

Accelerating **Elevate**

Annual Impact Report 2025



ELEVATE
NEW ENGLAND

Dear Friend,

At Elevate New England, we continue to see a simple truth unfold every day: when a young person is surrounded by consistent, caring relationships, their world begins to change. In our classrooms, on buses, after school, and in the everyday spaces where life happens, our Teacher-Mentors walk with students through challenges, victories, and milestones — offering the steady support that allows possibility to take root.

This year, **more than 2,000 students in Lowell and Lawrence experienced that kind of transformative guidance.** They built character, honed life skills, discovered new strengths, and took meaningful steps toward their futures. **As our students grow in character and essential skills, they carry those strengths into their families, neighborhoods, and communities — creating a ripple effect of stability and hope far beyond the classroom.** Their growth stands in stark contrast to the persistent opportunity gaps facing many urban communities, reminding us why our work matters so deeply — and why it must continue to deepen and expand.

The progress reflected in this report is the result of a dedicated leadership team and staff working in close partnership with the Board. We are proud to support a shared vision rooted in intention, accountability, and long-term student success.

As a board, we are profoundly encouraged by the resilience of our students and the extraordinary commitment of our staff. **And we are equally grateful for you.** Your belief in this model, and in the young people we serve, is what makes these outcomes possible.

In the pages ahead, you will see a clear picture of impact — and a glimpse of what comes next. **The demand for Elevate's work is growing,** and so is our responsibility to meet it with excellence, sustainability, and long-term support for the students who rely on us. We look forward to sharing how you can help us continue building strong pathways for both current students and the alumni who are stepping into adulthood with courage and purpose.

Thank you for standing with us. As you read this report, I hope you feel the same hope and conviction we do every day: that what we are building together is not only effective — it is life-changing.

With gratitude,

Jim Westra
Board Chairman
Elevate New England Board of Directors





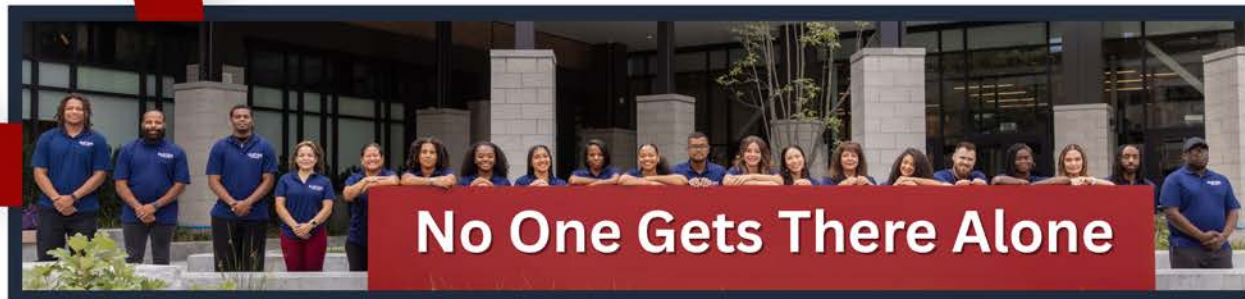
Mission

Building long term, life changing relationships with New England's urban youth, equipping them to thrive and contribute to their communities.

Vision

Generations of thriving urban leaders

Team



Dear Friends,

As we reflect on this year, the feeling that rises first is **gratitude**.

This work is only possible because of the people who **believe in our students and show up for them—consistently and with care**. The stories in this report reflect what happens when young people are surrounded by trusted adults who walk alongside them with high expectations and deep commitment. Because of that support, students are not only graduating—they are **growing in confidence, connection, and belief in what is possible for their futures**.

Across **Lowell and Lawrence**, Elevate New England continues to **deepen its roots**. Our **Teacher-Mentors**—many of whom grew up in the same communities they now serve—model stability, hope, and leadership every day. Principals welcome Elevate into more classrooms. Students ask for additional opportunities to learn, lead, and challenge themselves. Alumni reach back out as they navigate early adulthood, reminding us that this work **extends well beyond graduation**.

In response, we began **Accelerate Elevate**, a **multi-year** commitment to strengthening the systems and relationships that make lasting impact possible.

This year, we took **meaningful steps forward**—welcoming our **Alumni Success Navigator**, strengthening our presence in Lawrence, and investing in the people and systems that sustain this work. We do so with humility, knowing progress is always collective.

I am deeply grateful for the partnership of our **Board of Directors**, whose stewardship and shared responsibility guide Elevate with care and clarity. Together, we remain committed to **thoughtful growth, strong relationships, and long-term outcomes** for the students and communities we serve.

Thank you for believing in this mission, in **our young people**, and in the **power of consistent relationships to change lives**. It is an honor to work alongside you.

With gratitude and great hope,

Rhea Gordon

Rhea Gordon
Executive Director/Co-Founder
Rhea@ElevateNewEngland.org



Program Updates

Strong Student Outcomes & Character Growth

- ▶ **100%** of students showed measurable growth in at least two character qualities.
- ▶ Increase in students participating in Cross-Age Mentoring, with high schoolers collectively mentoring **483** elementary students.
- ▶ **90** students were certified to Teach Back in Spring 2026.
- ▶ Celebrated **81** high school graduates (a new record!)



"Teach Back helped me see myself differently. Walking into an elementary classroom where younger kids were watching and learning from me made me realize that my actions matter. I learned how to be patient, prepared, and confident — and how to lead by example. It's an experience that changed how I see my role in school and in my future."

— Elevate High School Student



Teacher-Mentor Support: Depth, Stability & Expansion

- ▶ ENE onboarded **1** new Teacher-Mentor across Lowell and Lawrence, expanding capacity.
- ▶ Strengthening of the T-M career ladder, reinforcing ENE's long-term staffing pipeline:
T-M-in-Training → Associate T-M → Full-Time T-M
- ▶ Teacher-Mentors delivered over **2,600** hours of classroom instruction and nearly **8,400** hours of mentoring this year (including alumni mentoring hours!).

"No one gets there alone—this is more than a motto; it's a truth I've lived. The support I received from Elevate has shaped how I envision my future success. My aspiration to work in the field of psychology, with a focus on behavior, was deeply influenced by Elevate's emphasis on leadership, vision, and courage. My purpose now is to give back to my community and contribute to a better society."

— Demi Peau, Associate Teacher-Mentor

School Partnership Growth & Demand

- ▶ New requests from principals or counselors for additional Elevate classes or expanded grade levels.
- ▶ Launched Elevate in **1** new middle school in Lawrence.
- ▶ **60%** of students in Elevate high school classes were placed there by guidance counselors.



"What Elevate brings to our school isn't just a program, it's a lifeline of personalization. We are committed to scaling this partnership because we've seen the results. By increasing Elevate's presence, we ensure no student walks alone, providing them with a dedicated mentor who stays by their side until they cross the finish line at graduation."

— Michael Fiato, Head of School, Lowell High School



"Honestly, I've watched students walk into Elevate unsure of themselves and walk out standing taller. They're more confident, more engaged, and more willing to take ownership of their growth. It's one of those programs where you can feel the shift in how students see themselves."

— Melissa I. Melendez, 9th grade Principal, Lawrence High School



"Elevate has had a measurable impact on our students by increasing engagement, confidence, and persistence—particularly for students who have historically needed additional support. The consistent relationships and skill-building Elevate provides help students stay connected to school and envision positive postsecondary pathways."

— Megan O'Loughlin, Principal, Career Academy

Alumni Support & Early Career Preparation

- **1** Alumni Success Navigator position developed to support connecting with alumni and ensuring ongoing success.
- **97%** recent graduates were supported in navigating post-grad steps, from college applications to workforce entry.
- **208** total alumni connected with this year.
- **124** students participated in early college programming.
- **3** students sent to Gordon College after they received the newly-created Elevate Scholarship.



"This year, we took an important step at Elevate by creating the Alumni Success Navigator role. With nearly 400 high school graduates, we are committed to supporting each young adult as they move into their next chapter and continue working toward their own version of greatness. So far, we've connected alumni to trades like HVAC, supported others in securing an apartment, and helped students navigate the unfamiliar world of four-year colleges. These early moments reflect what's possible when continued guidance is in place, and we're excited for the many stories still ahead."

— Kendra Gordon, Alumni Success Navigator



Adventure: Social-Emotional Learning, Resilience, and Community

- Students participated in **27** adventure-learning experiences, each designed to build confidence, resilience, and teamwork.
- **160** students participated in adventure activities this year.



"Watching students step into challenge, support one another, and grow in confidence is what makes Elevate Adventure so powerful."

— Ro euth Lan, Adventure Coordinator/Teacher-Mentor

Student Success Story

Julianna's Story



I first met Julianna in eighth grade at Sullivan Middle School. At the time, she participated in Elevate but often struggled with social awareness, engagement, and navigating conflict. **She was bright and curious, but her words could get ahead of her and she didn't always realize the impact they had on others.**

When she entered high school and rejoined Elevate, **I saw a clear shift.** Julianna was more focused, more reflective, and eager to set goals for herself. As we spent time together, we realized we shared the same early dreams — to become a forensic scientist or a veterinarian. I once held those same hopes as an Elevate student myself, long before becoming a Teacher-Mentor. That connection helped her open up, and it helped me see how determined she could be.

Over the past year, Julianna has taken meaningful steps toward her future. She secured her **first job at Market Basket**, where she has now worked for nearly a year, showing responsibility and consistency - a commitment that would have been hard to imagine when she was in middle school. Together, we've begun the process of **enrolling her in an early college program so she can earn credits while still in high school** — an opportunity she is genuinely excited about.

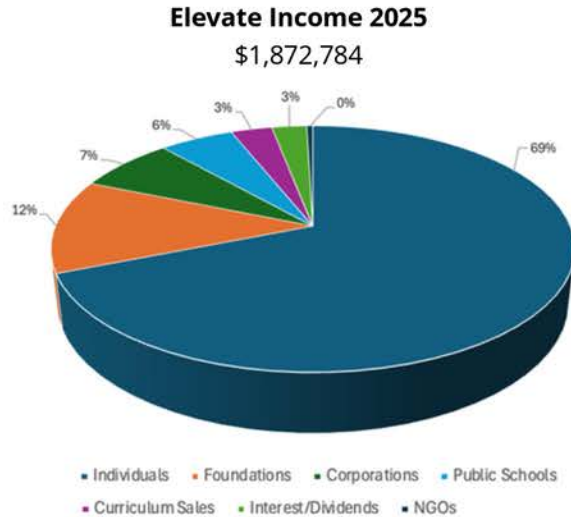
This year also brought challenges. A fight led to suspension and a court appearance, a moment that could have set her back. Instead, **Julianna responded with maturity:** she reflected on her choices, expressed real remorse, and talked openly about what she learned. **That growth — the ability to pause, reflect, and choose differently — is one of the clearest signs of her development.**

We continue to meet for monthly mentoring sessions — time she chooses to show up for. She is beginning to understand her strengths, take responsibility for her choices, and imagine a future where she contributes something meaningful to her community. I see in her the same kind of turning point that once shaped my own life. Whether she becomes a veterinarian, a scientist, or finds a new path entirely, **I believe she will carry her resilience, empathy, and character with her.**

And if one day she chooses to give back to her community the way Elevate mentors once invested in me, I will be proud — but not surprised. Her story is still unfolding, and **she is already growing into someone who will make a meaningful impact wherever she goes.**

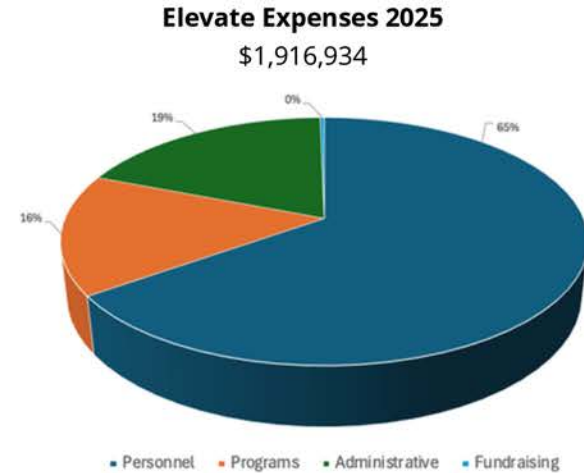
Ms. Demi
Teacher-Mentor

Financial Overview

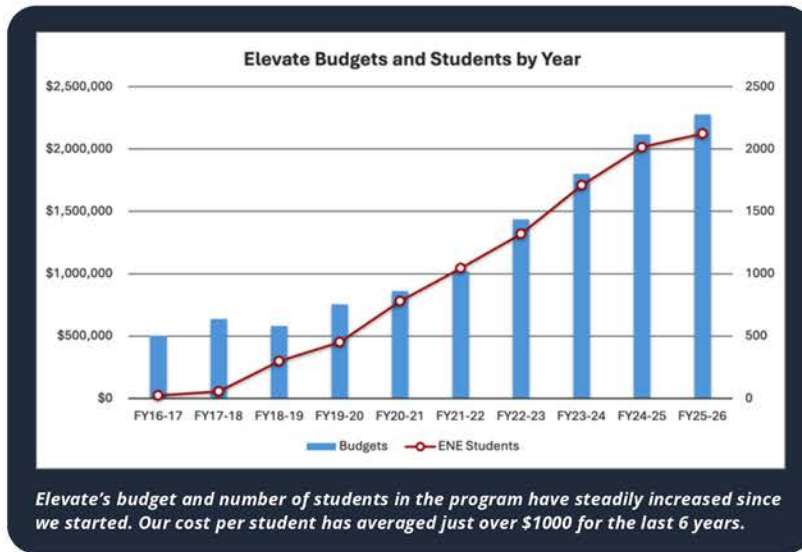


Budget for 2026:
\$2,276,234

Cost per student:
\$1,075



Elevate's FY 2025 budget increased 17% over the prior year. The income reported above is less than expense because some large gifts and grants arrived just before the fiscal year started, or just after it ended. Our reserve funds stood at \$1,285,357 at FYE, which is consistent with our policy of having 6 months cash on hand. Our FY 2026 budget is 8% larger than 2025, the 7th year in a row of budget increase.



High School Graduation rates:

90%
Massachusetts
Public Schools

78.5%
Lowell
Public Schools

74%
Lawrence
Public Schools

99%
Elevate
New England

Why it matters

A single high school dropout costs the public roughly \$300,000 over a lifetime between lost tax revenue and increased reliance on public services.

— *The Real Cost of Dropping Out*,
Forbes, Dec. 19, 2025

MEET OUR NEW *Team* Members

In 2025 we added one Teacher-Mentor to our rapidly growing program. Serving 2189 students in 19 different public schools requires passionate, full time staff members who teach Elevate's high school or middle school classes in teams of three, and mentor the students they meet there.



Lucy (Luz) Rodriguez
Middle School Teacher-Mentor



Grace Bish
Associate Director of
Development



Cecilio Hernandez
Executive Director, Fortaleza
Board Member



Reece Brown
Associate Director, Harvard
Human Flourishing Project
Board Member



Lisa Gerdes
Education and School
Consultant
Board Member

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"Why do I support Elevate? Because it's a well run organization that delivers results!" - Elevate Donor

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First Parish Church Congregational	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	
Fowler Family Foundation	Second Congregational Church, Missions Committee	
Gemline	The Church Home Society	

This work is only possible because of the people who stand with us. Thank you for believing in our students, investing in relationships, and trusting Elevate to walk alongside young people as they move toward independence and thriving futures. We are deeply grateful—and excited to continue building what comes next, together!

With gratitude,

From All of us at Elevate New England!



To Learn **More**



www.elevatenewengland.org
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