



2024-2025

# A Year in Review

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear friends,

Every week, I have the opportunity to dive into meaningful, mission-driven work that makes my role so rewarding. Work such as:



- Assisting students as they craft their college essay.
- Meeting with principals to explore how 826 Boston programs can help them meet their academic goals.
- Building partnerships, such as one we just established this year with the Boston Public Library to offer 826 Boston publications at every branch.
- Or, sometimes, it's simply having the backs of our students and advocating for their right to have their voices heard and their stories told unapologetically.

As many of you know, the work of 826 Boston was threatened in February when AmeriCorps began taking proactive action to ensure compliance with anti-DEI directives from the Trump administration.

We were asked to certify that our organization and the activities of our AmeriCorps service members did not engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion activities. The work of our 11 service members helped us achieve more than 24,000 hours of individualized support to students.

Imagine 826 Boston, a storytelling organization that published 742 student authors last school year, suddenly censoring students, or declining to help them write. Or a tutoring organization where 100 percent of partner teachers affirmed that we support their instructional goals, now avoiding lessons discussing identity or historical oppression. It was for these reasons that we opted not to certify. We withdrew our AmeriCorps application to remain true to our values.

That decision cost us approximately \$250,000, or roughly 9 percent of our annual budget, at the time. But as I shared in a video about our decision, “with community, anything is possible.”

And indeed, our community showed up for us. To date, we have raised \$260,000 from our rapid response campaign, allowing us to hire five new full-time program assistants to fill the void of the 11 service members we lost.

This year's annual report spotlights 826 Boston's remarkable programs and illustrates our impact in amplifying youth voices and developing the next generation of leaders. Thank you for your support.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey Yarbrough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Corey Yarbrough

826 Boston Executive Director

# GOVERNANCE

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## Executive Committee

Janet Tiampo, Board President  
April Bo Wang, Vice President  
David Bagnani, Board Treasurer  
Jill Harrison Berg  
Kate Taylor, Independent Coach and Consultant

## Board of Directors

Andrew Cohn  
Harvey Cotton, Legal Counsel  
Mimi Curran  
Dr. Shannon Fairley-Pittman, Northeastern University  
Javier Juarez, The Boston Foundation  
Gillian Kohli, Wellesley Books  
Benielle Sims, Liberty Mutual Insurance  
Rosann Tung  
Agnes Ugoji, Cerulli Associates

## Literary Board

M. T. Anderson  
Neema Avashia  
Richard Blanco  
Christopher Castellani  
Jennifer De Leon  
Anita Diamant  
Andre Dubus III  
Julia Glass  
Meredith Goldstein  
Desmond Hall  
Jeff Kinney  
Helen Elaine Lee  
Tom Perrotta  
Heidi Pitlor  
Jessica Shattuck  
Annie Weatherwax

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## New appointment to the 826 Boston Board of Directors

Agnes Ugoji is the first 826 Boston student alumna to have joined the board. A graduate of the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science in Roxbury and Dartmouth College, Agnes currently works as an institutional research analyst at Cerulli Associates. She serves as a mentor and associate board member at Minds Matter Boston, and is an active member of the Boston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Agnes is a dynamic writer and poet. She also was awarded the individual state championship at the 2016 Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam and Festival in Washington, D.C. At the age of 16—the youngest on the list—YW Boston named her one of Boston's 150 Women of Influence.

Agnes is a passionate advocate for community empowerment. We are thrilled to have Agnes' valuable perspective on our board. Her wealth of accomplishments and her experience growing up with 826 Boston will help her empower young storytellers and turn ideas into impact at 826 Boston.



Photo: Vitallia Williams

# THE YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

826 Boston provided **3,878** unique students and a total of **24,729** hours of individualized writing support.

Among them, **975** students received college essay support, accumulating more than **3,000** program hours.

Additionally, **569** students received STEM literacy support, accounting for a total of **1,912** program hours.

We also collaborated with **116** partner teachers across **13** partner schools.

This year, we published **34** publications in which **742** students were featured.

We had **12** program partners, including Black Boy Joy, Bloomberg Arts Internship, Boston Collegiate Charter School, Boston Neighborhood Network, Boston Public Library, Brooke Charter School, FAO Schwarz Fellowship, Future Chefs, MLK Scholars, The Possible Zone, White Snake Projects, and Y.M.W.A.P.



**We surveyed 1,500 students. Here's what they reported:**

95% felt more confident in their writing

94% felt safe and supported

94% felt their thoughts and opinions were valued

94% felt 826 Boston improved their writing/project/work

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) remains a core driver of our mission at 826 Boston. As reflected in the year's major initiatives and organizational commitments, we remain steadfast in ensuring that equity is embedded across programs, operations, and partnerships.

As such, a central component of this work is our robust, cross-departmental DEI Committee, which meets monthly as both a proactive forum and a problem-solving hub for equity issues as they emerge. The committee surfaces equity concerns, anticipates organizational needs, and collaborates to implement solutions that strengthen the organizational commitment to DEI. This is accomplished in various ways.

For example, over the past year, in addition to providing feedback and input about the AmeriCorp transition, the committee examined the importance of multilingual support, provided critical feedback related to compensation, developed guidance for supporting staff and students during Ramadan, and partnered with department leads to ensure equitable practices are embedded in daily operations.

We also deepened our organizational learning by engaging in a detailed examination of the traits of White Supremacy Culture (based on the work of author Tema Okun) and their potential impact on nonprofit work environments. Through a scaffolded approach focused on defensiveness, right to comfort, and fear of open conflict, we examined how these dynamics show up in practice and co-created strategies to disrupt them. As a direct result of this work, 826 Boston has implemented annual assessments of our feedback and conflict culture, developed new tools to support managers in navigating difficult conversations, and reinforced organizational norms that center transparency and accountability.

# 826 BOSTON AND BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“We’ve already seen the remarkable impact 826 Boston is having on our students. In just a short time, they’ve become an invaluable partner in our classrooms. Their dedication to student success, their expertise in writing and literacy, and their commitment to fostering a love of learning are inspiring. We are so grateful to have 826 Boston as a partner in our mission to empower our students. We look forward to seeing the impact they have across our school.”

—Karen Loughran, CO-Head of School, New Mission High School, Hyde Park, MA



Karen Loughran (Co-Head of School, New Mission High School), Kassy Edouard (Writers’ Room Manager), Rep. Rob Consalvo (Massachusetts State Representative), and Corey Yarbrough (Executive Director).



We surveyed Boston public school teachers who work with 826 Boston. 100% of teachers agreed that:

- Writers’ Room supported their curriculum & instructional goals
- 826 Boston programming was paced well to provide right balance of challenge and support
- 826 Boston team members were well trained
- 826 Boston team respected my students’ cultural background
- They would like to partner with 826 Boston again

# CIVIC LEADERS TUTORING WEEK



In an inspiring display of community engagement, 826 Boston's inaugural Civic Leaders Tutoring Week welcomed 13 elected and appointed officials to 826 Boston's Writers' Rooms in Boston Public School classrooms and our tutoring center in Egleston Square.

We launched the "Civic Leaders Tutoring Week" to bring awareness to our mission—to provide free writing, tutoring, and publishing programs to students in grades K-12 and beyond so they can share their stories, amplify their voices, and develop as leaders in school and in life. The initiative, which ran from October 21-24, 2024, deepened relationships between civic leaders and the students they serve, highlighted the transformative power of writing, and shed light on the critical need for high-dosage tutoring.



Thirteen elected and appointed officials participated, including U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley, State Reps. Christopher J. Worrell, Russell E. Holmes, Chynah Tyler, and Samantha Montaña; Boston City Councilors At-Large Henry Santana and Ed Flynn; Boston City Councilors Brian J. Worrell, Enrique J. Pepén, and Benjamin J. Weber; Boston Public School Committee Chair Jeri Robinson; Hyde Park Neighborhood Liaison Cecily Graham, and Dorchester Neighborhood Liaison Madison Foley.

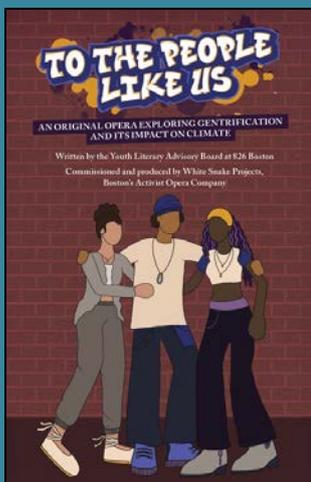


# TWO NEW WRITERS' ROOMS



826 Boston opened its first dual-language high school Writers' Room at Margarita Muñiz Academy in Jamaica Plain. We celebrated our fifth Writers' Room with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 20, 2024. Although the Writers' Room opened its doors to students in 2024, 826 Boston has partnered with the school since its inception a decade ago.

826 Boston celebrated the opening of our sixth Writers' Room with a ribbon-cutting at New Mission High School in Hyde Park on March 20, 2025.



826 Boston and White Snake Projects' joint production of To The People Like Us was performed on June 28, 2025 at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester.

It was the first libretto created by 826 Boston's Youth Literary Advisory Board (YLAB) and a collaboration with White Snake Projects. The opera is a timely exploration of gentrification and its impacts on our climate.



# FEATURED BOOKS



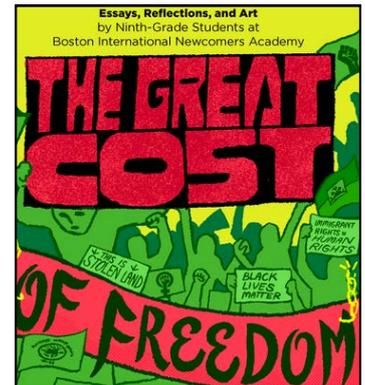
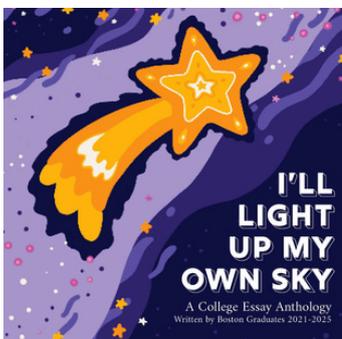
From small-class zines to widely-shared anthologies, 826 Boston students created 34 publications this year.

Writers' Rooms produced a variety of work, including heartfelt personal narratives, multilingual poetry, and imaginative explorations of the future.

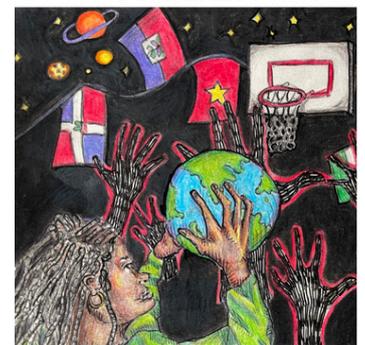
Writing workshops sparked creativity with projects that built brand new characters, encouraged collaborative storytelling, and invited readers into the exciting world of choose-your-own-adventure tales.

These books exemplify the transformative power of writing.

Students' vibrant creativity offers wisdom, humor, and unique perspectives, inviting readers everywhere to connect with and learn from their stories.



## I AM BRAVERY ITSELF



POEMS, NARRATIVES, AND FUTURE BIOGRAPHIES ABOUT IDENTITY

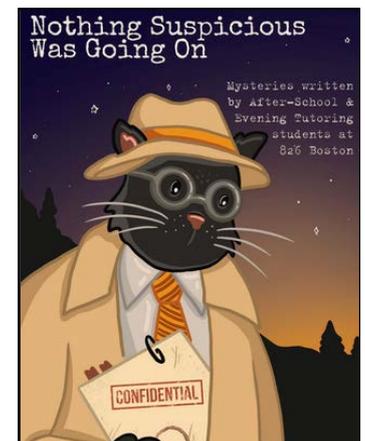
By the Dr. Albert D. Holland High School of Technology's Exploration Academy



"What was once green turns to flame, smoke twisting into choking skies. We burn in their game, lost in a forest of paper lies.

But listen—hear the crackle, the hiss. Even flames bow to the winds of change. What's planted in ash could birth bliss, if we scatter their chains, rearrange."

—Iyanna, grade 9, "Green Flames," Rubix literary magazine from John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science



# SIGNATURE EVENTS



Our Night of 1,000 Stories gala was held on October 9, 2024. The evening featured readings by students Maya and Rudhly and alumna Mariam, plus a lively conversation with Rudhly and author and Literary Board member Desmond Hall. Restaurateur Nia Grace received our Reshaping the Narrative Award. We premiered a moving film about Adam, age 23, who started as a student at age 12 and has continued as a volunteer for many years.



PHOTOS BY MIKE MEJIA



Books for Breakfast was held on May 7, 2025, at Goodwin Procter, where 160 attendees enjoyed breakfast and reconnected with the 826 Boston community of supporters. Speakers included a reading from Huma, a student at the Boston International Newcomers Academy, featured author Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, and a special appearance by 826 Network co-founder and author Dave Eggers.



PHOTOS BY MIKE MEJIA

# THE HALF HALF HALF HALF HALF MARATHON

On a picture-perfect evening on April 17, 2025, more than 160 runners ran the eighth Half Half Half Half Half Marathon, a 0.826-mile race at Jamaica Pond.

With students Tej and Charles from the Dr. Albert D. Holland High School of Technology as our dynamic emcees, we raised more than \$30,000 and brought the community together for another memorable event.



# HOUSE PARTIES AND EVENTS



September 2025: Students and author Keith Magee (Prophetic Justice: Race, Religion, and Politics) discussed his book at our tutoring center in Roxbury.



November 2024: Annie Weatherwax shared a screening of her film Monster in a Dress at our tutoring center to a full house.



March 2025: Authors Jessica Shattuck (Last House) and Nina MacLaughlin (Wake, Siren) discussed the writing process in Chestnut Hill.

April 2025: Author Vaishnavi Patel spoke about her feminist novel Kaikeyi in Lexington.



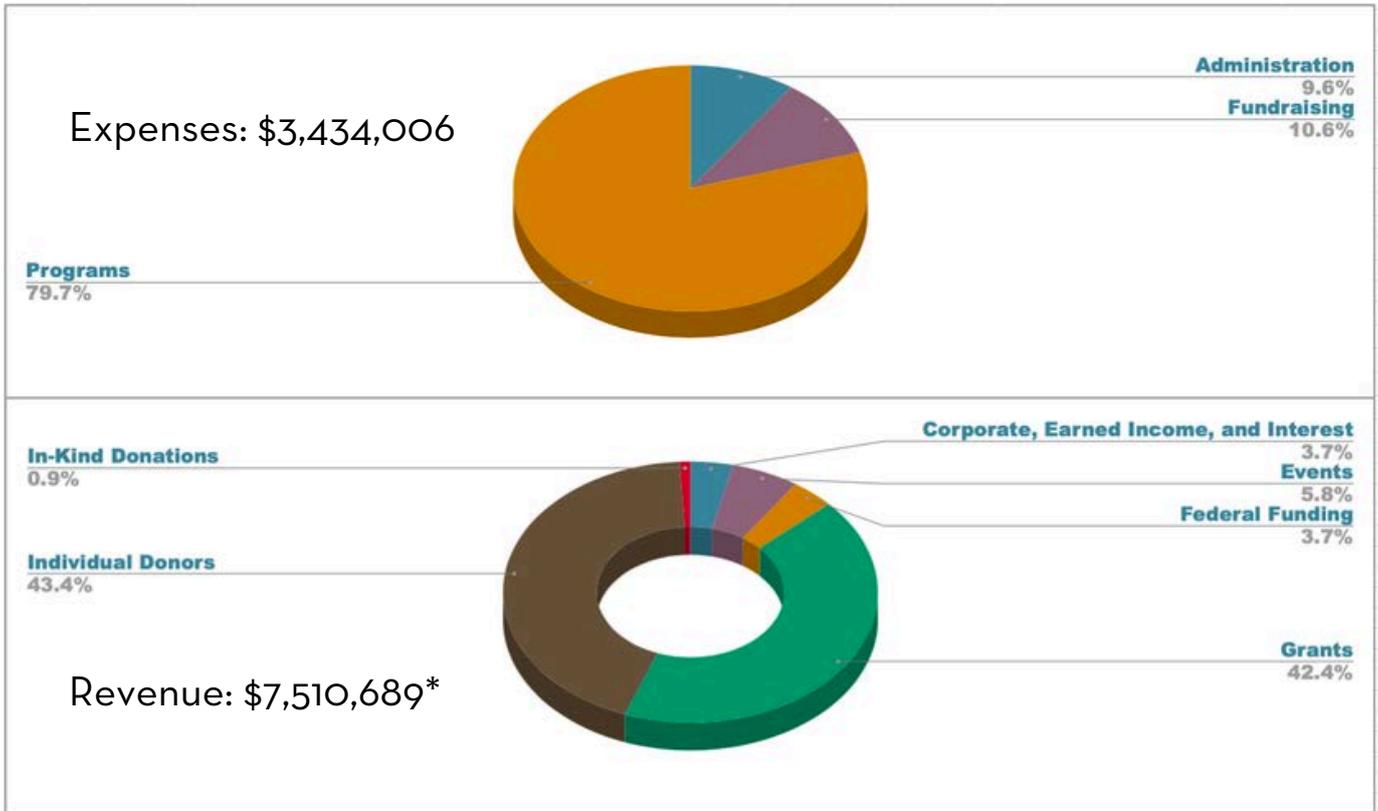
May 2025: Authors Marjan Kamali (The Lion Women of Tehran) and Rachel Barenbaum (Host of NHPR's Check This Out) spoke about historical fiction at GrubStreet in the Seaport District.



June 2025: Author and illustrator Raúl the Third (the iVamos! series) discussed his creative process in Jamaica Plain.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT



\* Includes pledges and commitments for future fiscal years generated through a multi-year campaign.

## THE 826 BOSTON TEAM



The 826 Boston team at the Greater Boston Bigfoot Research Institute, August 2025

# MORE STORIES, PLEASE

## MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 826 BOSTON TEAM:

After-School and Evening Tutoring Program students showcased their latest work in [Nothing Suspicious Was Going On](#), a thrilling collection of bite-sized mysteries. Whether it's a missing dog or a mistaken identity, the stories in this chapbook promise clever twists, endless detectives, and plenty of mischief. But don't be fooled...something suspicious is definitely going on!



At Boston International Newcomers Academy, ten seniors served as Writers' Room Ambassadors, a paid semester-long internship opportunity designed to build students' leadership skills and provide work experience. Ambassadors worked as peer tutors in the Writers' Room, designed and edited the annual yearbook, and shared their work at school-wide celebrations.



Have you ever seen a Squoik? A Moshee? A MeseCool? These creative creatures are just a few of the characters second graders at the Boston Teachers Union K-8 Pilot School created during their Camp Cryptid Workshop, a new offering for early elementary students that was piloted in the Writers' Room last year.



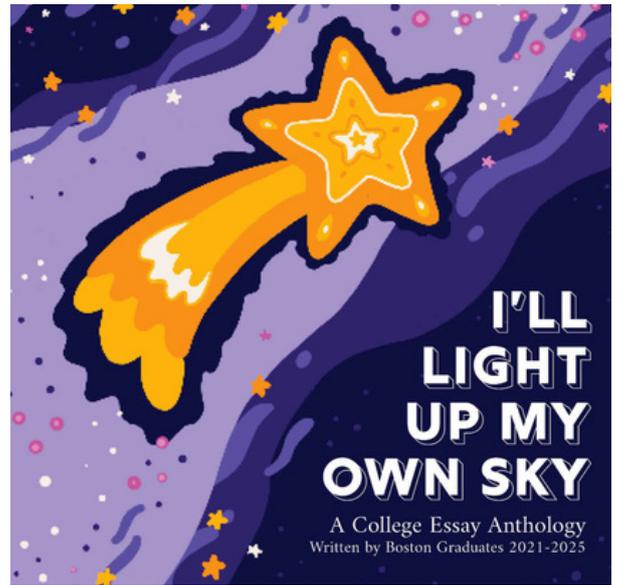
# MORE STORIES, PLEASE

826 Boston worked with 975 students from across the City of Boston to brainstorm, write, and revise their personal statements for college applications, providing more than 3,000 hours of individualized support. The recently published [I'll Light Up My Own Sky](#) is a collection of college essays written by Boston graduates from 2021-2025.

Students at the Dr. Albert D. Holland High School of Technology met weekly in the Writers' Room to create [Heartache Gang](#), a literary magazine showcasing stories of a talking toucan and a knight with a tortured past, along with poetic explorations of anxiety, self-image, identity, and those eternally bittersweet bonds between teens, their friends, and their families.

The Writers' Room team at the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science helped middle school students crack the code on their writing through biweekly writing conferences focused on understanding and implementing teachers' coded feedback.

The Writers' Room at the Margarita Muñiz Academy partnered with seventh-grade students in the SLIFE program (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) to publish [La Historia de una Manzanita que Quería Cumplir Sus Sueños](#), a collectively written story about an Italian apple and her journey to fame!



# MORE STORIES, PLEASE

The Writers' Room at New Mission High School teamed up with creative writing teachers and volunteers to support students in writing original satirical plays. Through a series of mini workshops, students learned to weave together research and creativity, adding depth to their characters by utilizing Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory.



YLAB also presented original work on the first installment of Boston Neighborhood Network's The Word. And, they were photographed as part of I Learn America's multidisciplinary storytelling campaign!



**826 Boston is a nonprofit writing, tutoring, and publishing organization where students in grades K-12 and beyond can share their stories, amplify their voices, and develop as leaders in school and in life.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT US AT [826BOSTON.ORG](https://826BOSTON.ORG)**