

COMPOSING CREATIVITY

826 NATIONAL
ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023



We write the future, **TOGETHER.**

D

EAR FRIENDS,

This year, more than 710,000 students around the country put pen to paper with 826. They sat at desks and computers and on bean bags writing love poems and letters to editors, persuasive personal college admission essays, and short stories that built whole new worlds.

Their voices, stories, and perspectives are a testament to the transformative power of accessible, quality writing education. By engaging these talented students, we sow the seeds of a future generation of leaders, thinkers, and storytellers.

There is so much for our students to be proud of this year: 91% say they improved their writing skills and work, 86% feel proud of their writing, and 88% feel more prepared for college and for their careers. And there is so much for our teachers and volunteers and 826 staff—National and Network alike—to be proud of, from the research on writing education we conducted and published, to the joyful, evocative curriculum we created and shared, to the partnerships and platforms we developed to reach more students with the endless possibilities that come with strong writing skills.

This annual report is a celebration of the dedicated staff, volunteers, partners,

and supporters who have played a crucial role in making these achievements possible. Your collective efforts have not only enriched students and educators everywhere but also contributed to the broader landscape of diverse voices, education, and creativity.


This movement for writing education and amplifying the power of youth voice is only getting started. Our goals are ambitious. The power and joy of writing propels us forward as we continue to develop 826 Digital, ground ourselves in evidence-based excellence with 826 University, reach more students through 826 Partners, and shower the world with the magical words of 826 Voices.

And we plan to reach 1 million students and 35,000 educators annually by 2026.

Thank you so much for sitting with this annual report. I hope you enjoy this glimpse into what our students and 826 have created this year. And if you get curious to learn even more, please reach out. I'm always eager to talk with people whose imaginations are stirred by these students and this work.

Here's to the power of words, storytelling, and the transformative journey called writing.

Warmly,


Laura Brief
laura@826national.org



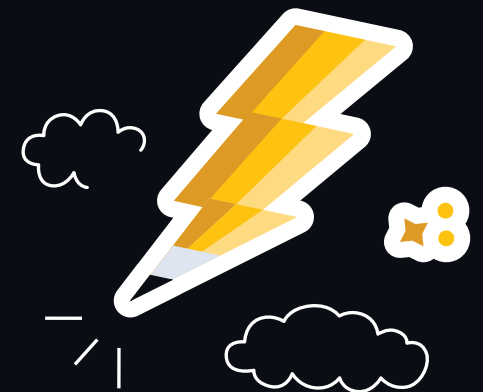



826 NATIONAL WORKS TOWARD A COUNTRY IN WHICH

THE POWER AND

JOY OF WRITING

IS ACCESSIBLE TO EVERY STUDENT.





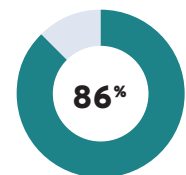
Student writers
can create a
BETTER, BRIGHTER,
and **MORE**
COMPASSIONATE
FUTURE.

▲
826 IS THE LARGEST YOUTH WRITING NETWORK IN THE COUNTRY. We're working toward a future in which writing education is accessible to students in every classroom.

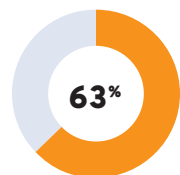
Through our pencils, pens, and keyboards, our students **CONJURE UNIVERSES, BUILD UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHY, and CATALYZE CHANGE.**

As the largest youth writing network in the country, 826 teaches thousands of young people each year in under-resourced communities to harness the power and joy of writing. Rooted in the belief that strong writing skills are essential for academic and lifelong success, the 826 Network serves K-12 educators and students ages 6 to 18 across the nation.

EQUITY AND ACCESS are at the heart of the 826 mission.



86% of students are students of color



63% of students are from low-income families



CENTRALIZED SUPPORT FOR GRASSROOTS WORK

What started as a single chapter in San Francisco—founded by author Dave Eggers and educator Ninive Calegari in 2002—now serves over 710,000 students ages 6 to 18 each year. 826 National was established in 2008 to support and strengthen our growing network of in-person and online writing experiences.



OUR VALUES

- Power and potential of youth
- Culture of creativity and learning
- ◆ Transformative power of writing
- Equity as mission, vision, and practice
- ▲ Strength of community

826 National **AMPLIFIES** the impact of our national network of youth writing and publishing centers—and **THE WORDS OF YOUNG AUTHORS.**

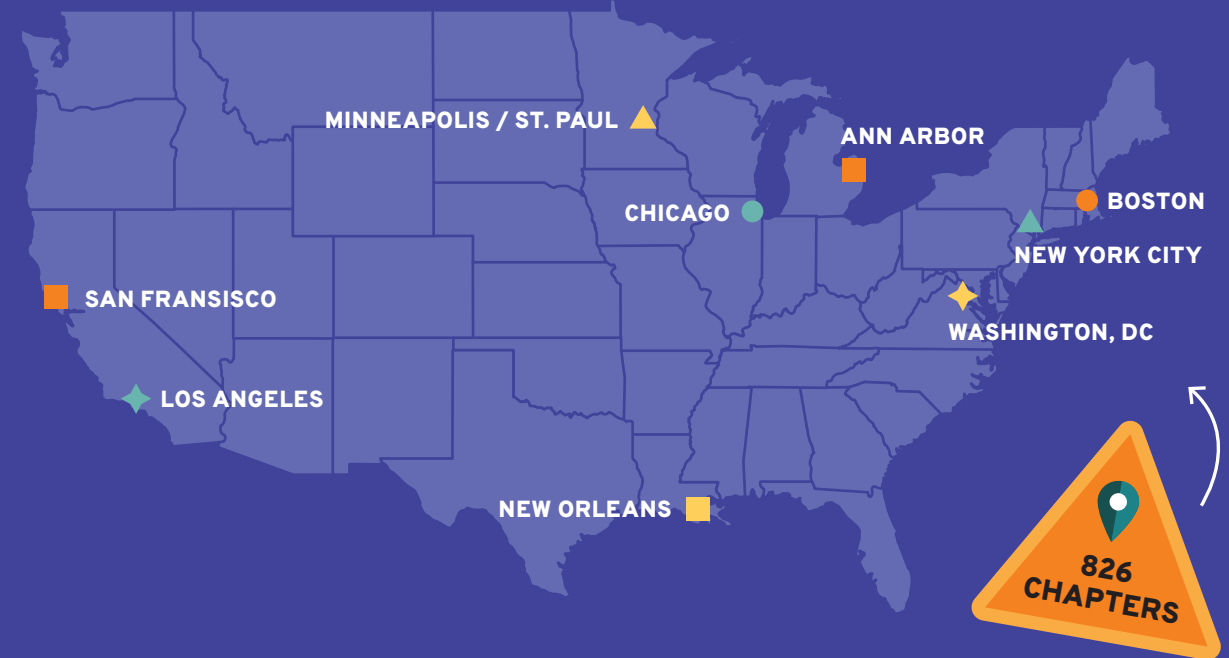
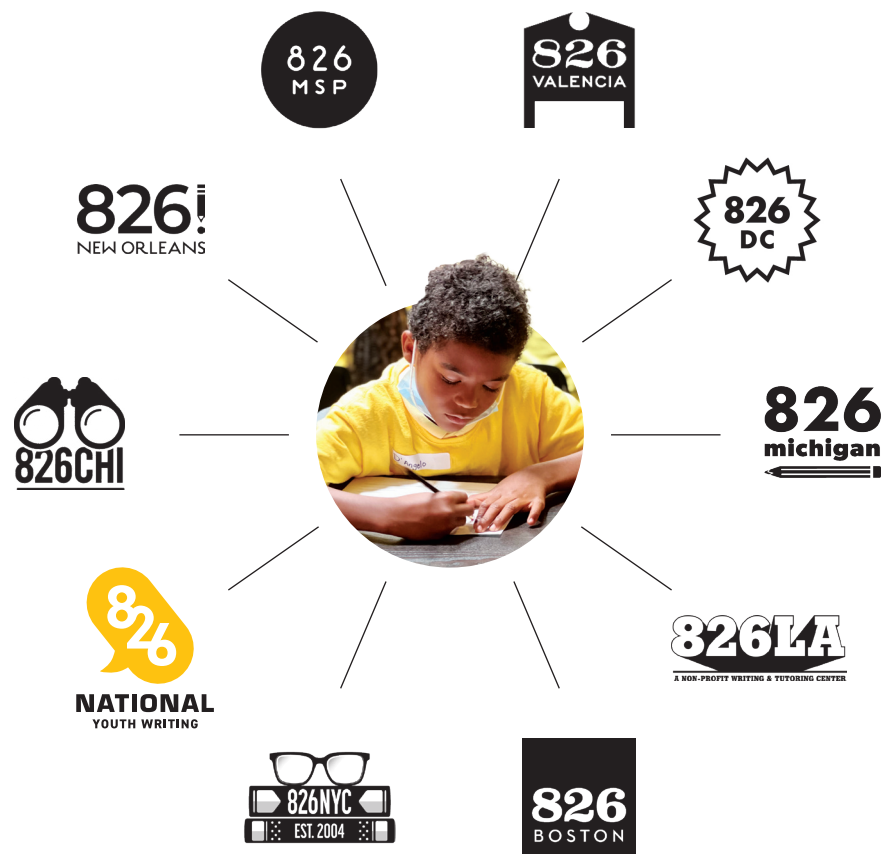


OUR MISSION

We serve as an international proof point for writing as a tool for young people to ignite and channel their creativity, explore identity, advocate for themselves and their communities, and achieve academic and professional success.



826 National is the **NEXUS**
of a **NETWORK** that includes nine
brick-and-mortar writing centers.
We call them **826 CHAPTERS**.



“I write poetry for young future-shapers needing a reminder of their powerful voices. I write poetry to empower and heal and question myself and others.”

AMELIA P., GRADE 9,
826 DIGITAL, ALTADENA, CA



A NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR CREATIVITY
Students at 826 New Orleans, striking a pose after writing some prose.

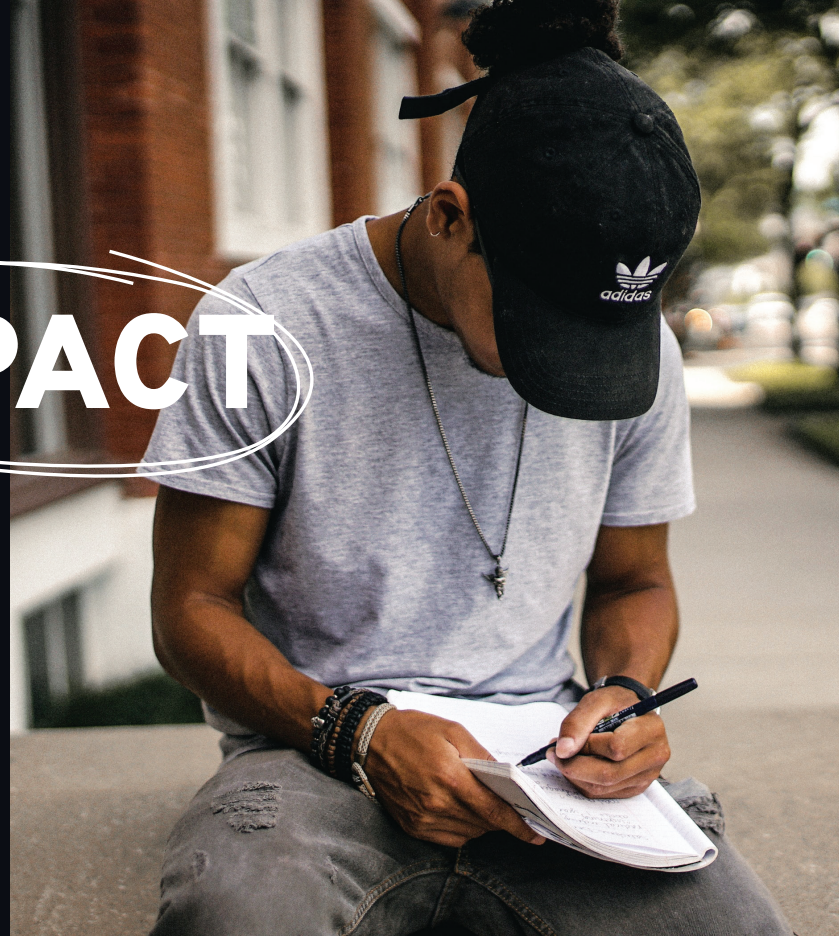


Writing is power—
**THE POWER TO
USE YOUR VOICE**
to advocate for yourself,
to share your ideas,
to enact change,
and to build community.



We believe that **WRITING CHANGES LIVES**
and is an invitation, a vehicle for empathy and
meaning-making, and a call to action.


826 BOSTON partnered
with community program
Becoming A Man to mentor
student authors and publish their
work exploring what it means to be
a young man of color today.



Our **IMPACT** in 2023.



710,000+

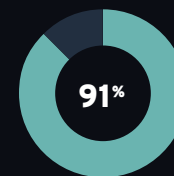
Students reached via chapters and 826 Digital

18,000+

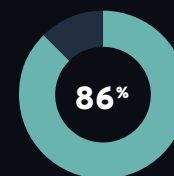
Educators supported via 826 Digital

16,000+

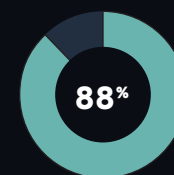
Students with work published by the 826 Network



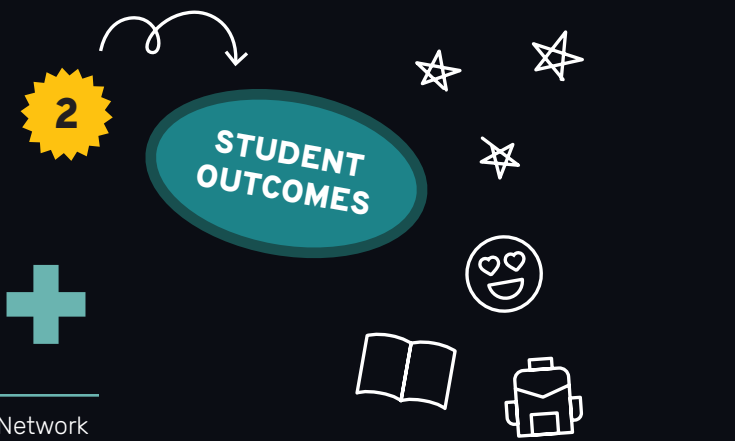
91% of students say that 826 improved their writing and work



86% of students report they feel proud of their writing



88% of students say working with 826 will prepare them for college and their career



770+

Educator collaborators and teaching artists served through chapters

2,934

Active volunteers in the 826 Network

We plan to reach 1 MILLION STUDENTS and 35,000 EDUCATORS by the year 2026.

1. STRENGTHEN THE NETWORK

Deliver training and professional development for 826 chapters

2. TURN EVERY TEACHER INTO A WRITING TEACHER

Inspire and support educators with digital resources

3. SCALE IN MORE STUDENT SPACES

Customize curricula with community partners

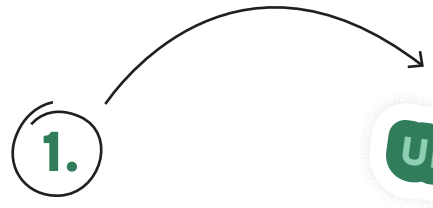
4. BE A FIERCE ADVOCATE FOR WRITING EDUCATION

Grow the public platform for student writing



READ OUR
STRATEGIC
PLAN →





1.



Supporting a thriving network of local writing centers

The 826 Network is a grassroots movement led by local chapters in nine cities. As a centralized resource, 826 National aids each chapter's ongoing innovation, growth, and success.

In 2023, we expanded financial, operational, and professional development support through 826 University to build cohesion across our network as we transform writing education.



DISCOVER THE POWER AND JOY OF WRITING
A proud smile from an 826 Boston student writer.

“826 has helped me evolve spiritually, psychologically, and literally. Before joining 826, I wasn't a very strong reader or writer, but thanks to 826 mentors, I was able to develop solid concepts that allowed me to evolve into a powerful comprehender and thinker.”

**ACES B., 826 VALENCIA STUDENT,
BLACK LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT CLUB**



CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

The strength of the 826 Network lies within the collaborative learning environment stewarded by 826 National. With Cohort Calls, Lunch N Learns, and research Deep Dives—in addition to the 826 Learning Series—we provided an **average of twenty hours of learning per employee** in the 826 Network.

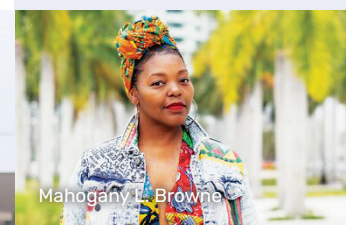


World-class learning opportunities

For the 826 Learning Series, we convened the 826 Network for three days of virtual chapter tours, workshops, and panels, including conversations about **diverse representation in books, interactive product design, and equitable and effective management.**



Jason Torres-Rangel



Mahogany L. Browne



Tasslyn Magnusson



Dr. Eve L. Ewing

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS

We invited acclaimed writers and activists to share their knowledge with our network, including **Jason Torres-Rangel**, a National Writing Project partner teacher, 826 collaborator, and 2023 California Teacher of the Year; **Mahogany L. Browne**, a poet, playwright, organizer, and educator; **Dr. Eve L. Ewing**, a sociologist, scholar, cultural organizer, and award-winning writer; and **Tasslyn Magnusson**, a researcher and expert on banned books.

\$430k+

Chapter grants given



Hours of professional development and learning programs

2.



Bringing 826 to classrooms everywhere

To reach even more students, 826 National cultivates and champions a community of educators inspired and equipped to bring writing to classrooms everywhere.

Most K-12 educators do not have access to creative, proven methods to teach writing. 826 Digital meets this gap by providing free resources and lesson plans to educators and parents nationwide.

In 2023, we launched a record number of lessons, partnered with award-winning authors and working professionals, and reached more students than ever before.



Soledad O'Brien



Nidhi Hebbar



Dr. Matthew Bucknor



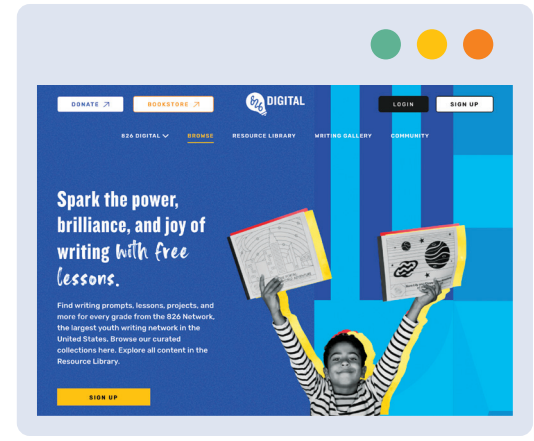
Nicole Dungca

THE PROS SHARE HOW WRITING IS ESSENTIAL IN ALL TYPES OF CAREERS



For the *Write Your Way Forward* series, we published videos of journalists, doctors, and tech professionals explaining how they use writing in their work. Featured professionals included **Soledad O'Brien**, an award-winning broadcast journalist; **Nidhi Hebbar**, a misinformation specialist at Google; **Nicole Dungca**, a reporter at *The Washington Post*; and **Dr. Matthew Bucknor**, a radiologist at UCSF.

826digital.com/watch-and-write-write-your-way-forward/



NEW WEBSITE WITH IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY

We redesigned the 826 Digital brand and website to reach a wider audience, improve accessibility, and enhance engagement. **89% of users felt satisfied with the new homepage, and 88% were satisfied with the new resource library.** One user said, "I like how easy it is to navigate the site, as well as how you showcase student writing and put educators in the spotlight."

"826 Digital resources help my students find the joy of writing while seeing characters and authors who look like them and have similar stories to them."

ALISON P., TEACHER, NASHVILLE, TN



685k

Students reached

18%

User growth

30k+

Hours of instructional content downloaded

Your favorite authors share writing prompts, strategies, and more

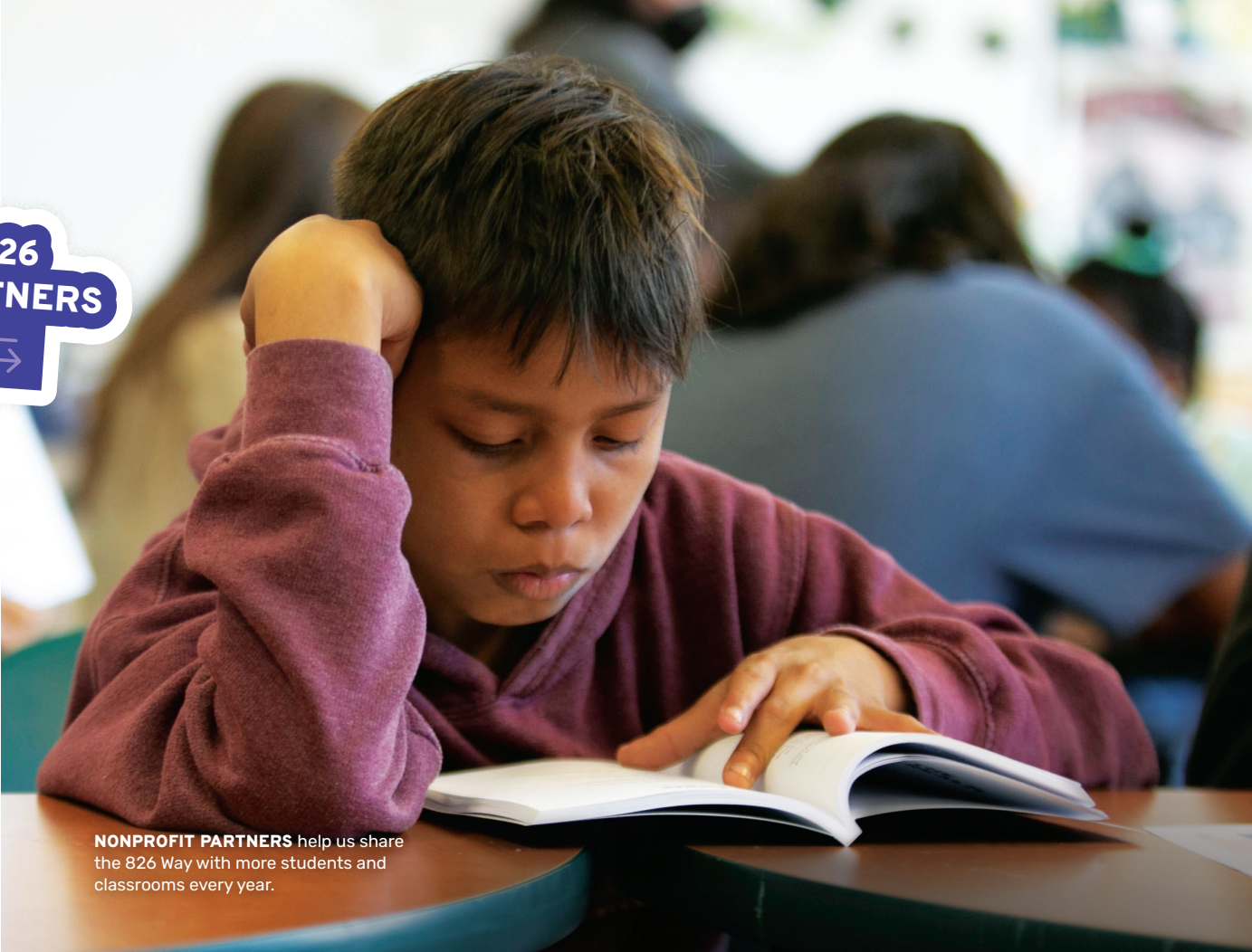
For the *A Good Time to Write* series, we invited authors to share their go-to writing activities and advice on the creative process. Featured professionals included **Charlotte Yeung**, the Midwest Poet Laureate Ambassador; and **Javier Zamora**, an 826 Valencia alumnus and *New York Times* bestselling author.



826digital.com/watch-and-write-a-good-time-to-write/

3.

Reaching students by scaling into spaces where they gather



NONPROFIT PARTNERS help us share the 826 Way with more students and classrooms every year.

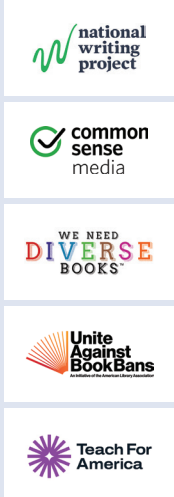
The 826 Way has always been about reaching beyond traditional classroom conventions—inviting students to explore the power of writing in unexpected ways.

Through partnerships, we aim to turn every space into a writing space: libraries, community centers, and wherever students gather.



EXPANDING OUR PROGRAM REACH WITH PARTNER POWER

We collaborated with the **National Writing Project**, **Common Sense Media**, **We Need Diverse Books**, **Unite Against Book Bans**, and **Teach for America** on campaigns and writing programs to extend our reach into more student and educator spaces.



Developing new ways to bring poetry into classrooms

In celebration of National Poetry Month, the **Academy of American Poets** selected a poem by an 826 Network student author every day in April and shared it across social media. The FY23 partnership culminated in the publication of a zine titled *A Poem in Your Pocket*.



826 NATIONAL LAUNCHED A RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Brianca Wright, a master's student in Education and Human Development at the George Washington University served as the 2023 inaugural research fellow. This paid program is designed for graduate and postdoctoral researchers of color in fields that lack diverse representation, including education, child development, learning sciences, psychology, digital media, and public policy. Brianca's research culminated in a report focused on the role of writing to support social, emotional, and mental health outcomes.



Bringing 826 methodology to new platforms for students

Thanks to a generous investment from **AT&T's The Achievery**, 826 Digital created thirty-five *Watch and Write* videos and lessons to share inspiration and ideas directly from authors, working professionals, and friends of 826. These videos help close the digital divide for hundreds of thousands of students.

Explore our "Watch and Write" videos and lessons: 826digital.com/watch-and-write



4.

Amplifying students' words and publishing research for global advocacy



826 NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

A Place Worth Being

A Place Worth Being features work from more than sixty student writers grades 7–12 from across the country. An anthology of poems and essays created in partnership with **Jason Reynolds**, bestselling author and three-time National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, these works were inspired by his prompt of the same name featured on 826 Digital.

The Beast

The Beast is a collection of poems from young authors across the country ages 8–18 about beloved family pets, mythical beasts from storybooks, and local creatures resting outside our window—all relationships that offer the opportunity to reflect on the world we live in, and the world we wish to live in. The poems are all inspired by a writing prompt from **Ada Limón**, 24th Poet Laureate of the United States and the foreword is by **Charlotte Yeung**, 2023 National Youth Poet Laureate finalist.

Heroes of Our Own

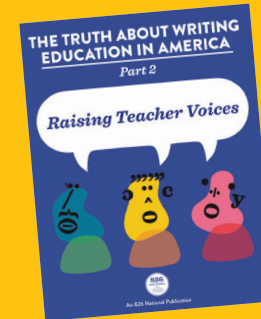
826 National joined forces with our chapters in Los Angeles and San Francisco to launch the two-year 826 Student Author Program, thanks to a grant from the **California State Library Foundation**. The book includes a foreword featuring a conversation between 826LA and 826 Valencia students, **San Francisco Mayor London Breed**, and **Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly Mitchell**, as well as curriculum from the project designed by staff at 826LA.

Explore our books of published student authors online at 826national.org/student-writing

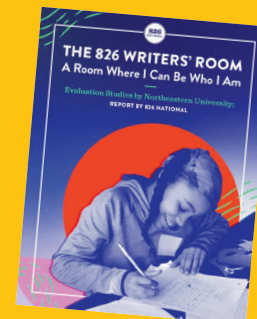
This year we released **THREE REPORTS** examining the state of writing education:



2022 Quick Report:
Creativity Gains in Student Writing



The Truth About Writing Education in America, Part 2:
Raising Teacher Voices



The 826 Writers' Room:
A Room Where I Can Be Who I Am

Explore all of our research publications online at 826national.org/our-work/research



SHOWCASING STUDENT VOICES

We hosted our first-ever 826 Digital Writers' Showcase, inviting students from across the country to submit a video featuring their original writing in any genre. Ten finalists were added to the 826 Digital platform, including **Naomi Ku**, age 11, from 826LA; **Iman Abdullah**, grade 2, from 826NYC; **Eloise Combs**, grade 3, from Michigan; and **Alistar Bedell**, grade 11, from North Carolina

826digital.com/watch-and-write



BRINGING THE CAUSE OF WRITING EDUCATION TO GMA

Good Morning America invited 826 National CEO **Laura Brief** and our co-founders, **Nínive Calegari** and **Dave Eggers**, to talk about the importance of student voices.

826national.org/gma

Our BOARD includes authors, educators, and advocates for student writing.



Anne Wintroub
Co-President
Founder, UPSIDE



Sandro Olivieri
Co-President
Founder and President, Project FoundED



Tom Racciatti
Treasurer
Director, West Monroe Partners, Minneapolis



Joaquín Alvarado
Chair, Consumer Reports Board of Directors;
Founder, Partner, Studio To Be



Leah Clapman
Executive Director,
PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs



Andrew Cohn
826 Boston Representative
Fellow, Volunteer Lawyers Project



Kristen Conry
Senior Vice President Global Design,
Marriott International



Miah Daughtery
826DC Representative
VP, Content Advocacy-Literacy, NWEA



Abby Fanelli
826michigan Representative
COO, Beyond the Brand



Tony Francis
Senior Program Manager for Global Early Career
Programing, Finance Dept., Google



Scott Ginsburg
826LA Representative
Managing Partner, Boulevard Partners



Amanda Gorman
Inaugural poet and
National Youth Poet Laureate



Ronicka Harrison-Briscoe
826 New Orleans Representative
President, Legacy Inventive Solution for Schools



Ryan Landes
Partner, Quinn Emanuel,
Los Angeles



Michael Masserman
Head of Global Policy & Social Impact,
Lyft



Kate O'Sullivan
General Manager,
Digital Diplomacy, Microsoft Corporation



Tom Pyun
Independent consultant to nonprofits
and foundations



Jeff Shi
826 MSP Representative
Scientific Computing Consultant, Minnesota
Supercomputing Institute at the University of Minnesota



Joe Vasquez
826 Valencia Representative
Growth Tech Alliance Lead, Boston Consulting Group



Kara Wright
826CHI Representative
Managing Director, Envisioning Equity Work, LLC



Kathryn Yontef
826NYC Representative
Senior Director, Competition Policy and
Market Regulation at Microsoft



Nínive Calegari
Emeritus Board Member
Co-Founder of *826 National* & *826 Valencia*
President and Founder, Teacher Salary Project



Dave Eggers
Emeritus Board Member
Co-Founder of *826 National* & *826 Valencia*
Founder of McSweeney's Publishing
Award-Winning Author



Meet our TEAM.



Laura Brief
Chief Executive Officer

Cynthia Chiong
Director of R&D

Megan Derry
Graphic Designer

Anna Griffin
Director of Content & Partnerships,
826 Digital

Dennis Guardado
Development & Finance Coordinator

Abbey Hayward
Director of Finance & Operations

Zaneta Jung
Communications Manager

Kona Lai
Network Support Manager

Kai Lokken
Development Manager

Meghan Dove McAfee
826 Content Developer

Gabi Oliveira
Research Manager

Amira Seaboch
Chief Development Officer

Kait Steele
Director of Field Operations

Shida Zamani
Salesforce Administrator

Financial Performance

REVENUE

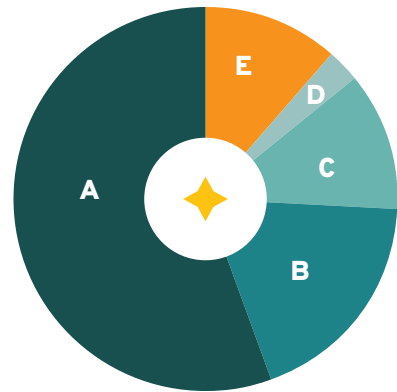
\$2,786,339

SUPPORT

- A FOUNDATION**
\$1,549,825 • 56%
- B CORPORATE**
\$520,582 • 18%
- C INDIVIDUAL**
\$324,313 • 12%
- D GOVERNMENT**
\$77,726 • 3%

OTHER REVENUE

- E EARNED INCOME**
\$313,893 • 11%



EXPENSES

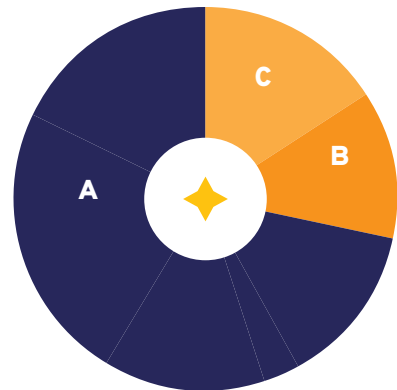
\$2,394,157

PROGRAM

- A PROGRAM**
\$1,717,356 • 72%

OTHER EXPENSES

- B ADMINISTRATIVE**
\$304,333 • 13%
- C FUNDRAISING**
\$372,468 • 15%



WRITING IS FUN!
A couple students collaborating and having a great time.

“The key to changing this country is within us, we have a voice and two fists to raise. Whether we choose to use this power is up to us. Will we die unspoken or will we live unbroken?”

EXCERPT FROM *WE ARE ALIVE WHEN WE SPEAK FOR JUSTICE*,
JACQUELINE R., 826LA



We're **THANKFUL** for the generosity of donors and partners who made 2023 our most impactful year yet.

Academy of American Poets
 Acton Family Giving
 Adam Abensohn
 Adam Livingston
 Adam Rex
 Aiden Baldree
 Alice Rupp
 Ama Carey-Barr
 Amazon Smile
 Amity Horowitz
 Amy Charleroy
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 Caroline Williamson
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 Catlyn Blanchard
 Cecilia Juan
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 Chronicle Books
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 Conor Lastowka
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 Daniel Heiser
 Daniel Kakuschke
 Daniel Shader
 Dashiel Jacobs
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 Erika Egner
 Erika Pulley-Hayes
 Erin Pearce
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 Ezra Remer
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 Gary Heidenreich
 Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
 General Motors
 Glencoe Family Foundation
 Goldman Sachs & Co. Matching Gifts Program
 Good Today
 Hawthornden Foundation
 Heather Smith Jones
 Ioana Patringenaru
 Jacquelyn Jarrell
 James Daly
 James Esposto
 Jane Cass
 Jason Acunzo
 Jason Dixon
 Jeff Antebi
 Jeff McCall
 Jeffer Daykin
 Jeffrey Snow
 Jenna Friedel
 Jennifer Borchard
 Jennifer March Soloway
 Jenny Decker

Jentes Family Foundation
 Jess Murphy
 Joaquín Alvarado
 Joe Paunovich
 Joe Rieke
 John and Kelly Couch
 John Box
 John Wyatt
 Jon Pickhardt
 Jonathan Agins
 Joni Deutsch
 Jordan Catalano
 Joseph Murphy
 Julia Beskin
 Julie Tsai
 Justin De Graaf
 Justine Jentes and Dan Kuruna
 Kaitlin Malixi
 Kara Koch
 Kara Waite
 Karen Fox
 Kate O'Sullivan and Kurt Bauer
 Kate Young
 Katherine Mello
 Katherine Michiels
 Katherine Shrager
 Kathleen McCaren
 Kathryn Buhrmann
 Kathryn Murphy
 Katie Hyde
 Katie Mattes
 Katy Didden
 Kay Brief
 Kendra McKeever Renner
 Keough Family Foundation
 Kerry Stubbs
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 Kirsten Mize
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 National Endowment for the Arts
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 Raj Sehgal
 Randy Boone
 Recht Family Charitable Fund
 Regina Kakadelis
 Richard Connell
 Robert Loigman
 Robert Madden
 Roger Ausbury
 Ronicka Briscoe

Ryan Arai
 Ryan Landes
 San Francisco Foundation
 Sarah Boone
 Sarah Box
 Sarah Kling
 Sarah Robinson
 Sarah Zimmerman
 Sarilda Tackett
 Scotia Rivard
 Sean Pak
 Singer Family Foundation
 Spike Jonze
 Stan Sanchez
 Stephan Zuercher
 Stephen Farneth
 Stuart Gansky
 Tedra Osell
 Terry Wit and Jenn Heflin
 Tessa Wilson
 Tobias Russell
 Tom Hall
 UK Online Giving Foundation
 Valhalla Treehouse Fund
 Vanguard Charitable - Anonymous Donor
 Vashti Moss
 ViacomCBS
 Victoria Maroulis
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 Wendroff Family
 Wendy Ryan
 Will Wollesen
 William Adams
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 William Seybold
 Wylie Agency, Inc.
 Yellow Chair Foundation
 Yerba Buena Fund
 Yolanda Peirce
 Zelis
 Zingerman's Mail Order

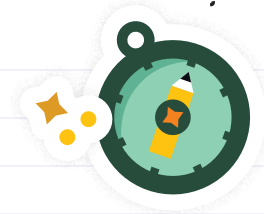
EVERY DAY,

STUDENTS

WRITE

THE

FUTURE



I Am



VIOLET B., GRADE 6, 826 DIGITAL



I am a place always singing, thinking, learning and teaching.

I am a place that knows no failure, one where giving up isn't an option.

I am a place that has no moon, no stars, no night sky.

Only a Sun that never sleeps.

I am a place with an imagination as empty and dull as a new box of crayons.

Never not doing something.

Wishing nothing more than to see the world, make memories,
experience every little thing it can before construction stops
and time becomes a dead end.

I am the Howler Monkey's mighty cry,
the Scarlet Macaw's vibrant wings,
the Poison Dart Frog's strength.

I am the heart and wisdom of a Bristlecone Pine,
the warmth of the Sun's rays, the Earth's harsh terrain.

I am all things unharmed and unprepared, hope and sorrow,
evident and unseen, genuine and disguised—

I am a jungle.



From A Place Worth Being: Explorations by Young Writers, an excerpt from the poem *I Am*

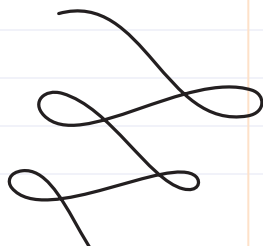


La luna de mi vida

KARLA M., AGE 16, 826LA

I never believed in love
my young eyes only ever saw heartache after heartache in my
family
I was cautious lending you my heart
vulnerable, waiting for impact
yet you held it so gentle
I spoke to the moon and told her about you
In front of the moon, and her sky full of stars I realized I love you
she smiled at my story
they say the moon loves love
I hope our love is her favorite

From the publication *We Are Infinite: Poetry and Prose for the Cosmos*



Skin

JENNIFER M., AGE 15, 826 BOSTON

My brown skin is a canvas of **gold**,
A tapestry of stories untold.
It's a melody of sunlit days,
And a dance of life in many ways
My skin is the Earth, warm and rich,
A garden of cultures, a perfect niche.
It's a symphony of hues and shades
And a masterpiece that **never** fades.
So when you see my brown skin shine,
Remember it's a treasure, divine.
It's a reflection of who I am within
And a triumph over **hate** and **sin**.

From the publication *I Find A Place*



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