



LEAP *for Education*

LEARN EXPLORE ASPIRE PURSUE

ANNUAL REPORT

The Magic of Mentoring

A Message From Leadership



“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Isaac Newton’s words remind us that progress is never solitary—it’s built on the wisdom, generosity, and belief of those who came before. When caring adults invest in young people, they become the giants who lift others to new heights. Mentoring is not just a gift—it’s a legacy.

At LEAP, mentoring is central to our mission. Middle school students begin with project-based career exploration; guided by dedicated staff and volunteers. In high school, youth deepen their sense of identity and belonging through Sisters for Success and Brothers for Success, and receive year-round one-on-one coaching that culminates in our paid summer work experience. With continued support, graduates go on to earn industry credentials and college degrees. In FY 2025, over 575 students benefited from these services.

This past year brought many challenges. Funding cuts and uncertainty strained nonprofits and threatened the wellbeing of our students and families. LEAP responded by building cash reserves, expanding our volunteer base, and exploring revenue-generating strategies to help bridge funding gaps.

Even amid these headwinds, we celebrated major milestones: certification by the Massachusetts Service Alliance as a best-in-class volunteer organization; a \$100,000 New York Life Foundation grant for our Lynn middle school program (one of only 15 awarded nationwide); a three-year renewal and exemplary designation for our Salem middle school program; a powerful partnership with the Peabody Essex Museum that culminated in an immigrant story exhibit; and, a summer work program showcase comprised of 60 student projects and presentations at Salem State University.

Looking ahead to FY 2026, mentoring remains our anchor strategy. We’re investing in technology and expanding partnerships to reach more youth. Notable collaborations include Salem High School and Salem State University, where LEAP supports Early College students, and Lynn Community Health Center, where career mentoring will extend to more Lynn teens. Together, these efforts will reach an additional 150 students.

To our community of supporters: you are the giants on whose shoulders our staff, volunteers, and students stand. Your belief fuels our work and inspires us to meet each challenge with creativity, resilience, and hope.

Sincerely, .

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Constance Grayson".

Constance Rudnick Grayson
Chair, Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda E. Saris".

Linda E. Saris
Executive Director

LEAP Staff and Board of Directors

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

Rebecca Field, Middle School Curriculum and Summer Program Manager

Hilary Kopp, Senior Director of Middle School Programs

Wanntha Sim Chanhdymany, School Year Manager, Middle School

Niko Staniszewski-Stanley, Dream MORE Site Coordinator

Brandon Sungy, Data Specialist

HIGH SCHOOL AND POST-SECONDARY

James Anderton, Career and Education Resource Manager

Ivana Buenopena, Career Exploration and Readiness Manager

Jhayr Castillo, Teen Center Coordinator, Lynn

Allison De La Puente, Teen Center Coordinator, Salem

Ariel FitzHugh, Senior Director of High School and Post-Secondary Programs

Nicole McClain, Work-Based Learning Coordinator

Mariel Nunez, Teen Center Associate, Lynn

Lara Sao Pedro, Career and Education Mentoring Coordinator

Jeison Toribio, Teen Center Associate, Salem

Erica Waters, Career and Education Mentoring Associate

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Linda Saris, Ex-Officio



"Joining LEAP's Board has been a powerful way to give back to the community that shaped me. As a Salem public school graduate, I am proud to support an organization where mentorship is more than a program—it's a promise to the next generation. The staff's dedication and the students' talents have been nothing but inspirational."

- Santi DeOleo

Co-Host & Executive Producer of Ashlee & The New JAM'N Morning Show at iHeartMedia
LEAP Board Member

PROGRAM MODEL & IMPACT

LEAP for Education, working with the community, expands opportunities for youth and supports them throughout their educational and career journey.

Read the graphic from left to right: This theory of change shows the resources and strengths we have to move our students through a pipeline of age-appropriate programs and the measurable outcomes we produce.





“LEAP for Education exemplifies what’s possible when a university and a community partner come together around a shared belief in investing in the future of the region’s youth. Through our 15 years of partnering with LEAP, hundreds of first-generation college students have benefitted from LEAP’s ESL academies, college access and STEM programs, career mentoring and early college wrap-around support. Together we are nurturing the next generation of leaders while strengthening our communities.”

- John Keenan
President, Salem State University



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

78%
STUDENTS
OF COLOR

32%
ENGLISH LEARNERS
AND FORMER ENGLISH
LEARNERS

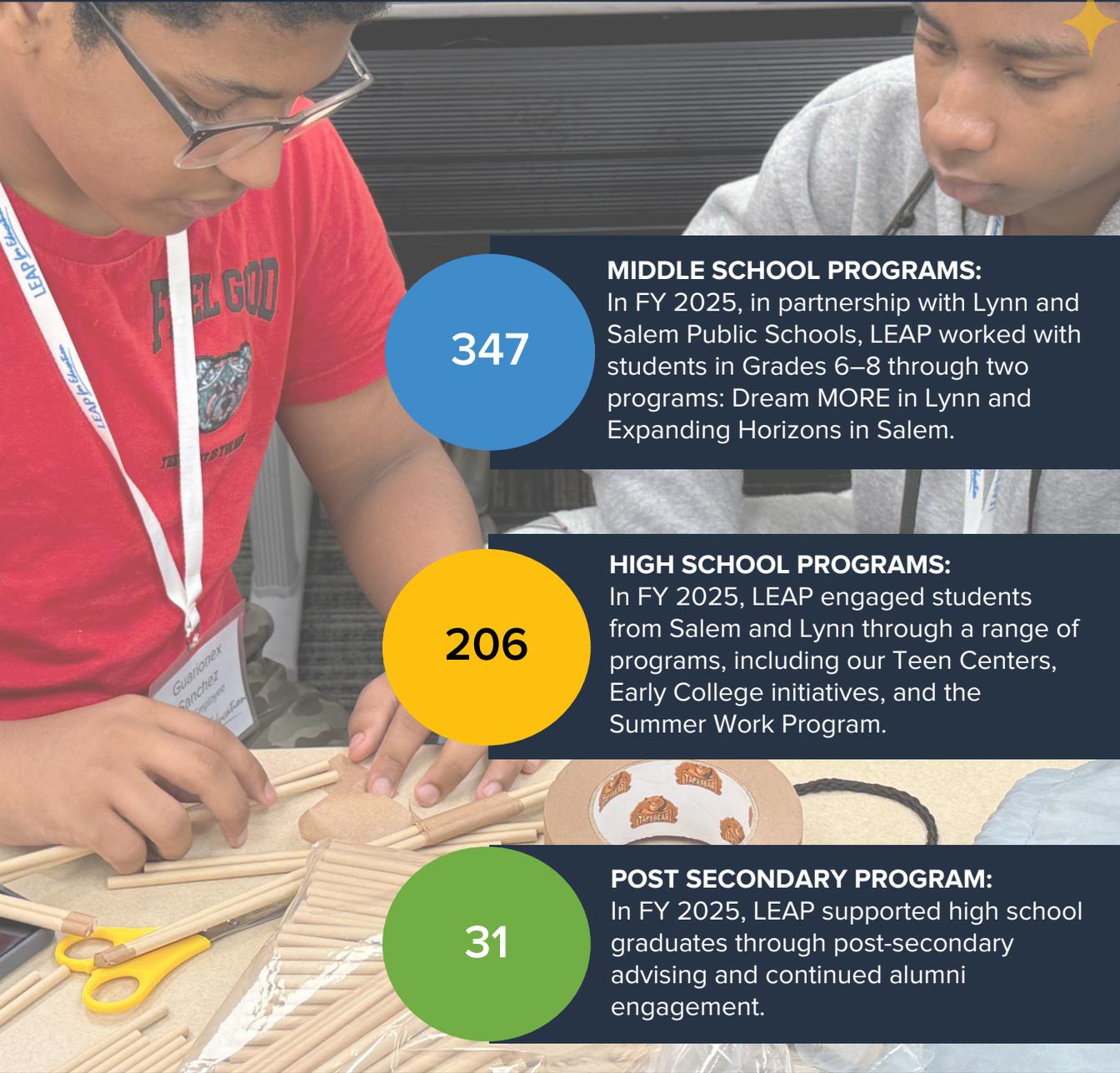
LEAP supports these diverse and
talented populations

76%
FIRST-GENERATION-
TO-COLLEGE

79%
LOW INCOME

2025 PROGRAMS: BY THE NUMBERS

LEAP for Education provides free after-school and summer programs in Salem and Lynn, supporting students from middle school through post-secondary completion. Along the way, youth build skills and confidence through career-connected, project-based, and work-based learning.



347

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

In FY 2025, in partnership with Lynn and Salem Public Schools, LEAP worked with students in Grades 6–8 through two programs: Dream MORE in Lynn and Expanding Horizons in Salem.

206

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

In FY 2025, LEAP engaged students from Salem and Lynn through a range of programs, including our Teen Centers, Early College initiatives, and the Summer Work Program.

31

POST SECONDARY PROGRAM:

In FY 2025, LEAP supported high school graduates through post-secondary advising and continued alumni engagement.

Summer Programs 2025

195

Middle School youth engaged in five weeks of project-based learning, enrichment, and social-emotional development.

57

The Summer Work Program offers teens (ages 14-19) a unique, immersive workplace experience over six weeks.

2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Middle school youth begin by building foundational academic mindsets and social-emotional habits. They identify emerging career interests through hands-on, project-based learning. Along the way, youth practice planning, problem-solving, and presenting—habits they carry into class and beyond.



In partnership with Salem Alliance for the Environment, students used their engineering skills to plan and build their own wind turbines. They carried this experience into a robotics project by designing robots that support sustainability initiatives.



Middle School

"My son's ability to participate in Expanding Horizons made a powerful impact on his successful transition into middle school. We are beyond grateful to finally have a place where he feels welcome, included, and comfortable enough to participate."

-Andrea R
Parent of Salem Middle School Student

Project-Based Learning

Group Learning



In partnership with Salem Public Schools and the Peabody Essex Museum, students explored the immigrant experience in Salem through history and constructed artifacts to display at the PEM. This project was made possible by a grant from Mass Humanities.



Students learned basic coding skills and developed their problem solving skills as they experienced what is involved in being a video game creator.

"The support my daughter receives—both constructive and emotional—along with the independence she has developed and been granted, sets this program apart from others."

-Debra B
Parent of Lynn Middle School Student

In high school and beyond, students build on their middle-school foundations by testing interests and applying their skills in the real world—through work-based learning, internships, and skill-building projects tied to career pathways. Consistent advising, placement support, and follow-up ensure they keep momentum from graduation to post-secondary enrollment or employment.



High School

Work-Based Learning

One-to-One Mentorship & Coaching

High school teens toured Cell Signaling Technology and participated in a networking event that provided them with professional insight and career-building skills.



Mazow & McCullough Personal Injury Law hosted a mock interview night for our teens, providing them with valuable real-world experience.

"By attending LEAP and meeting my mentors, I learned skills that helped me plan for my future. The biggest thing I learned was how to network. Now I feel confident talking to people, and that's helped me a lot in my job."

- Ester, Salem Teen Center Student

In a conversation with Senator Crighton, teens applied critical thinking to a proposed cellphone ban in schools, weighing pros and cons from their own experiences. Their analysis impressed the senator—"I'd be out of a job," he quipped—and highlighted how the program cultivates civic engagement.

"Through our partnerships with organizations like LEAP, we are able to amplify the impact of mentoring—helping students stay in school, graduate, and access college and career opportunities. We help young professionals gain the mentorship and networks needed for workforce success, and we support youth organizations in running sustainable mentoring programs."

- Cynthia Orellana, PhD
CEO, Mass Mentoring Partnership





ALUMNA PROFILE

Sia-Linda

Sia-Linda Lebbie’s journey with LEAP began when she was eight. As refugees from the civil war in Sierra Leone, Sia’s family found a home in Salem and then found LEAP. While Sia-Linda’s mom attended computer classes at LEAP, Sia-Linda’s love of learning caught Executive Director Linda Saris’s attention and a bond was formed.

“My first impression of LEAP was that it was cool—there were other kids there.”

- Sia-Linda

Received a full scholarship to Notre Dame University, MBA Class of 2027.

2025

Volunteered and worked at LEAP during summers and vacations.

2021-24

Received a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and began working at Google in San Francisco.

2021

Graduated Valedictorian from Salem Academy Charter School.

2017

Attended LEAP for the first time.

2011

When Sia-Linda turned 11, she started to participate in LEAP’s middle school programs including the Zero Robotics NASA competition at MIT, and the Future City competition. “These programs helped me with my science classes and exposed me to a world of technology and career possibilities,” Sia-Linda explained.

Linda Saris continued to be a guiding force, mentoring Sia-Linda through the college application process to the University of Pennsylvania. In 2017 Sia-Linda graduated from Salem Academy Charter School as valedictorian and that fall entered the University of Pennsylvania on a full scholarship. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in Communications and Media Studies in 2021.

While at Penn, Sia-Linda launched the award-winning *The Trillect* podcast. The show gave her a platform to explore ideas, share stories, and connect with others—an early glimpse into her talent for content strategy and storytelling.

After graduation Sia-Linda joined Google, where she has spent four years as a go-to-market hardware digital marketing strategist for GoogleStore.com. She has helped launch five major products across 19 global markets. Through her years from high school through career, Sia-Linda has volunteered and worked for LEAP.

Today, Sia-Linda is pursuing an MBA at Notre Dame University on a full scholarship to become a leader in marketing, someone who understands the full scope of a business. She also dreams of leading content strategy for a brand she loves, helping shape its voice and impact.

Sia-Linda’s story is one of vision, hard work, mentorship, and purpose—and she’s just getting started.



Post-Secondary Outcomes

While Sia-Linda's story is compelling, she is just one of many students LEAP has helped.

● Massachusetts (Data for Low-Income Students) ● LEAP for Education

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT



COLLEGE PERSISTENCE



POST-SECONDARY GRADUATION (all LEAP High School Students)



POST-SECONDARY GRADUATION (all LEAP Post-Secondary Advising students)



VOLUNTEER AND PARTNERSHIPS

Volunteer Today, Shape Tomorrow

Our Volunteers Make An Impact

Our volunteers are allies, community advocates, and relationship builders, supporting our students directly and ensuring their success in academics, personal and career growth. Our dedicated volunteers are LEAP alumni, local college student interns, young professionals, Business Partner Network colleagues, and recent retirees looking to support the next generation of Lynn and Salem youth.

3,258

**Hours
Volunteered**

182

**Community
Volunteers**

92

Mentors

Service Enterprise Certification & Accreditation



After a year-long certification process supported by the Massachusetts Service Alliance, we have achieved national recognition for our commitment to volunteer excellence.

This accreditation affirms our dedication to increasing both the quality and quantity of our volunteers, and enhancing their overall experience. It also reinforces our ongoing mission to elevate the impact and caliber of our programs through strong, sustainable volunteer engagement.

“LEAP has transformed the way volunteerism drives impact— expertly connecting students with mentors, opening doors to career exploration, and strengthening programs that empower hundreds of youth. Their energy, creativity, and commitment to collaboration embody what these initiatives are all about.”

**- Ian Whalen-Stone
Massachusetts Service Alliance**





"Spending time with Amar each week has been incredibly rewarding. Watching her grow in confidence, open up, and connect real-life lessons to her passions reminded me how powerful mentorship can be—even in small doses. Our weekly meetings have brought both joy and inspiration to my own life."

-Courtney Carleo,
Mazow & McCullough

"Mentoring Darren over the past two years has been a truly rewarding experience for both of us. I've had the privilege of witnessing his growth—not just in maturity, but in his creativity and willingness to think outside the box when it comes to his passions. His confidence in pursuing his interests has genuinely inspired me to do the same."

-Jhayr Castillo,
LEAP Summer Mentor



"LynnLab was thrilled to partner with LEAP for Education this summer. The students we worked with were so engaged; they asked great questions and participated in all our activities. Our two organizations have aligned missions and we look forward to future partnerships!"

-Don Pinkerton
Lynn Labs



From Our Volunteers and Partners

A complete list of volunteers can be found on our website.

Interested in Partnering?



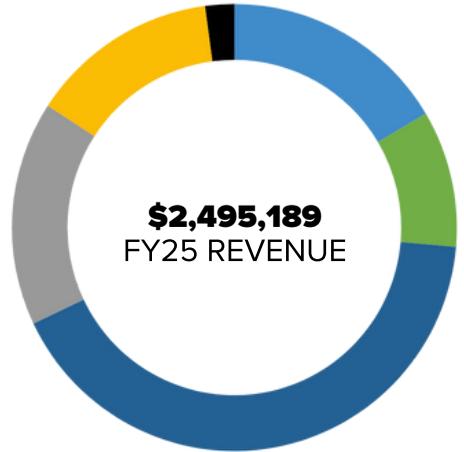
www.leap4ed.org/get-involved

FINANCIALS:

7/1/24 - 6/30/25

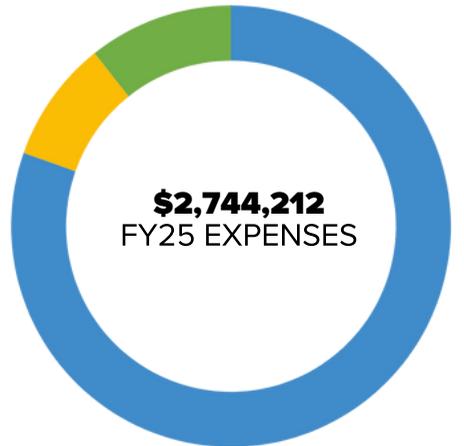
FY25 Revenue:

- STATE AND LOCAL GRANTS 16.5%
- CONTRACTS 9.9%
- FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS 41.6%
- INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS 16.2%
- FUNDRAISING EVENTS (NET) 13.7%
- OTHER 2.1%



FY25 Expenses:

- PROGRAMS 80.4%
- FUNDRAISING 9%
- GENERAL & ADMINISTRATION 10.6%



“LEAP for Education transforms the lives of its students through mentorship, community partnerships, and genuine care. LEAP’s programs enhance educational outcomes and expand career opportunities. An investment in LEAP is an investment in our community, by ensuring that young adults have the education, skills, and support to achieve their full potential in their careers.”

- RoAnn Costin

Founder and President of Wilderness Point Investments



Over the last five years, LEAP has been building its cash reserves in anticipation of the end of the COVID-era funding. This foresight has given LEAP the ability to weather the drop in government funding which has been exacerbated by the ongoing federal and state funding cuts and delays. LEAP continues to explore other sustainability strategies aimed at increasing our community and student impact while holding down costs. These include the expansion of its volunteer workforce and plans to serve more students and drive revenue through partnership development.

Balance Sheet Details:

	2025	2024	2023
CASH	\$1,399,067	\$1,669,237	\$1,614,694
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,638,805	\$2,021,281	\$2,074,713
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$383,294	\$512,790	\$582,894
NET ASSETS	\$1,255,511	\$1,508,491	\$1,491,819



“As a Board member and Treasurer, I have been impressed with the quality of their reporting, their understanding of financials, their focus on sustainability and their data-driven decision-making.”

- Raminder Luther
 Dean, Bertolon School of Business, Salem State University
 LEAP – Board Member | FY 2026 Treasurer

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"Our family has been supporting LEAP for years because of their outstanding commitment to quality educational experiences for youth of all backgrounds. LEAP innovates and excels in teaching and learning, while demonstrating compassion and empathy for all."

-Ana Colmenero
Peabody Essex Museum Trustee
Essex County Community Foundation Board Chair

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-Amanda Thompson
Director of Development, LEAP

LEAP for Education's mission is to support youth in their personal, educational, and career growth by partnering with the community to increase opportunities and advance equity.



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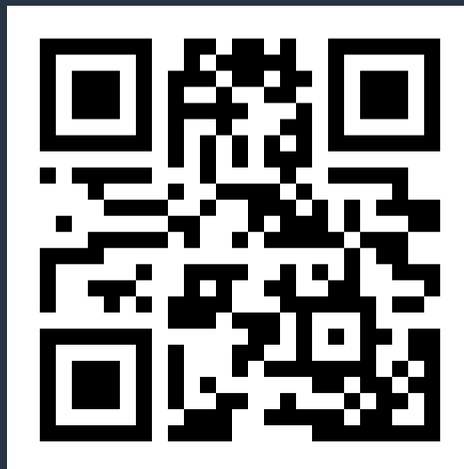
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