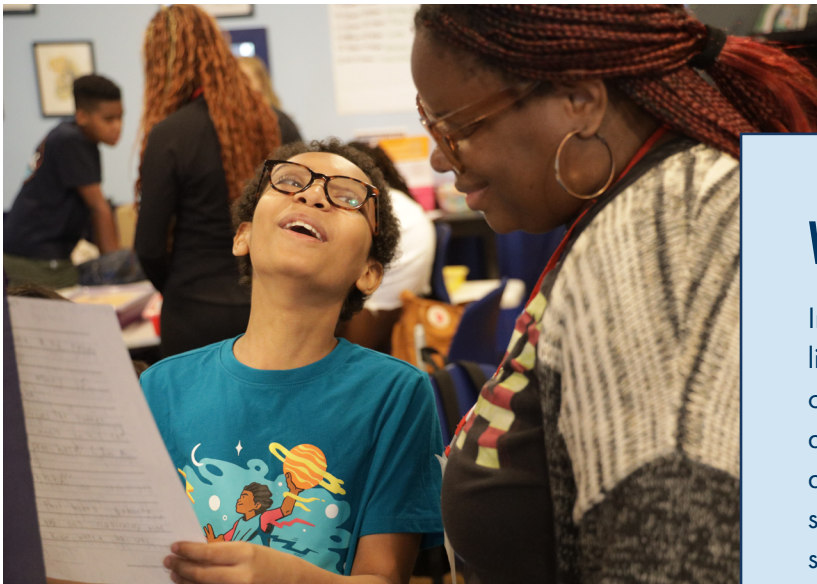
96% of students agreed that they can be creative
and try new things with 826NYC

88% of students agreed that 826NYC
helped them improve their writing



94% of after school students demonstrated
social-emotional gains

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS



WRITE AFTER SCHOOL

In Write After School, students stretch their literary imaginations and strengthen their core communication skills. Elementary and middle school students engage in activities that enhance reading, writing, social-emotional, and communication skills and participate in a Book Club.

WRITE AWAY WORKSHOPS

Ghost stories, sitcom scripts, and ordinary characters in extraordinary worlds are just some of the themes we explored in Write Away Workshops this year. Our students’ stories spooked us, made us play the laugh track, and helped us look at the world in new and exciting ways.

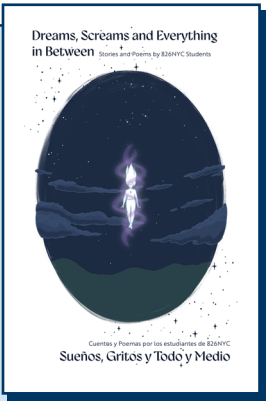
Our Dungeons & Dragons & Writers workshop fuses the magic of storytelling with the classic tabletop role-playing game. In its 3rd year, D&D&W invited students to shape a story of interstellar adventure through the lens of dice rolls.

And our Extended Day program brought the magic of Write Away Workshops out of our Youth Writing Center and into the classrooms of school and community partners during after school hours.



TEEN WRITERS' COLLECTIVE

The members of our Teen Writers’ Collective are young literary artists who learn from and uplift the work of their peers. They delved into genres and form, discovering new ways to get their voice and imagination on paper. TWC members also spoke at 826NYC events, and five members participated in our paid summer internships, leading programs with our younger authors.



SCHOOL DAY PROGRAMS



WRITE TOGETHER

School groups from across New York City slip behind the secret door at our Youth Writing Center for Write Together, a collaborative writing adventure that encourages creative expression, explores the elements of storytelling, and strengthens students’ writing skills.

“We love that the program encourages some silly scenarios that kids love, while still honing in on essential writing skills.”
— EDUCATOR FROM WEST SIDE SCHOOL

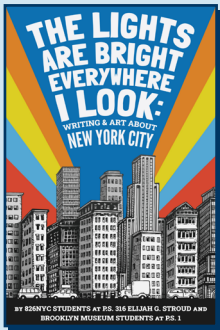
YOUNG WRITERS PUBLISH

Young Writers Publish supports classroom teachers at Title 1 schools through creative, impactful, curriculum-aligned projects that transform students into authors.

This year’s five residencies covered everything from personal and community narratives to science fiction to food writing.

WHAT WAS A HIGHLIGHT FROM YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH 826NYC?

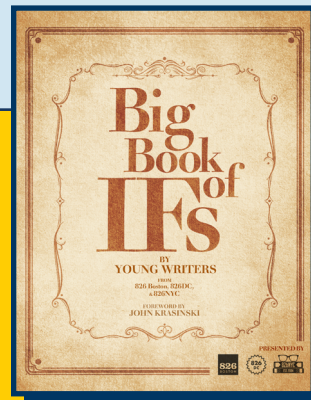
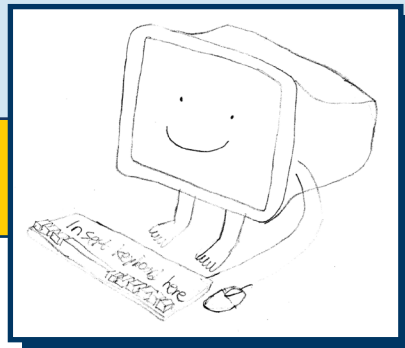
“When we arrived and were waiting outside, one student who identifies as a proud member of the LGBTQIA+ community saw the rainbows and pride cans and exclaimed ‘You planned this trip for me? I know I belong here!’”
— EDUCATOR FROM PASSAGES ACADEMY





THE BIG BOOK OF IFS

With Paramount Pictures' film *IF* as inspiration, 826 students around the nation put pens to paper to bring their imaginary friends to life through writing. We published their fantastical creations in *The Big Book of IFs*. Our students also attended an advance screening of the film with their families, and long-time 826NYC student Lhiam R. interviewed writer and director John Krasinski at the New York premiere. *The Big Book of IFs* has won two Anthem Awards in the Education, Art, & Culture category.



ALAN

By Frank Z., 7th grade

Alan is a fully functioning quantum Turing machine that can change size and shape anytime. The actual self-conscious part of the computer is built into the computer and can just change personality, likes, dislikes, and anything just whenever. The computer has a screen of the highest possible resolution and can run at 1000 MHZ and be programmed to do literally everything. But there is only one downside, which is that the programming language is absolutely terrible and is the most unintuitive thing possible to use. When he is bored or stuck or has nothing to do and wants to do something for fun, he just calculates pi. If he is sad or angry or something, he stops being like that. It's a computer, what did you expect?



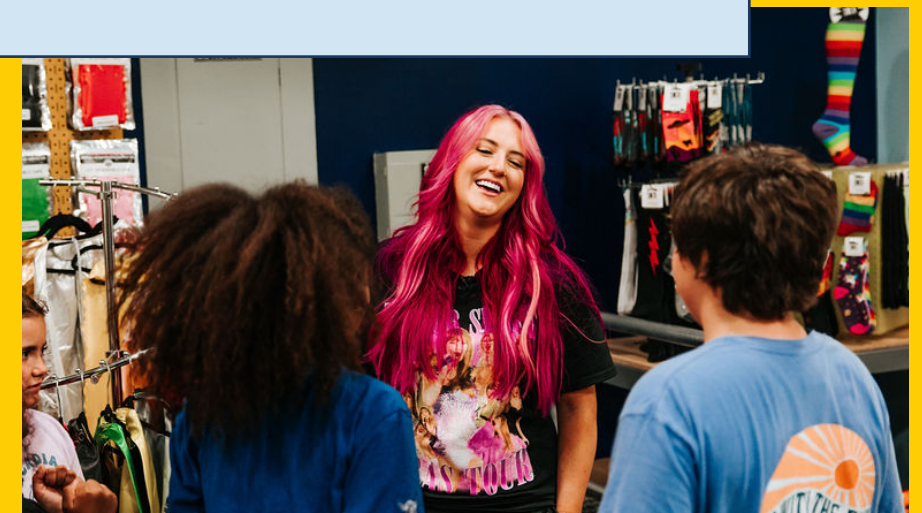
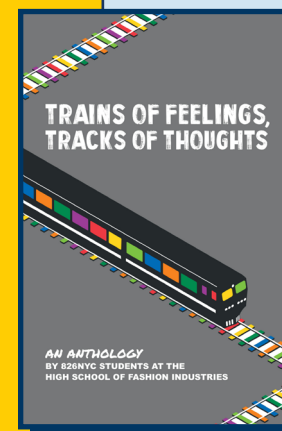
THE KELLY CLARKSON SHOW



826NYC was featured on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, in partnership with Pilot Pens! Executive Director Rebecca Darugar and after school student Alicia S. shared our mission over at 30 Rock with Kelly and her guests – Simu Liu (*Barbie*, *Shang-Chi*) and Luke Newton (*Bridgerton*).

HOPESCOPE COLLABORATION

Our Brooklyn Superhero Supply Co. was featured on popular creator HopeScope's YouTube channel in a collection of "secret stores" across New York City. Hope explored our Park Slope center, purchased some of our best-sellers, and spoke with our students over the summer. She also sponsored an 826NYC publication featuring work from students at The High School of Fashion Industries.



MY FIRST SUNSET HERE

By Isabella V-M, 11th grade

Being on the balcony
On San Luis Street, in between Moreno and Bolivar
I felt so connected to something I had just met.

I looked at the view
The simple, white buildings.
I looked at the neighbors' windows
Some exposed, the majority hidden behind their blinds.
If I looked down, I could see the roofs of shorter buildings
You couldn't see the street,
But you could see Mar del Plata from our balcony.

My mom was telling me that she grew up in this same building
In an apartment on this same floor.
And although she told me so much,
It was very quiet.
You could hear some birds,
The sound of my glass touching the table, of my shoes making contact with the floor
But when we weren't speaking,
There really was silence.

I was imagining her as a child
She probably had a curious face,
Perhaps she'd run through the hallway.
I was imagining my grandma, my grandpa
I pictured photos they had shown me at some point
With an orangey tone, typical of that era
It gave me warmth
So I held my mother's hand
And I served myself more club soda.

It was November 24, 2022, and the sky of Mar de Plata was darkening.
In the sky, there were purple, pink, blue, and yellow tones.
There was a soft breeze and a calmness in the air
I felt happy
A sense of peace.

I looked at my mom
With her bright eyes,
Her soft hair with tones of gray

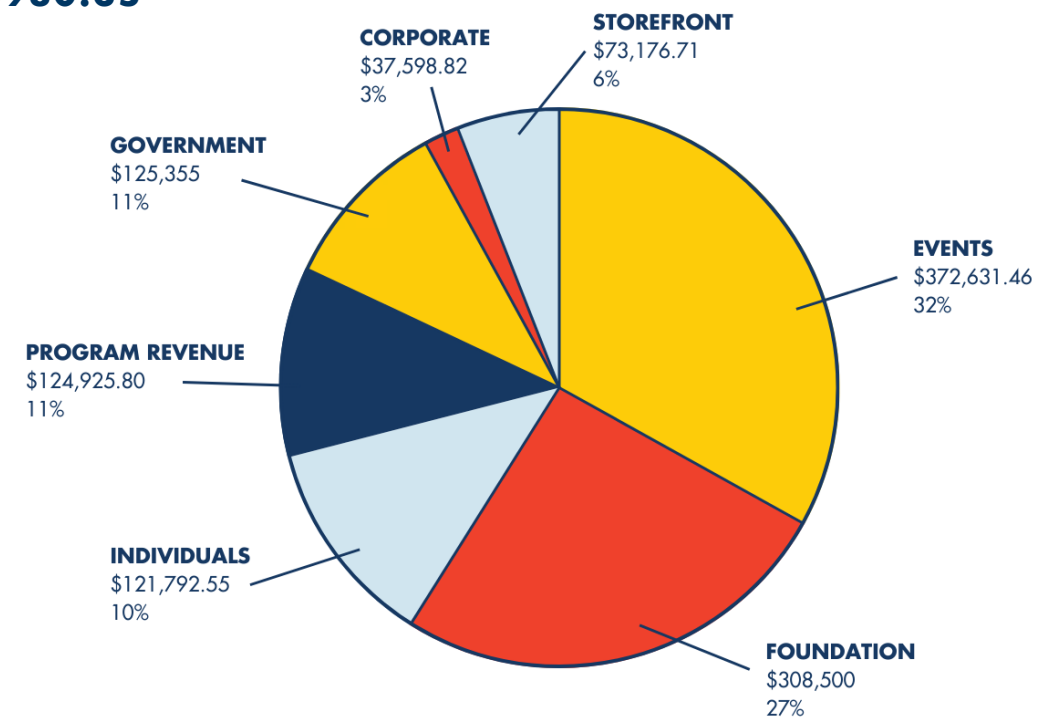
And I fell in love with that moment.



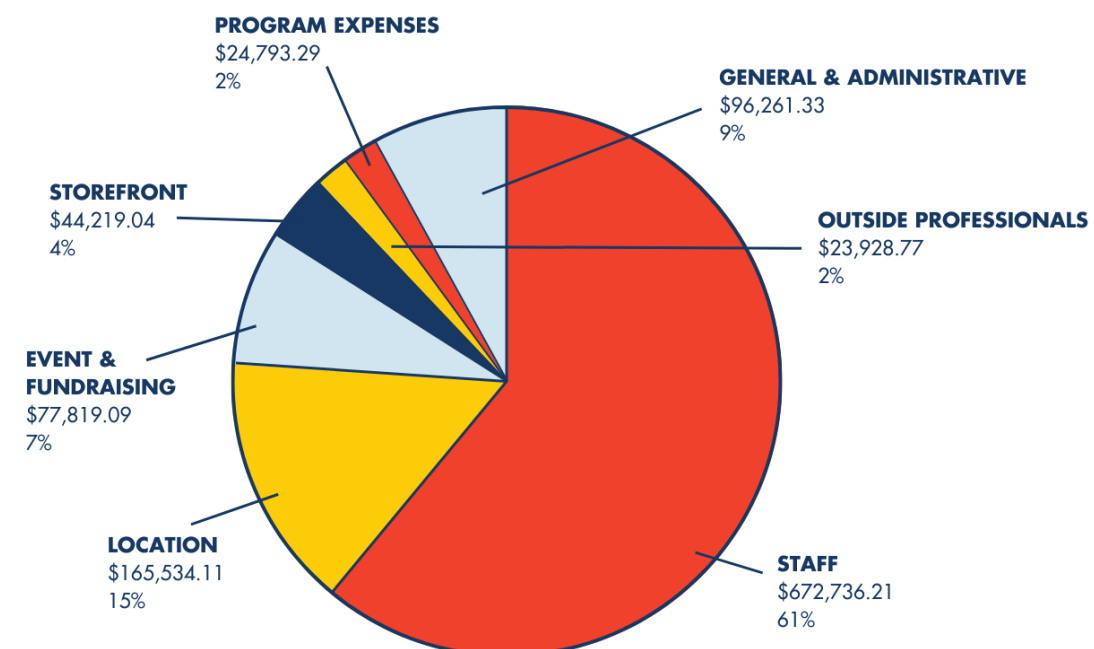
2023-2024 FINANCIALS

REVENUE

\$1,163,980.35



EXPENSES



THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THE GENEROUS FUNDERS AND DONORS WHO MADE OUR WORK IN 2023-24 POSSIBLE.

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Lara Martin and Casey O'Shea
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Sarah Min and Matt Pincus
Robin and Ted Plonsker
Mohan Ramaswamy and Rachel Bogan

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Lily Andrews
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Katrina Sharpe
Jack Szwergold
Brittani Telfair
Shamysia Waterman
Katherine West
Mike Wolf
Ronnie Wolff
Adina Zeth



LOVE LETTER TO NYC

by Vanessa T., 11th grade

From the outside, you look perfect.
You glitter with a thousand lights that will forever glow.
Your nicknames and reputation lead people to expect greatness from you.
But anyone who's spent time with you can attest to your flaws.
But these flaws of yours are often overplayed.
Whilst I want you to work on your downfalls,
I know no one is perfect.
And perhaps I'm biased in my opinion of you.
But I've known you for my whole life. I've gotten to know you inside and out.
You're chaotic; messy.
There is a perfect chaos in you.
Some say you are too difficult to love.
But I will always love you.