

# 826NYC ANNUAL REPORT

21 YEARS OF  
EXCEPTIONAL  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
INSIDE



FISCAL YEAR 2025

Dear Friends,

The 2024-2025 school year at 826NYC was a year of imagination, growth, and community. Across our programs, young writers explored new ideas, shared their stories, and discovered the power of their own voices — and we were honored to witness their creativity and confidence flourish.

This year, we served 3,484 students across all five boroughs, maintaining our focus on youth from historically marginalized and under-resourced communities. Our school partnerships remained strong, with 59 schools and 144 educators collaborating with us to bring engaging writing programs into classrooms and after-school programs citywide.

At our Youth Writing Center, students thrived in Write After School, Write Away Workshops, Teen Writers' Collective, and Write Together field trips. Across the city, they participated in Young Writers Publish, Extended Day, and Personal Statement Programs. Through these programs, 826NYC provided students with space to refine their craft, build confidence, and connect with mentors who inspire them to imagine the possibilities ahead. They tackled everything from crafting intricate story plots to publishing their own work. Students shared, "I am so excited and grateful to be a published author by the end of this [program]," "I finally perfected my personal statement [for college admission] and feel 100% confident with it," and, "All the things that we learned have stuck with me and helped me." Program evaluations showed that 95% of students reported that 826NYC helped them improve their writing and try new things, and 94% of after-school students demonstrated social-emotional growth after participating in the program.

Parents and guardians also shared the profound impact of our programs. In surveys, 100% agreed they saw improvement in their student's school work, recognized that 826NYC respects their family and cultural background, and affirmed that we are a helpful resource for their students. They shared heartfelt reflections such as, "Thank you everyone! Your work brings beautiful changes to kids' lives!" and, "The team helped my reluctant writer actually have fun writing, and the fun of it got him to practice." These responses speak to the meaningful difference our programs make.

Our volunteers were at the heart of this work, with 260 individuals contributing 3,300 hours of dedicated service, providing mentorship, encouragement, and guidance that helped every student feel supported and empowered.

None of this would have been possible without our dedicated staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your belief in young people and your investment in their voices allows 826NYC to continue expanding access, deepening impact, and inspiring the next generation of storytellers across New York City.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

With Gratitude,



Rebecca Darugar, Executive Director

**FROM SELF-DOUBT TO SELF-LOVE**

By Eli P., 10th grade

Self-love isn't a point in your life, it's an ongoing process. A daily practice that requires patience, honesty, willingness, and understanding. Yes, it may seem hard at times to learn and continue with self-love but it doesn't mean you should completely give up.

Sometimes you won't feel strong enough to continue on or worthy enough to even start right now, but realize that you even taking time to read this guide already shows the qualities and strengths needed to succeed with self-love. Showing that you're worthy of being able to do this!

We're all still just trying to figure out and find ourselves and our place in this big world. Don't be overwhelmed by how big of a world it is, if anything, see it as a bigger blessing that you have such a big place to explore and discover different parts of yourself within.

Remember that you are always deserving of love, never let anyone (not even yourself) think otherwise.

Always move with love that starts within.



***"My child's passion for reading and writing are showing up with high grades and test scores. That was not why we started the program, but a true testament to 826NYC. I'm forever grateful for the work you do, and the love of reading and writing you have given my child."***

— PARENT OF A 3RD GRADE WORKSHOP STUDENT



2024-2025 PROGRAM LOCATIONS



- 1 **826NYC'S YOUTH WRITING CENTER  
PARK SLOPE**
- 2 **HIGH SCHOOL OF FASHION INDUSTRIES  
CHELSEA**
- 3 **TRIDENT SWIM FOUNDATION  
PROSPECT HEIGHTS**
- 4 **P.S. 316 | CROWN HEIGHTS**
- 5 **M.S. 88 | SOUTH SLOPE**
- 6 **APEX FOR YOUTH | LOWER EAST SIDE**
- 7 **P.S. 1 | SUNSET PARK**
- 8 **THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM  
PROSPECT HEIGHTS**
- 9 **CONEY ISLAND PREP | CONEY ISLAND**
- 10 **M.S. 217Q | BRIARWOOD**

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Naomi Solomon, Director of Education  
Chris Eckert, Senior Store & Operations Manager  
Danny Kim, Senior Volunteer & Programs Manager  
Summer Medina, Senior Volunteer & Programs Coordinator  
Amani Nephew, Senior Programs Coordinator  
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Ari Grossman, Retail Associate

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Dave Eggers & Nínive Calegari

826NYC FOUNDERS

Scott Seeley & Joan Kim

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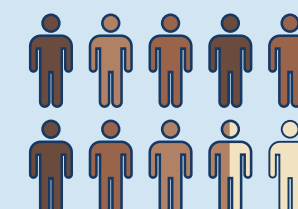
OUR IMPACT

# 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 the majority of seats in our weekend programs for students who would not otherwise be able to attend due to cost. Our partner-based programs focus solely on Title I schools and community partners that serve similar student populations.



**3,484**  
STUDENTS



**83%**  
STUDENTS  
OF COLOR



**59**  
SCHOOL  
PARTNERSHIPS



**14**  
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.



**94%** of after school students demonstrated  
social-emotional gains

**95%** of students agreed that 826NYC  
helped them improve their writing



**95%** of students agreed that they can be creative  
and try new things with 826NYC



OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME 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 weekly Book Club.

WRITE AWAY WORKSHOPS

Spy adventures, poetry, and fantasy worlds are just some of the themes we explored in Write Away Workshops during the summer and on weekends this year. Our students’ stories cracked the case, filled our minds with beautiful imagery, and took us to lands of mythos and magic.

Our Dungeons & Dragons & Writers workshop fuses the magic of storytelling with the classic tabletop role-playing game. In its 4th year D&D&W invited students to shape a story of interstellar adventure through the lens of dice rolls.

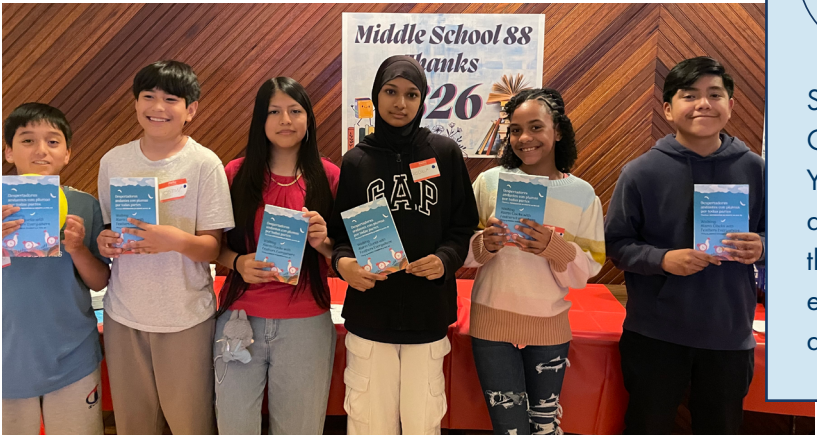
Our Extended Day program brings the magic of Write Away Workshops out of our Youth Writing Center and into the classrooms of school and community partners during after school hours.



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 three 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.

*“Enormous thanks to the team at 826NYC for being such thoughtful and caring partners, making sure our students know they are seen and loved, and nurturing their writer identities when it’s most needed.”*

— LIBRARIAN FROM PASSAGES ACADEMY-BELMONT

PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOPS

High schoolers craft the essays that show colleges their power, potential, and voices in Personal Statement Workshops. This program focuses not only on the elements of shaping great college applications, but also equip young writers with the tools to continue writing and editing long after the sessions conclude.



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 six residencies covered everything from argumentative essays, to personal memoirs, to reflections on what makes New York City so special.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF AN 826NYC FIELD TRIP?  
*“As a former quiet-student myself, I love when I see quieter kids’ ideas start flowing out onto page after page during individual work time, and they usually love to share it with you one-on-one!”*

— HUNTLY COOPER, 826NYC VOLUNTEER





## NY1'S NEW YORKER OF THE WEEK

Board of Directors member and long-time volunteer Christian Rongavilla was featured as Spectrum/NY1's New Yorker of the Week in June 2025. With reporting from Pat Kiernan and Chelsea Katz, this piece highlights the work Christian does with our middle school Write After School students—helping them flesh out ideas and create new, magical stories.



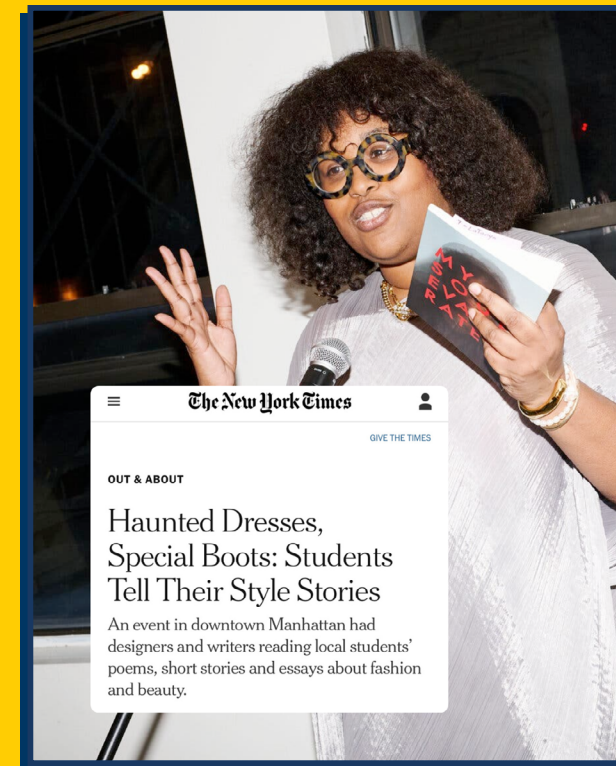
## CBS's UNIQUELY NEW YORK WITH RACHEL HOLT



The Brooklyn Superhero Supply Co and 826NYC were featured on CBS's *Uniquely New York*. Reporter Rachel Holt visited our center in Park Slope, and captured the immersive qualities of our space, while sharing our mission with the world.

## THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE SECTION

In February 2025, The New York Times featured 826NYC and our Stories of Style event in the style section. The event featured powerhouses of the fashion industry and art world such as playwright Jeremy O'Harris, co-founder of Paper magazine Kim Hastreiter, and designer Batsheva Hay, reading pieces from 826NYC students and raising money for our continued partnership with The High School of Fashion Industries.



Ms. Hay, in a sequined tangerine-colored dress of her own design, was slated to read a piece called "The Revenge of the Dress" written by a trio of fourth-grade girls. "It's the best thing I've ever read," she said of the story, which was about a dress that was cursed by a witch and haunts its unsuspecting wearers. "I relate to it one thousand percent," she laughed.





## AN EXPERIENCE THAT MADE ME SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY

By Naichael S., 11th grade

When I came to America for the first time, my life changed forever. I left behind everything I had ever known: my family, my language, my friends, and my culture. It was a hard decision, not one I made lightly. But I knew I had to take that step for a better future. What I didn't expect was how much that move would open my eyes and force me to see the world in a completely different way.

In Haiti, life was simple but full of love and connection. I grew up surrounded by family members who truly cared for me. I spoke Haitian, Creole, and French, which helped me feel comfortable in my skin. My culture was a big part of my identity, from the food we ate, to the music we danced to, to the way we treated each other with respect and warmth. Everyone knew each other in my community, and even if life wasn't always easy, it felt familiar and safe.

Coming to the United States flipped my world upside down. I suddenly found myself in a place where everything was different. I couldn't speak the language well, so I struggled to communicate with others. At school, I felt left out and alone. I didn't know how to express myself in English, and sometimes people made fun of my accent or the way I spoke. I missed my friends back home who understood me without me needing to say much. I missed my family's hugs and homemade meals. Even the cold weather felt like a shock to my body and soul. In Haiti, I had a strong sense of community, but in the US, I noticed people were more distant. Everyone seemed so busy, always rushing somewhere, barely making time to talk. I felt like a stranger, not just in a new place but in a new life. I cried often in those early days, asking myself if I would ever belong.

But little by little, I started to adapt. I pushed myself to learn English, even when it felt embarrassing to make mistakes. I watched videos, read books, and practiced speaking as much as I could. I started making new friends who were patient and kind, and who helped me understand American culture. I learned how to balance two identities, holding onto my Haitian roots while learning to live in a new land.

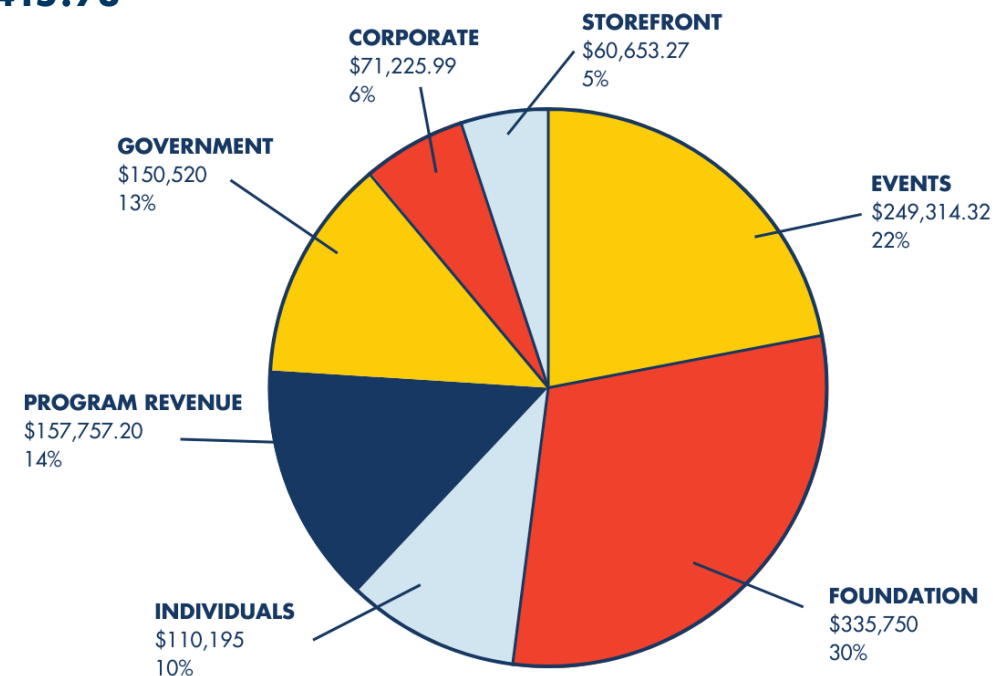
Now, I see the world differently. I understand that people live very different lives depending on where they are born. I've learned to be more open-minded and more appreciative of the small things, like a simple conversation or a friendly smile. I've also learned to never take my culture for granted. Being Haitian is a big part of who I am, and even though I live in the US now, I carry my heritage proudly. This experience taught me that change is hard, but it also helps you grow. Moving to America made me feel lost at first, but it also helped me discover my strength. It opened my eyes to different ways of life and showed me that no matter where I go, I can build a new home while keeping my old one in my heart.



## 2024-2025 FINANCIALS \*

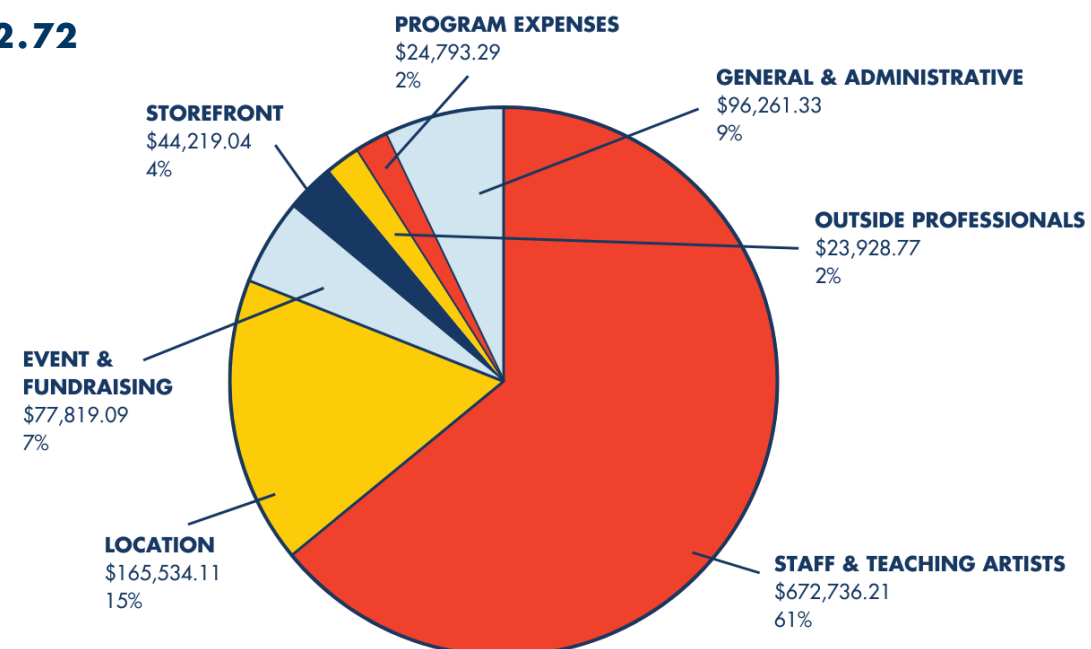
### REVENUE

**\$1,135,415.78**



### EXPENSES

**\$1,160,142.72**



\*Unaudited



# THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THE GENEROUS FUNDERS AND DONORS WHO MADE OUR WORK IN 2024-25 POSSIBLE.

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Andrew Sparkler and Starling Marshall

David Trahan and Susan Berliner

David Tuffy

Jan van der Lande

Richa Verma

Mo and Cher Willems

Ted Wolff and Anne Clarke Wolff

VOLUNTEERS: 20+ HOURS

- Alice Adeline

Eleanor Allen

Emily Anderson

Elias Attea

Finola Austin

Ennis Bache

Michael Burns

Kathy Christian

Caitlin Clements

Rose Connelly

Huntly Cooper

Sevasti Dames

Grace Dignazio

Kat Figurelli

Lia Florio

Darcy Fray

Maya Ghose

Stephen Giegerich

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- Davida Marion

Orli Matlow

Maye Mcphail

Mariana Medina

Tiana Moe

Elizabeth Morse

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Marguerite O’Brien-Pappalardo

Kahini Patel

Abigail Pfeffer

Lucy Powell

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Olivia Ray

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Clare Sabry

Anya Sacharow

Lili Schwartz

Rochelle Scott

Katrina Sharpe

Neerja Singh

Tracy Smith

Jack Szwergold

Ilene Tannenbaum

Sophia Tenesaca

Phyllis Trout

Josiah Vazquez

Richa Verma

Mike Wolf

Ronnie Wolff

Adina Zeth



## **I TOOK THE R TRAIN**

by Liam D., age 10

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Today I took the R train  
Because I didn't want to walk in the rain  
Then we took the D train,  
Which is next to three lanes.  
We are going to Coney island  
So my dad and I can make a sandwich out of sand.  
Then we saw an R32  
Which was graffitied all in blue  
Then we saw the orange Q,  
Which flew!  
Then we got in the sand,  
But it was really bland.  
Then we got chicken,  
It was finger lickin'!  
On the way home, into the train flew a pigeon,  
It flapped around eating bun, it was fun!  
Finally we made it home  
and ended the day with an ice cream cone!

**KEEP UP WITH OUR STORY**

