

# RELATIONSHIPS WORK

*The role of mentorship  
and how it affects our  
collective future*



**ELEVATE**  
NEW ENGLAND

IMPACT REPORT 2024



Dear Friend of Elevate New England,

On behalf of our Board, our excellent Staff team under the dynamic leadership of our Executive Director Rhea Gordon, and the thousands of young people and their families that we serve, I am pleased to present you with **Elevate's 2024 Impact Report**.



In the pages that follow you will see many stories, statistics and measurements that describe our success this past year, but before we begin, I don't want you to miss the big picture. **Why are we here?** What is Elevate doing that is so vitally important to our cities, to our state, to our society?

Just this: **We are helping thousands of overlooked youth in our most challenging urban centers develop into thriving, contributing young adults.** And as we do so **we are demonstrating a solution to one of the most persistent economic and social problems our country is facing.** The well-respected Hechinger Report tells us that the high school graduation rate in large US cities is 60.9%, but also that here in the northeast, if you travel just a few miles into the suburbs ringing those cities, that graduation rate increases by a whopping 30%. That's a huge gap.

That's our gap. Those are the kids we work with, and they are not just a percentage. They are precious, promising young people – thousands of them – whose names we know and whose futures are being shaped and realized. **Helping them fully develop and flourish as proud citizens of our cities and state is something we know how to do,** and by all measures, we are doing it well.

Thanks very much for reading this and supporting our work. I hope that as you explore these pages you will be filled with the same satisfaction that I feel every day, that **what we are doing together is nothing less than life changing.**

Gratefully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Pocock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jim Pocock  
CEO/Co-Founder  
[Jim@elevatenewengland.org](mailto:Jim@elevatenewengland.org)

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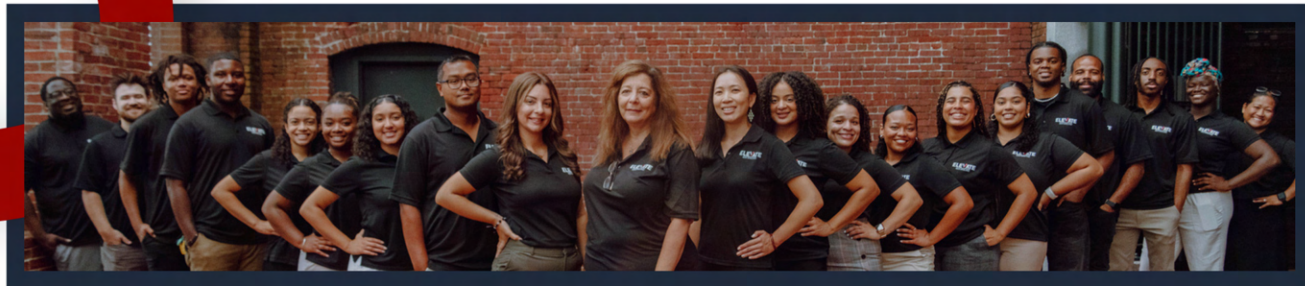
*Mission*

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 I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible work happening at Elevate New England and for your unwavering support of our mission. At Elevate New England, we are committed to empowering young people to become thriving contributors in their communities—leaders who are equipped to navigate life with resilience, character, and purpose.

But what does it truly mean to be a thriving contributor? It's more than a concept; it's the heart of our mission. A thriving contributor is a young person who has developed the tools, skills, and relationships necessary to succeed in school, in work, and in life. They are ready to lead, to serve, and to create positive change wherever they go.

This transformation doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of intentional work, grounded in relationships. Every year, we measure our impact in four key areas:

**School Success • Character Development • Community Engagement • Social-Emotional Health**

These areas form the foundation of our program, and they guide the efforts of our extraordinary Teacher Mentors, who walk alongside over 2,000 students each year. Their work is deeply personal and profoundly impactful.

Here's what we've learned:

**Relationships prepare young people for work.** Our students develop the skills to thrive in the workforce and beyond. They are learning to be strong employees and, for many, future employers. They are building the confidence and capabilities to support themselves and their families while becoming leaders in their communities.

**Relationships work.** The evidence is clear: deep, long-term relationships are the key to lasting transformation. There are no shortcuts to this kind of impact.

**DEPTH x TIME = TRANSFORMATION**

As you read through this year's Impact Report, you'll see the stories and data that bring these truths to life. You'll see how your generosity and support are creating opportunities and changing futures.

Thank you for standing with us and for **believing in the power of relationships to transform lives**. Together, we are building a brighter, stronger future—one student at a time.

Shine with Purpose!

*Rhea Gordon*

Rhea Gordon

Executive Director/Co-Founder

Rhea@ElevateNewEngland.org



“

*“In order to have a chance at a productive life, a child must have at least one adult relationship that is positive, caring and long-term.”*

— Dr. Del Elliott, Founding Director, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Boulder, CO

”



# THE *Problem*

## YOUTH ARE EXPERIENCING UNPRECEDENTED MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES.

**47%** of students say they are moderately or extremely **DEPRESSED**.

**55%** of young people report a **MENTAL ILLNESS** diagnosis or treatment, compared to 31% of those aged 55-64.



Young people are spending nearly **5 HOURS PER DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA**, but less than **30 MINUTES PER DAY VOLUNTEERING**.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION.



In the past decade, total college enrollment has dropped by nearly **1.5 MILLION** students, or about **7.4%**.

**4%**

of low-income students attend **SELECTIVE 4-YEAR COLLEGES**, compared to 33% of higher-income households.



The undergrad college enrollment decline has accelerated since the pandemic, resulting in a loss of over **900,000 STUDENTS**, or **6%**, between fall 2019 and 2023.



Educational attainment has been widely recognized as a **ROOT OF HEALTH DISPARITIES**. People with higher levels of education have **BETTER HEALTH STATUS** by almost every health measure.

The nation risks a weakened economy and limited opportunities for gainful and meaningful work without addressing these gaps. Preparing the next generation is crucial for personal and societal growth, and vital for sustaining thriving communities.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT WORKFORCE-READY.

60%

of executives, directors and managers surveyed in a 2024 study agreed that recent college graduates (Gen-Z employees) are **UNPREPARED FOR THE WORKFORCE.**

73%

of employers rated **TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION** as “very important,” but **ONLY 27%** of new hires were rated highly proficient in these skills.

92%

of employers report a **LACK OF ESSENTIAL SOFT SKILLS** among job candidates.



- “People skills”
- Problem-solving
- Emotional intelligence
- Professionalism
- Time management
- Ability to handle feedback



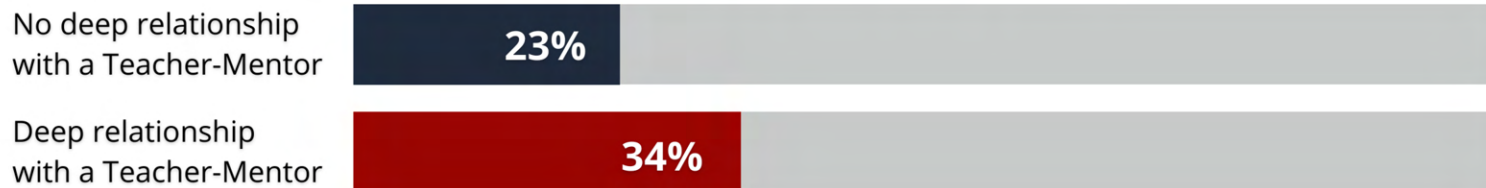


# OUR *Solution*

The Elevate model is dedicated to developing students of character, who have the social-emotional intelligence to navigate anything that life throws their way, who actively engage in their community, and whose grades and post-secondary plans reflect all of this. The following four areas of thriving are made possible by relationships (**DEPTH x TIME**).

## 1. SCHOOL SUCCESS

### Students Who Pass Their Classes Because of Their Teacher-Mentor:



### Students Who Are Engaged in School:



### Why does school success matter?

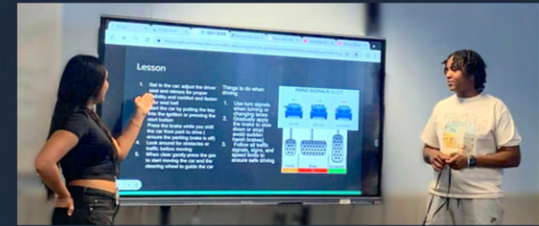
Over a lifetime of working, those without a HS diploma can expect to earn about 75% of what one with a high school diploma may earn, and less than half (46.2%) of the potential income of someone with a college degree (Current Population Survey).

*"Thank you to the wonderful mentors of Elevate New England for giving great support and guidance to my son during the time he attended Lowell Career Academy. It was great to know there is still such a great program with our community for our future leaders such as my son and his peers." – Elevate Student's Parent*

The data on pages 7-10 are from ENE student self-reporting surveys taken at the start (black) and finish (maroon) of the 2023-24 school year.

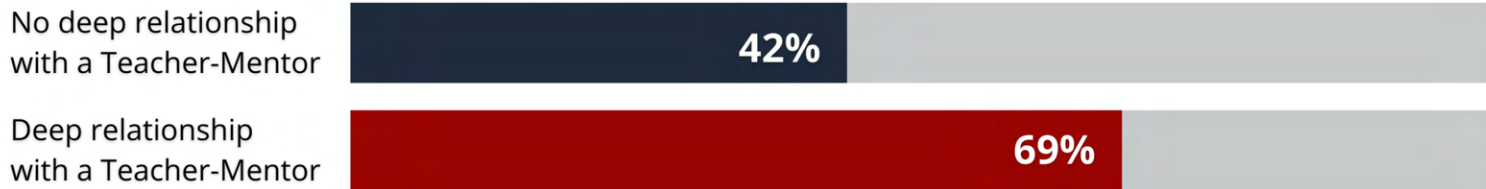
Those four things, woven together, build holistic transformation in students' lives.

DEPTH X TIME = CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION  
DEPTH X TIME = EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION  
DEPTH X TIME = SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION  
DEPTH X TIME = COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION



## 2. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH

### Students Who Are Not Afraid to Try New Things:



### Students Who Have Adult Friends for Support:



### Why does social-emotional health matter?

A 2019 study revealed that out of 500 people managers, 75% use emotional intelligence levels as a criteria for considering a team member for a promotion or raise.

*"Great to know there are still great programs such as Elevate to support our youth. Our future leaders. Great job!"*

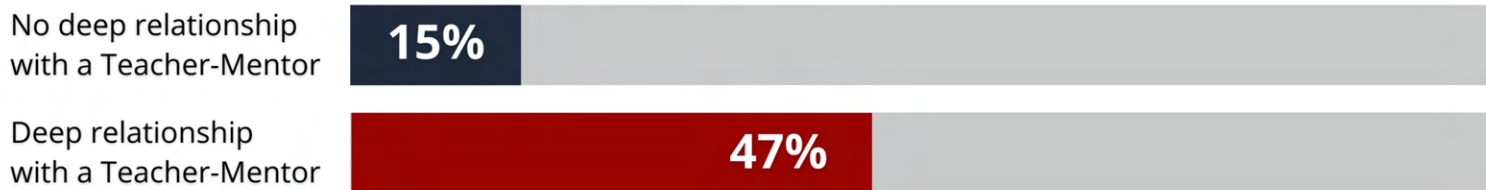
- Elevate Student's Parent

### 3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### Students Who Serve Regularly Because of Their Teacher-Mentors:



#### Students Who Say Their Peers Select Them to Lead:



#### Why does community engagement matter?

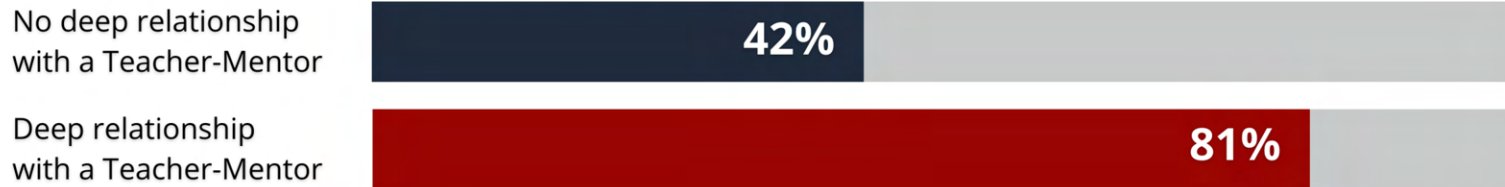
Students who performed voluntary community service are 19% more likely to graduate from college than those who did not. Volunteering is also associated with 27% higher odds of employment.

*“This is a wonderful program! Not only has it helped our daughter to develop better responsibilities, but has also helped her grow as a personal as well.”* – Elevate Student’s Parent



## 4. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Students Who Say They Are Hard Workers:



### Students Who Help Others Learn:



### Why does character matter?

Studies show that holding leadership positions in high school increases self-esteem, teaches teamwork and communication skills, & leads to higher pay after graduation – up to 33% more!

*"I just wanted to thank my mentors Kendra and Adam for pushing me and motivating me to keep going and follow what I believe in. Thank you!"*  
– Elevate Student



# STUDENT *Stories*

At Elevate we often say that we are in the prevention business, not the remediation business. Helping young people graduate high school and succeed in life is far more effective (and far less costly) than helping them recover from the major life problems that come from poor life choices. Over half the students in the Elevate program were once regarded as drop-out risks. Seeing that they reverse that path is what we do.



Here is one of their stories. **Please meet Starr.**

Five years ago, Starr was a high school junior in Elevate's program. Though she didn't particularly stand out, she was a pleasant young woman who blended in well with her peers. But one day, Starr simply disappeared. A day's absence became a week; a week became a month and a month became a semester. She was gone.

The school made strong efforts to reach her, but every phone call, email, letter, or knock on the door went unanswered by Starr or her family. Eventually, overwhelmed by the many other students facing difficult circumstances, the school had to move on. They assumed Starr had dropped out – one of the unbelievable 1.2 million U.S. students who do just that every year.

One person, however, refused to give up, and that was Miss Kendra, Starr's Elevate Teacher-Mentor. For Kendra, Starr would open the door. Remember, this was five years ago, and all that time Kendra stayed in touch. Gradually their conversations moved from the trivial to the serious, including the type of person Starr wanted to become. Slowly, the light in Starr's eyes began to return.

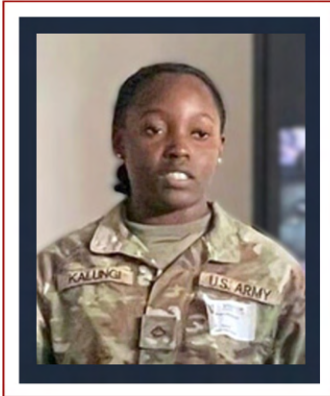
This past fall marked a major turning point. Now 21 years old, Starr walked into the Principal's office, with Kendra alongside, and announced her plans – she wanted to come back to school and earn her high school diploma. Today this young woman sits in classrooms with 17 year-old teenagers, showing up every day and working hard to make up for lost time. She is now on track to walk across the stage next June, at 22 years old, and receive her high school diploma. Like every other Elevate graduate, she will also have a workable plan for her future.

We are eager to see what the next year brings for Starr, but whatever it is, we'll be able to tell you. Because Miss Kendra will be sure to know.

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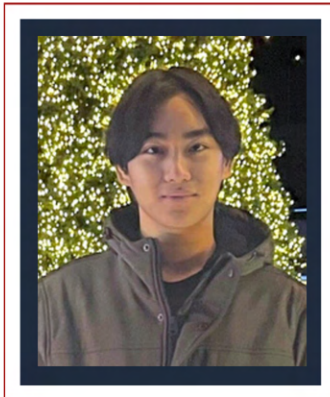
**100% graduation rate.** For the second year in a row, 100% of the seniors who had been in Elevate's program 3 semesters or more graduated high school – all 77 of them. This brings the total of Elevate graduates now in college, the workforce or the military to 257.

# STUDENT *Stories*



## **Pearl Kalungi**

A 2023 graduate of Lowell High, PFC Pearl Kalungi has been nominated by her commanding officer for the Soldier Admissions pathway to the US Military Academy. Having earned the Army Achievement Medal and scoring 100% on the Army Combat Fitness Test, she also received a letter of recommendation from Congresswoman Lori Trahan. If selected, she will begin at West Point this summer.



## **Ethan Ty**

Ethan LHS '24 just completed his 1st semester at UMass Lowell as an applied biomedical science major. He is in the Honors Program and also volunteers at Lowell General Hospital. Ethan will participate in a study abroad program in France this summer.

# MEET OUR NEW TEAM

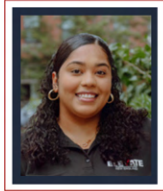
# Members

In 2024 we added six new staff members to our rapidly growing program. Serving 2015 students in 16 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.



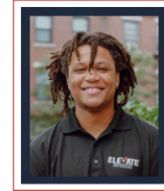
**Xahn Frater, Teacher-Mentor**

With a degree in Communications/Marketing and experience as a college basketball player, Xahn joined Elevate through a recommendation from a former student. “I’m here to help and uplift the youth,” Xahn shares. His background in communications helps students develop key skills, while his basketball experience teaches teamwork, discipline, and perseverance—qualities that benefit their personal and future success.



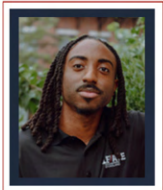
**Ashley Santos, Teacher-Mentor**

With a degree in Criminal Justice and over a decade of experience, Ashley mentors students by helping them navigate challenges. “When former students reach out to say I’ve impacted their lives, it motivates me to keep going,” she shares. Her background equips her to guide students in making informed decisions and building resilience for the future.



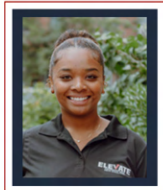
**Jayson Clayton, Teacher-Mentor**

Jayson, who played college basketball and graduated with a degree in Kinesiology, brings a unique perspective to mentoring. His background in movement science helps him emphasize the importance of physical health, resilience, and self-care to the students he works with. He says, “Mentoring high school students is something that fulfills me. I like to teach kids that being themselves is important, impactful, and cool!” Jayson’s favorite part of the job is how funny the kids can be, and he enjoys connecting with them in meaningful ways.



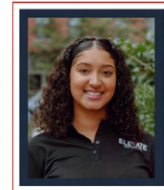
**Marvin Cayo, Teacher-Mentor**

Marvin joined Elevate with a degree in Criminal Justice, which helps him guide students in navigating challenges and understanding their potential. “I have a passion for teaching urban inner-city kids,” Marvin shares “I’m here to help them achieve their goals, develop leadership skills, and discover their future paths.” His Criminal Justice background inspires students to think critically, build resilience, and shape their futures.



**Demitria Peau  
Associate Teacher-Mentor**

Demi Peau, an Elevate New England success story. After joining Elevate as a high school student, Demi pursued a degree in Psychology while serving as a Teacher-Mentor in Training. Now a college graduate and Associate Teacher-Mentor, Demi uses her academic knowledge and personal experience to support students’ emotional well-being and growth. Demi’s journey highlights the ripple effect of mentorship - when you invest in students, they rise up and invest in others.



**Kiani Garabito, Associate Teacher-Mentor**

Kiani, in her final year of college studying Psychology, uses her knowledge to support students through the emotional challenges of adolescence. She says, “I want to be a positive role model and a supportive adult they can confide in to help manage the difficult teen years.” Her background helps her offer valuable insights and coping strategies to the students she mentors.

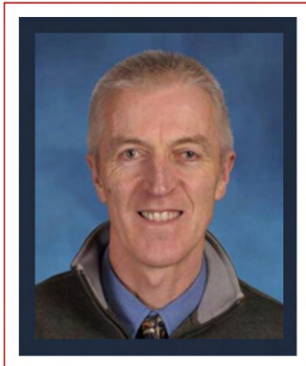


**Rebecca Gyra, Board Member**

An experienced executive in the technology and software fields, Rebecca joins the Elevate board with expertise in strategic planning, leadership development and coaching, and marketing. She has held board positions in the fields of education and disability advocacy.

# FROM OUR SCHOOL *Administrator*

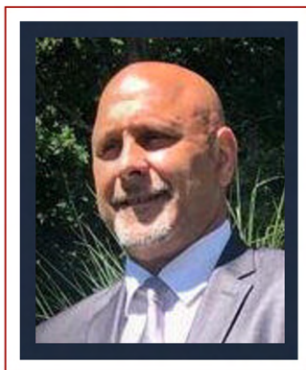
The public school systems of Lowell and Lawrence are Elevate New England's primary collaborators, often referring students to us because they know we can provide what they need. Elevate is the only non-profit teaching accredited courses at the high school and middle school levels, focusing on character development, life skills and leadership training. Here is what two of them say about Elevate.



*"We miss sometimes the other more relational skills and that is what Elevate brings for our youth. They give them those mentorship opportunities and leadership opportunities and what that does for our high schoolers it builds their confidence, it allows them to be assertive and it makes them all the more successful in those academic pursuits."*

*"We are confident that it has a lifelong impact when they leave Lowell High School. We want our students to grow up to be responsible citizens, active citizens involved in their communities and able to live happy productive lives."*

- Liam Skinner, Superintendent of Lowell Public School



*"What Elevate does in their programs, we would like to replicate that in all of our classrooms. Increase Elevates capacity at the high school, if we could have more we would love to continue to provide that personalization, follow them through into graduation."*

- Michael Fiato, Head of School, Lowell High School





# FROM OUR *Students*



*"Thank you Elevate for letting me be a part of the family! I appreciate each and every one of the mentors and thank you for giving me an awesome 6 years with many more to come."*

- Elevate Student

## *Parent* ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE



### **Strengthening Families**

Mentoring young people is good, but helping entire families succeed brings even greater, more permanent results! Our Parent Engagement Initiative involves our parents in shaping our programs with their Elevate students and participating in family-focused activities. Additionally, we've developed and distribute parent handbooks, equipping them with essential resources and information which some in our population might not have. Our Teacher-Mentors make it a priority to make visits in the home and meet the parents or guardians, which builds trust and fosters collaboration. In the end, we know that parents have the greatest influence in their child's life, so we work hard at partnering with them.

*"I highly recommend this program. My child learned so much. She made new friends, memories, and developed leadership skills that she will take with her on all her future endeavors."* - Elevate Student's Parent

# 2023-2024 **IMPACT**

## Elevate New England by the Numbers

Urban Youth Involved Weekly	2015
Public Schools Served	16
Mentoring Hours Per School Year	8400+
2024 Graduation Rate	100%

Community & Business Partnerships	47
Placement in College, Military, or Vocations	97%
Alumni Still Engaged with Mentors After High School	71%
Elevate Staff	24

### Behind the numbers:

The 2015 youth involved weekly is **in addition to** the hundreds of Elevate alumni who are still engaged with their mentors and the Elevate community. This is healthy!

The 16 schools served includes Lowell's Sullivan Middle School, where since August 2024 all 5th graders take Elevate classes year-round – a request from the Principal and a first for Elevate! The younger we get them, the greater the chance for a flourishing life.

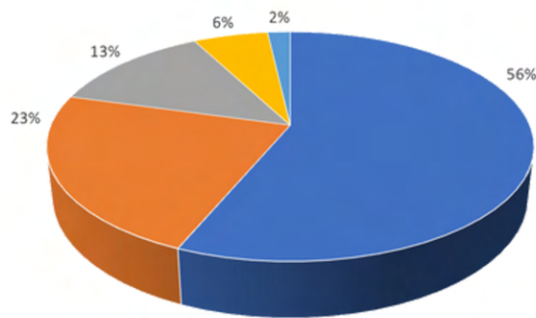
97% are succeeding after high school. We are always looking for more community and businesses to partner with us by giving our grads jobs.

# ELEVATE NEW ENGLAND

# Financials

**2024 was Elevate's best fundraising year ever.** We received over \$1.93M, which is 28% higher than 2023, our previous record year. We have had nine consecutive years of income growth, and expect 2025 to be the tenth.

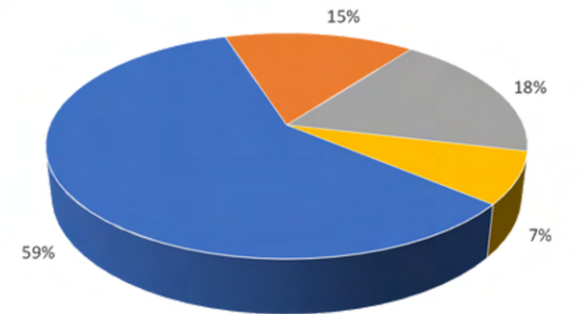
**Elevate Income 2024**  
1,927,725



■ Individuals (110) ■ Foundations (11) ■ Corporations (2) ■ Public Schools ■ Interest/Dividends

Budget for 2025:  
\$2,117,673  
Cost per student:  
\$1,051

**Elevate Expenses 2024**  
1,752,109



■ Personnel - Direct Service ■ Program ■ Administrative ■ Fundraising

## Income Highlights:

- Of the 110 individuals who donated last year, 27 of them are brand new. Welcome, new partners!
- We successfully developed all the new funding required to secure our two large multi-year matching grants, Thee Mustard Seed Foundation (\$500,000 over 4 years) and the GEM Group (\$300,000 over 4 years). This was Year 2 for both grants and we hope to be successful with yet more new funding in Year 3.
- A shout out to our largest collaborator, Lowell Public Schools, for including us in several contracts for student success, all of which we met.

## ELEVATE NEW ENGLAND IN YOUR

# *Estate Plans*

Leave a lasting legacy by including Elevate New England in your estate plans. Your generosity will ensure our mission continues to thrive for future generations. Together, we can make a lasting impact. Contact us to learn more about planned giving options. Here's what Kathy Taylor, one of the first donors ever to support Elevate has to say...



“As Kit and I were evaluating our priorities after retirement, the question for us became what was the greatest, most long-lasting good we could do with the resources we were blessed with. Our children and grandchildren are well cared for and on a good path, so our thoughts turned to others. When we learned about Elevate New England, we visited the communities they were working in, met some Teacher-Mentors, and saw the impact they were having with students. We immediately knew we had our answer.”

“We put Elevate in our estate plans because Elevate makes a permanent difference in the lives of urban youth, and we wanted that to happen to thousands of kids in our region. Kit’s whole career had been in building businesses to succeed, so now we are building young lives to succeed. We believe in Elevate; its staff and leadership and the long line of Teacher-Mentors who are the real difference makers, and we want it to last forever.”

*Kathy Taylor*

(Since Kit passed away several years ago Kathy continues to be a wonderful champion for Elevate, introducing us to several of her friends.)

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

Anonymous (12)  
Hank Amabile  
Loren & Beata  
David & Ellie Beatty  
Russ & Janet Bjork  
George & Rose Bottger  
Dave & Pat Cameron  
Vincent Cappetta  
Wes Card  
Dave Carlson  
Phil & Christine Carter  
Tom & Nancy Colatosti  
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John Daniel  
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John Doyle

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Alan & Merewyn Harrington  
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Kirk Henry  
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John Hueber  
Elsje Zwart & Rich Klajnscek  
Marina Lam  
Jeff Leblanc

Thomas & Theresa Littauer  
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Caleb & Bronwyn Loring  
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PJ O'Sullivan  
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Steven Tamasi  
Kathy Taylor  
Wally & Florence Wadman  
Mark & Tricia Ward  
Robert Ward  
Kirk & Linda Ware  
Betsy & Jim Westra  
Ted & Lynda Wheatley  
Dan Williams  
Luther Ziegler  
James & Katherine Zingarelli

## OUR CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Align Credit Union  
Calvary Baptist Church, Lowell MA  
Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston  
Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church  
Cummings Foundation  
First Congregational Church, Essex

Fowler Family Foundation  
Gemline  
Henley Enterprises  
LHS Outdoor Adventure Club  
Lowell Public Schools  
Manchester Harbor Boat Club

Martha Sanfilippo Foundation  
New England Mission Foundation  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
Protein Foundation  
Second Congregational Church, Beverly MA  
The Church Home Society

Thee Mustard Seed Foundation  
The Women's Fund of Essex County  
UKG  
Van Otterloo Foundation




**TO LEARN MORE:**

[www.ElevateNewEngland.org](http://www.ElevateNewEngland.org)  
[Rhea@ElevateNewEngland.org](mailto:Rhea@ElevateNewEngland.org)

 [facebook.com/elevatenewengland](https://facebook.com/elevatenewengland)

 [@elevatenewengland](https://instagram.com/@elevatenewengland)

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