

LATINO EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Annual Report

FY 2025



WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY
LATINO EDUCATION INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION



It is my pleasure to present the Latino Education Institute's **Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report**—part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen standards of transparency, accountability, and shared learning with our community. Each year, we will share a report like this one on our website and make it available to funders and community stakeholders.

We are compiling the highlights, updates, and outcomes of all our programs in one comprehensive document, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. This annual publication reflects our commitment to measuring progress, celebrating impact, and identifying opportunities for growth. We also remain open to refining and improving this report each year as we learn and evolve as an organization.

Through this report, we aim not only to reflect on what we have achieved but also to share how we are strengthening our work in the service of Latino youth and families in Worcester.

Our mission advances best when we are open about both our successes as well as the challenges we are working to overcome together. Thank you for your continued support as we build a stronger, more equitable future through education.

With appreciation,

María A. Juncos-Gautier

LEI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

K-12 PROGRAMS

From October 2024 to May 2025, we enrolled a total of 253 participants in our 6, year-long intensive K-12 programs: 2 for elementary, 3 for middle and 1 for high schoolers (combining LIDER and YCU in FY25). The average cohort size per program was approximately 41 students. These programs achieved an average attendance rate of 78% and a retention rate of 67%. We also reached an additional 254 students through three special events during spring and early summer of 2025: the STEM Expo, the Youth Summit and the Southbridge Middle School visit to WSU. This brings the total to 507 students directly impacted by our educational programs and events.



These outcomes reflect the power of our innovative curriculum, grounded in Positive Youth Development (PYD), dedicated staff, and strong community partnerships. Participants made measurable gains in confidence, skill-building, and future planning. At the core of our educational approach are four foundational modules:

- Personal identity and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Cultural awareness
- College & career exploration
- Civic engagement via photovoice and digital storytelling projects, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and service learning.

Together, these create a well-rounded and impactful learning experience that supports academic and personal development.

A student from our One Circle program shared:

"The environment is fun, and during school, there can be a lot going on—drama or people being rude. But here, it's safe and welcoming. People are kind, and you meet a lot of nice people, too."

As we reflect on this year's accomplishments, we extend heartfelt appreciation to our staff. Your dedication has left a lasting impact on our students and families. Thank you for being the driving force behind our mission.

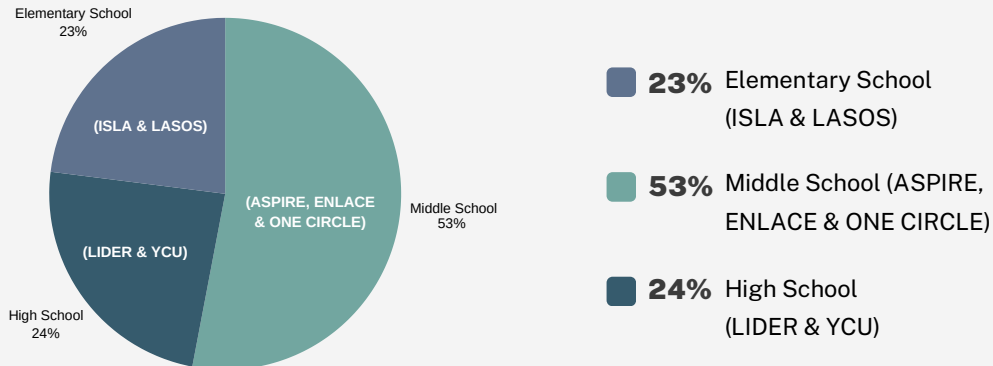
NEW THIS YEAR:

- This year, we also enhanced our ISLA program by introducing family engagement workshops on CPR, family health, parenting, communication, and mental wellness, among other topics—strengthening school-home collaboration.
- Our reimagined LIDER+ program (Latinos Involved in Discovering Educational Resources +) now integrates college access and civic leadership. This dynamic after-school initiative empowers Latino high school students and their families to navigate the college admissions process while building leadership skills and cultural pride. Through interactive college workshops, campus visits, youth-led research (YPAR), and LEI's signature Youth Leadership Summit, LIDER+ prepares students for academic success and lifelong civic engagement.
- The **Barr Foundation** is an important new funder and partner that has helped us to enhance our high-school programs to LIDER+.

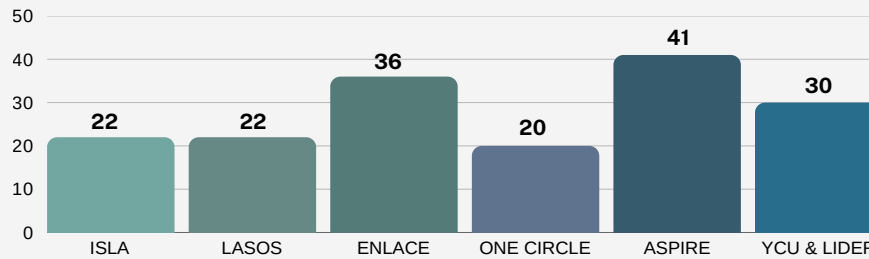


Participant Demographics:

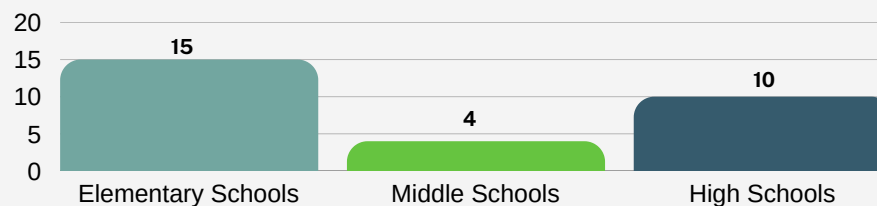
Program Participants by Grade Level



Students Retained by Program



Schools Served by LEI Programs

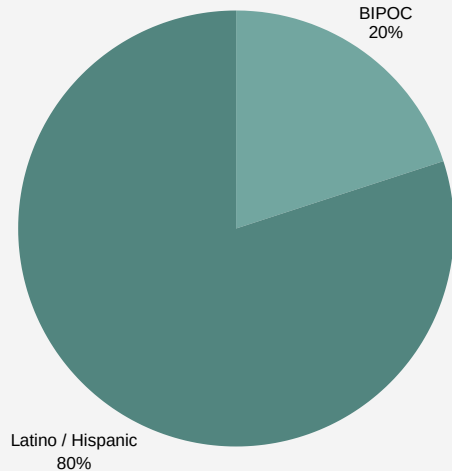


28 Worcester Public Schools represented. Includes students from the Central Mass Collaborative, the Abby Kelley Charter Public School, and Bancroft High School.

Our students come from the following school quadrants:

- **32%** from the South Quadrant (Claremont/Woodland Academy, Columbus Park, Heard St, New Citizens Center, South High School, Sullivan Middle School, University Park)
- **25%** from the Burncoat Quadrant (Burncoat High School, Burncoat Middle School, Lincoln Street, Norrback Avenue School, Wawecus Road School, Worcester Technical High School)
- **25%** from the Doherty Quadrant (Chandler Elementary, Worcester Dual Language Magnet, Doherty Memorial High, Flagg Street, Forest Grove Middle School, West Tatnuck)
- **18%** from the North Quadrant (North High School, Grafton Street School, Lake View School, Rice Square School, Worcester East Middle School)

✓ Ethnicity of Program Participants



Our students represent a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds, originating from:

- **North America & the Caribbean:** Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Canada
- **Central & South America:** Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Perú, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil
- **Africa:** Liberia, Ethiopia
- **Middle East:** Iraq
- **Asia:** Philippines, Nepal

✓ Challenges Faced

- Heightened political fear reduced attendance, with some families withdrawing their children for safety concerns. Many students also brought emotional stress and trauma, affecting group dynamics and requiring extra staff support.
- Resource limitations were another hurdle—restricting our ability to consistently provide transportation and more sustainable snacks, both of which are critical for access and engagement.
- Finally, rising costs forced us to reduce the number of enrichment trips we could offer, limiting some of the hands-on learning opportunities that are usually a hallmark of our programs.
- Despite these challenges, our team remained resilient, creative, and deeply committed to student success.

✓ FY26 Program Recommendations

- Update curriculum and expand 21st-century skill-building (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, leadership).
- Strengthen staff capacity for inclusive, culturally responsive learning.
- Partner with WSU (Admissions, Financial Aid, Career Services, faculty) to expand early college exposure.
- Launch new LIDER+ track with Latino Medical Student Association (STEM, healthcare, social justice pathways).
- Improve student retention through family outreach and personalized support.
- Enhance data tracking to assess impact, guide design, and align with long-term goals.

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

ISLA PROGRAM

The **Innovative Services for Latino Achievers (ISLA)** empowers students in grades 3–6 by enhancing literacy and math skills through engaging activities that build academic confidence and competence. The program fosters a love for learning by encouraging students to approach reading, writing, and math with enthusiasm and curiosity. It also builds strong school-family connections through intentional parent involvement.



✓ Highlights

- Successfully resumed math tutoring, which improved students' confidence and problem-solving skills.
- Strengthened English literacy through read-alouds, grammar and comprehension practice, journaling, and culture enrichment exercises.
- Implemented bilingual strategies, including translanguaging and leveled reading groups.
- Older students gained confidence through mentoring younger peers in language tasks.
- Engaged students in photovoice projects to explore cultural identity through literacy.
- A family engagement component was implemented with parent workshops that equipped families with strategies to support their children's academic success. Topics included CPR training, family, mental, and sexual health education, as well as communication and stress management. These sessions fostered collaboration between families and schools, bridging the gap between home and the classroom.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **79%** retention rate
- **77%** attendance rate
- **88%** of students demonstrated greater confidence in their mathematics problem-solving skills.
- **62%** improved in English proficiency, with **27%** advancing at least one reading level and **35%** meeting their target goals.
- **95%** consistently completed their math assignments
- **80%** of parents/caregivers actively participated in family engagement workshops and activities

✓ Youth Survey Highlights (SAYO-Y)

- **88%** of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel proud of their cultural identity.
- **75%** felt more confident speaking about who they are.
- **80%** enjoyed working with others and being part of the group.
- **Many students** cited that they feel "seen," "included," and "supported" by facilitators and peers.

✓ Parents Survey Highlights

- **Over 80% of parents strongly agreed** that their child looked forward to attending ISLA and found the activities valuable to their development.
- **100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed** that the program helped their youth build friendships and work well with others.
- **91% of parents** felt staff served as positive role models for their youth.
- **Nearly 92% of parents strongly agreed** that the program helped their child do better in school.

- **Every parent expressed satisfaction** with communication from the program and reported their child felt proud of their cultural background.

✓ Qualitative Data

- Parents consistently praised staff warmth, communication, and cultural understanding.
- Students appreciated activities that celebrated identity and Latinx heritage, including journaling, cultural art, and discussions.
- Based on the results of the surveys and observations, students showed signs of growth in self-confidence, emotional awareness, and social bonding.

Student Voices

"I really enjoyed attending the ISLA program. It made learning fun!" • "I believe the program has helped me a lot with my math skills. I feel more confident in my abilities." • "ISLA gave me the tools I needed to succeed in math." • "I love ISLA because it is helpful, and the people are kind." • "I love ISLA because we get to learn with fun teachers."

Parent Feedback

"What a great experience at ISLA there are always new things to learn, and the staff is excellent." • "In the two years my son has been participating in the ISLA program, I've seen improvement and progress in his academics." • "At first, I had trouble getting to the program, and they were able to help by providing transportation for me and my daughter."

8 Elementary schools served: Abby Kelley Charter Public School, Chandler Elementary Community, Flagg Street, Lincoln Street, Rice Square, West Tatnuck, Woodland Academy, Worcester Dual Language Magnet.

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	38	28
Retained	63%	79%
Attendance Rate	76%	71%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment rate.** It dropped from 38 to 28 students. A 26% enrollment drop reflects the external political uncertainties and shifts in youth engagement.
- **Retention rate.** It increased significantly from 63% to 79%, indicating stronger connections and trust built between staff and participants.
- **Attendance rate.** It dipped slightly from 76% to 71%, possibly impacted by safety concerns and the evolving political climate nationwide.

✓ Observations

- While fewer students may have enrolled, those who did were more deeply engaged, as evidenced by the higher retention rate.
- It highlights that even amidst the challenges, ISLA is a stabilizing force for elementary school children and continues to uplift and empower youth by fostering resilience, leadership, and trust.
- The data illustrate not only the program's effectiveness but also its role as a safe, consistent space for youth during uncertain times.

LASOS PROGRAM

The **Latina Achievers in Search Of Success (LASOS)** program empowers 6th-grade Latina girls and their mentors through culturally responsive enrichment that promotes self-discovery, cultural pride, and early exposure to college and career opportunities. The program is built on a foundation of relationship-building, identity exploration, and community connection.



✓ Highlights

- Built community through "Mucho Gusto!", "Creating Group Norms," and relationship-focused sessions.
- Developed self-reflection and identity with activities like "Quien Soy?", "Who Am I? Creating Self Portraits," and "Understanding Yourself: What Are You Made Of?"
- Explored cultural pride through "What is Culture? ¿Quienes Somos?", "De Donde Soy: Exploring My Family Background," and the creation of a collaborative LASOS Community Quilt.
- Fostered media and emotional literacy through journaling, affirmation boxes, and film reflections on *Real Women Have Curves* and *Inside Out 2*.
- Promoted personal development through discussions on Latina stereotypes, gratitude, and emotional intelligence.
- Facilitated college and career readiness. Students created vision boards, completed personality assessments, and participated in college campus visits to WSU and WPI.
- Taught financial literacy through a budgeting workshop led by United Way Women's Initiative
- Engaged in community issues through a photovoice project, which allowed participants to document their communities' strengths and challenges through photography.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **63%** retention rate.
- **77%** attendance rate.
- **80%** of girls completed and presented a photovoice project.
- **85%** enhanced communication and peer relationship skills.
- **88%** reported a strong understanding of healthy relationships.
- **90%** improved emotional awareness.
- **100%** set academic and personal goals and participated in STEM and college-readiness activities.
- **92%** of parents strongly agreed that activities offered were valuable to their child's development.
- **75%** of parents strongly agreed that the program helped their youth do better in school.
- **90%** of parents said their youth looked forward to attending the program.
- **83%** of parents strongly agreed that the program helped their child build friendships.

Student Voices

"We can do anything, change our world, and respect others from different cultures. Latinas rule and are strong." • "LASOS helps me when I sometimes lose control, meaning I get angry very easily. They assist me and also help me learn more things, as well as providing support." • "I feel good and like they're [staff] really helpful because they understand what teenagers and people like this age go through a lot."

Parent Feedback

"LASOS has been such a positive experience. My daughter looked forward to it every week, and the staff truly made her feel seen and supported." • *"She's more confident, talks more about school, and has made new friends because of this program."*

3 Schools Served: Worcester Dual Language Magnet School, Woodland Academy, Wawecus Road School

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	32	33
Retained	61%	67%
Attendance Rate	85%	77%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment rate.** Grew modestly from 32 to 33 students, A stable rate year over year.
- **Retention rate.** Improved significantly from 61% to 67%, suggesting stronger program engagement and support.
- **Attendance rate.** Dropped from 85% to 77%, a notable decline.

✓ Observations

While retention increased, the dip in attendance may signal external challenges affecting participants' ability to attend consistently. Based on feedback and contextual factors:

"The recent shift in the political climate has created tangible barriers for some families, ranging from heightened concerns about safety to transportation hesitancy. These systemic pressures, though often invisible in raw numbers, impact day-to-day participation." Kathy Orengo. LEI K-12 Program Manager

This suggests that while families deeply value the LASOS program as reflected in the improved retention rates, growing systemic discrimination and emotional safety concerns may be influencing day-to-day attendance behaviors.

Despite these challenges, LASOS continues to inspire young Latinas to envision a bright future celebrating their identities, strengthening leadership skills, and nurturing the lifelong confidence they need to thrive.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

ENLACE PROGRAM

The **EN**couraging **L**atinos to **A**chieve **E**xcellence (**ENLACE**) program is designed to support BIPOC/Latino boys in 7th and 8th grades from the Worcester Public Schools. ENLACE provides early intervention, mentorship, and in-school programming aimed at fostering personal development, academic success, and positive behavioral and mental health outcomes. Operating under the mottos "Boys, Men, Gentlemen" and "Engage, Empower, Excel," the program emphasizes identity exploration, self-discipline, and cultural enrichment.



✓ Highlights

- Promoted personal, social, and academic growth by fostering a safe and supportive environment where students developed confidence, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- Built a strong sense of community and belonging, where students felt valued, supported, and connected to both peers and staff, encouraging consistent participation.
- Encouraged leadership and identity development, offering structured opportunities for self-reflection, cultural exploration, and positive behavioral change.
- Expanded community involvement and civic awareness through engagement in cultural events, service projects, and educational field trips that broadened students' perspectives.
- Offered weekly mentoring, academic support, and themed sessions focused on identity, race, ethnicity, masculinity, intersectionality, gratitude, and well-being.
- Facilitated college and career exploration through vision boards, SMART goals, and career interest inventories.
- Educated about STEM via drone technology sessions, a WPI campus tour, and STEM Expo participation.
- Provided cultural and enrichment activities, for example: Seeds of Greatness, Youth Summit, and the Brotherhood Sisterhood Conference.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **75%** retention rate
- **77%** attendance rate
- **90%** of participants actively engaged in academic and social-emotional activities, including SMART Goals, Vision Boards, and Education Pays workshops.
- **75%** demonstrated increased self-confidence and leadership, as seen in activities like Positive Identity Circles, Future Self Letters, and mentoring sessions
- **60%** discovered new career interests and clarified their future goals through career-focused activities, including the RIASEC Career Inventory, résumé writing, and insights from the BIPOC Professionals Panel.
- **97%** indicated that the program was engaging and that they appreciated the activities provided.
- **100%** reported the program's environment as healthy and welcoming.
- **92%** reported that their families want them to pursue higher education.
- **90%** expressed aspirations such as graduating from a good university, getting a scholarship, or building a career in sports or the NFL, showing clarity and ambition in their personal goals.

- **100%** indicated that adult mentors in the program provided consistent care, support, and guidance.

Open responses emphasized the importance of mentorship, identity support, and the role of caring adults in fostering personal growth.

Student Voices

"ENLACE is one of the programs I have enjoyed coming to, all the time!" • "ENLACE is about interacting with others and talking with my peers and instructors." • "ENLACE is always fun with Moises and Walter, they are great." • "I liked how any time someone looks at you, they ask how you're doing."

Parent Feedback

A parent expressed deep gratitude for the program and staff with thoughtful gifts and a personal note. This gesture beautifully recognized the team's dedication, care, and positive influence. The kind words and gifts lifted the spirits of the staff, reinforcing a strong bond between the family and the program. It highlights the importance of mutual appreciation and trust cultivated through ongoing support for their child.

"I liked that my son was able to spend time with other children his age and become more outgoing." • "Because I felt my son was more confident in himself." • "I liked that the program kept him busy doing positive things." • "Thank you for being there for our youth, the next generation."

When parents were asked if they felt the ENLACE Program helped improve their youth's self-esteem, they responded: *"Yes, definitely my son is more confident." • "Yes, he's more confident around other kids."*

3 Middle Schools Served: Burncoat Middle School, Forest Grove Middle School and Worcester East Middle.

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	50	48
Retained	94%	75%
Attendance Rate	90%	74%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment rate.** Steady, with a slight dip from 50 (FY24) to 48 (FY25) students.
- **Retention rate.** Decreased from 94% to 75%, signaling shifting levels of continued participation.
- **Attendance rate.** Dropped from 90% to 74%, a notable decline worthy of deeper attention.

✓ Observations

- While enrollment figures show consistent community interest, the decline in attendance and retention points to growing barriers, particularly systemic discrimination and emotional safety.
- In FY25, many families reported concerns related to heightened safety fears, disrupted routines, and a growing sense of uncertainty for immigrant and BIPOC youth. These are likely influenced by the shifting political climate and national rhetoric, which may have created emotional tension, distrust in institutions, or reluctance to participate in public programs.
- Despite these hurdles, ENLACE continues to be a space of celebration, healing, and transformation nurturing confidence, identity, critical thinking, a sense of community, and leadership in young Latino boys. Students gained a stronger understanding of their personal identity, the importance of mental and physical wellness, and the role of education in achieving future goals.

ASPIRE SUMMER ACADEMY

ASPIRE Summer Academy is a five-week intensive program designed to strengthen literacy skills among middle school students using an integrated approach that blends Photovoice, STEM, and culturally relevant learning. The short-term goal is to improve literacy and communication through discussion-based analysis of a shared summer reading. The long-term objective is to prepare students for high school success and future college and career pathways by helping them explore diverse learning strategies and real-world applications. **86%** of students were from **6th - 8th grades** whereas **14%** were from **9th - 10th grades**.



✓ Highlights

- **Strengthened Interpersonal and public-speaking skills.** Participants developed confidence and communication abilities through community-building, civic engagement via a photovoice or a digital storytelling project, and public speaking activities.
- **Improved academic and personal growth.** Strong relationships with staff and peers fostered personal development and boosted academic performance.
- **High engagement through enrichment:** Field trips and workshops effectively enhanced student engagement and skill-building.
- **Positive impact recognized by families.** Students and families reported gains in confidence, mindset, reading proficiency, and school engagement.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **95%** retention rate.
- **80%** attendance rate.
- **93%** of participants stated they tried something new, enriching their overall experience.
- **92%** had someone in the program who helped them reach their goals.
- **62%** felt that coming to the program has helped them find out what they're good at.
- **79%** agreed or strongly agreed that they liked coming to the program.
- **86%** reported having fun during the program.
- **86%** expressed that they didn't feel bored.
- **82%** found something they liked to do in the program.
- **79%** felt they learned new things.
- **54%** felt challenged in a good way.
- **93%** got to try new things.

✓ Student Feedback

- **Positive recognition.** Students consistently praised staff members, noting their kindness, support, and respect. Comments such as “The staff at this program are kind, good, and respectful,” and “Isalby is a very good staff” reflect the strong rapport between students and facilitators.
- **Learning and identity building.** Some students highlighted the importance of learning about topics that aren't typically discussed, such as social issues. “This program is a way to learn about things happening in the world that others don't talk about” suggests that the program offered a space for meaningful discussions that went beyond just fun activities.

Student Voices

“I enjoyed coming together as a community to learn from one another and grow through collaboration.” • “ASPIRE is a fun program because of the activities we do. We engage in social projects and go on great trips that help us learn more about science and our community.”

Parent Feedback

“This program has been amazing. My daughter came home every day excited to share what she learned”. • “The ASPIRE team was wonderful with the kids and kept the parents informed.” • “We felt supported and included every step of the way.”

17 Schools Served: Burncoat Middle School, Worcester Dual Language Magnet, Woodland Academy, Claremont Academy, Worcester Arts Magnet School, Chandler Elementary Community, West Tatnuck, Sullivan Middle, Forest Grove, Worcester East Middle, Grafton Street, Norrback Avenue School, Lake View School, Columbus Park, Central Mass Collaborative/Hartwell, Doherty Memorial High School, and North High School

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	30	43
Retained	90%	95%
Attendance Rate	70%	77%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment rate.** ASPIRE saw a significant rise in student enrollment in FY25 (43 students vs. 30 in FY24), showing growing awareness and demand for the program.
- **Retention rate.** The retention rate improved from 90% to 95%, indicating not only higher enrollment but also deeper engagement and satisfaction among participants and families.
- **Attendance rate.** The attendance rate rose from 70% to 77%, a 7-point gain, reflecting stronger consistency in participation.

✓ Observations

ASPIRE continues to thrive as a culturally responsive, student-centered program, inspiring youth with a sense of purpose, identity, and academic confidence. The positive trends in both retention and attendance suggest a strong community endorsement, and the enrollment growth is a testament to its increasing impact across the community.

ONE CIRCLE PROGRAM

The **One Circle program** empowers BIPOC girls ages 10–14 by fostering cultural identity, emotional wellness, and stress reduction. The program creates a supportive space where participants engage in workshops that focus on self-expression, positive identity development, leadership skills, and coping strategies. In addition to serving youth, One Circle also provides support to parents and caregivers, offering tools and resources, including clinical consultations, to strengthen mental health advocacy at home.



✓ Highlights

- Facilitated growth in self-awareness, empathy, and personal development via weekly workshops.
- Taught about how to manage stress, set goals, and develop healthy emotional habits through discussion and engaging activities.
- Fostered mutual respect and community through sharing circles and guided conversations.
- Introduced topics on college readiness with sessions about the steps the girls need to follow for future academic success.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **61%** retention rate.
- **65%** of girls expressed that attending college is very important to them.
- **80%** demonstrated improved confidence in self-expression and an increased ability to manage stress and set goals.
- **88%** reported actively practicing empathy and deep listening in group settings.
- **80%** agreed or strongly agreed that they have someone they can count on for support.
- **72%** learned how to ask for help.
- **64%** felt equal in worth to others.
- **75%** learned how to resolve conflicts positively.
- **100%** agreed that college is important to them.
- **93%** got to try new things.

✓ Student Feedback

- **Emotional support and confidence-building.** Students emphasized the emotional support they received and how it helped build their confidence. Many students described the program as a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings, helping them develop trust in others.
- **Aspirations and career goals.** Aspirations for the future were high among students, with many mentioning careers in medicine, military service, and sports. The program fostered these aspirations by helping students explore college opportunities and think about their long-term goals.
- **New experiences and learning.** A significant portion of students (93%) mentioned that they got to try new things, highlighting how the program encouraged them to step outside their comfort zones and engage in activities they may not have experienced before.

Student Voices

"The environment is fun, and because during school, there can be a lot of things going on, like drama and people being rude. But here, it's a safe, welcoming environment where people are kind, and you meet a lot of nice people too." • *"This program has helped me by teaching what I need to do to prepare for college, like how to get ready and understand what college is really like."*

Parent Feedback

"Thank you for everything! The communication was very helpful." • *"The staff is very nice and caring. They truly understand how much they care for our children."* • *"The program helped my daughter gain more self-confidence."*

1 Middle School Served: Burncoat Middle School

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	32	33
Retained	38%	61%
Attendance Rate	67%	76%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment rate.** It remained steady. This consistency is valuable for a specialized support program like One Circle.
- **Retention rate.** It improved significantly, jumping from 38% in FY24 to 61% in FY25. This reflects stronger student engagement and likely improvements in program design or relational support..
- **Attendance rate.** It saw a notable increase, rising from 67% to 76%. This suggests greater consistency and commitment from participants, potentially linked to better facilitation and trust built over time. One of the influencing factors was that we only served one school, which helped us to focus our efforts better on attendance and retention efforts, including solving any transportation issues.

✓ Observations

- The rise in both retention and attendance underscores a successful program year. Students stayed engaged and showed up more consistently, a testament to the supportive environment One Circle creates.
- It's worth noting that attendance could have been even higher if not for external barriers. Ongoing safety concerns and shifts in the political climate posed challenges for participants. Despite this, the program still saw measurable growth, highlighting its resilience and the deep value it offers to its community.
- One Circle continued to nurture the social-emotional development of BIPOC girls by helping them build resilience, develop their voice, and envision their futures with confidence.

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

LIDER PROGRAM

The **Latino Involved In Discovering Educational Resources (LIDER)** program supports Latino high school students and families by increasing access to higher education through workshops, counseling, application assistance, college-credit courses, and campus experiences. YCU complements LIDER by focusing on leadership development, civic engagement, and youth-led research.



✓ Highlights

- **Strong connections with LIDER staff.** Students built meaningful relationships with staff, often seeking recommendation letters and professional references, which demonstrates their trust and appreciation for the guidance they received.
- **Improved assignment completion with support.** When given clear prompts and reminders, students showed stronger academic performance. This highlights the importance of structured support in helping students stay on track and succeed.
- **Deep engagement with research topics.** Students were highly interested in their project topics and developed new knowledge through their research. Their enthusiasm grew as they explored their topics in depth, demonstrating curiosity and dedication

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **97%** retention rate.
- **88%** attendance rate
- **100%** of students reported increased confidence in pursuing their educational and career goals.
- **80%** participated in college visits.
- **100% of seniors graduated and enrolled in local area colleges.**

Student Voices

"The LIDER program gives me university credits and tools for my future while expanding my understanding of societal issues." • "The projects are important, and the research helps us see facts rather than misinformation."

Parent Feedback

"I love that my child has built such a good relationship with the program staff. They've even asked for a recommendation letter, which is something I never thought they'd do!" • "It means a lot to know there are adults in their corner who believe in them."

LIDER Dual Enrollment, SO199 - Special Topics in Sociology: Civic Engagement

Facilitated by Dr. Francisco Vivoni and grounded in the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework. The course encouraged students to critically examine the role of civic engagement in shaping a more just and equitable society, as well as leadership development, civic engagement, and youth-led research. **Offered in Spring 2025.**

✓ Highlights

- Explored the intersection of race, class, gender, language, religion, and age in shaping identity and access.
- Analyzed real-world issues through the lens of power, privilege, and systemic inequity.
- Conducted youth-led research projects rooted in community experiences.
- Developed critical thinking, academic writing, and independent research skills essential for college success.

✓ Outcomes from LEI’s Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **97%** of students enrolled successfully completed the course with a passing grade.
- **100%** demonstrated measurable growth in college readiness.
- **100%** deepened their understanding of equity, advocacy, and participatory research.

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	20	30
Retained	75%	97%
Attendance Rate	91%	88%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment growth.** The number of students enrolled increased by 50%, showing rising interest and outreach impact.
- **Significant improvement in retention.** Retention jumped from 75% to an impressive 97%, suggesting stronger engagement, program quality, and sustained student commitment.
- **Slight dip in attendance.** Attendance slightly decreased from 91% to 88%. This dip could be attributed to broader structural challenges.

✓ Observations

- Changes in the national political and administrative climate impacted student morale and created some emotional uncertainty.
- Safety concerns could have prevented some students from attending regularly despite strong interest.
- This continued growth in both enrollment and retention despite external challenges speaks volumes about the LIDER program’s effectiveness, trustworthiness, and impact.
- The dip in attendance is not a program flaw but a reflection of current uncertainties and sociopolitical stressors, which the program continues to navigate with resilience.

YOUTH CIVIC UNION (YCU) & YOUTH SUMMIT: BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH AWARENESS AND ACTION

Complementing the LIDER program, the Youth Civic Union (YCU) empowers high school students through leadership development, civic engagement, and youth-led research. The program cultivates student voice by guiding participants to explore issues like diversity, equity, immigration, and social justice through workshops and collaborative projects. Students also earn college credit through participation in a dual enrollment civic engagement course.



✓ Highlights

- Learned about racial justice, identity, equity, and youth advocacy through weekly workshops
- Participated in the dual enrollment course SO199: Civic Engagement. Earned college credits and facilitated access to college.
- Engaged in a youth-led research project rooted in community experiences.
- Promoted leadership while preparing and planning for the Youth Summit to present the youth-led project —a culminating event that brought together over 110 participants, including students, families, educators, and local community members.

✓ Youth Summit Highlights:

- Presented youth-led research addressing topics such as gambling, drug addiction, DEI, immigration, discrimination, and gang violence.
- Encouraged and facilitated group discussions grounded in lived experience.
- Inspired participants to take steps toward inclusive change - a collective Call to Action.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **100%** of students developed critical thinking, presentation, and research skills.
- **100%** increased confidence in advocating for justice and equity.
- **100%** strengthened communication and collaboration with peers and community.

Student Voices

"At YCU/LIDER, we've been diving deep into the importance of racial justice—because understanding and speaking up against injustice isn't just about awareness; it's about shaping a better world." • "These conversations inspire us to take action for a future that's inclusive, equitable, and just!"

10 schools served: Bancroft High School, Burncoat High School, Central Mass Collaborative, Claremont Academy, Doherty Memorial High School, New Citizen's Center Secondary, North High School, South High School, University Park School, and Worcester Technical High School

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	25	30
Retained	72%	100%
Attendance Rate	84%	86%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment growth.** Student enrollment increased from 25 in FY24 to 30 in FY25, reflecting a positive trend in outreach and interest in the YCU program.
- **Outstanding retention.** Retention jumped from 72% to a perfect 100%, highlighting the program's success in keeping students engaged and committed throughout the year.
- **Sustained attendance.** The attendance rate improved slightly from 84% to 86%, indicating consistent student participation and strong program delivery.

✓ Observations

- These improvements reflect the YCU program's growing impact and its ability to create a supportive, engaging environment for young people. The perfect retention rate is particularly commendable and sets a benchmark for other programs.

SPECIAL EVENTS

AVANZA 2025 STEM EXPO

The AVANZA 2025 STEM Expo aimed to inspire Latino and BIPOC youth to explore STEM pathways with continued support from the **Massachusetts Biomedical Initiative (MBI)**. The event featured interactive workshops and expert-led demonstrations.



✓ Highlights

- Seventy-three (73) students from middle and high schools actively participated in 12 interactive workshops, exploring topics such as AI, coding, CPR, water filtration, and rocket building.
- Students selected sessions of personal interest, fostering a tailored experience.

The STEM Expo:

- Provided expert-led activities and demonstrations that enriched the students' STEM experiences.
- Strengthened partnerships with WSU, WPI, QCC, and the EcoTarium.
- Boosted outreach through school visits and social media promotion, engaging a wider audience and increasing visibility for STEM education.
- Conducted a bilingual workshop for parents to promote STEM awareness and college readiness.
- Distributed swag bags, including t-shirts, STEM kits, and raffle prizes to participants.
- A NASA Solar System Ambassador delivered an inspiring keynote address, sparking excitement for STEM careers and space exploration.

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **100%** of students participated in at least one STEM workshop, gaining exposure to a variety of fields and hands-on activities.
- **95%** of parents who attended the bilingual workshop reported increased awareness of STEM education and college readiness.
- **85%** of participants fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment among Latino and BIPOC youth in the STEM community.
- **90%** of participants were satisfied with the quality of STEM workshops and sessions delivered in the event.

✓ Key Insights

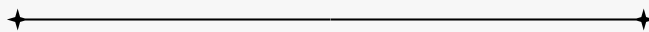
- **Student engagement.** The number of student participants (73) shows strong engagement and outreach impact, particularly within the Latino and BIPOC communities.
- **Community partnerships.** The event's partnerships with WSU, WPI, QCC, and the EcoTarium significantly enhanced its reach and educational value.
- **Parent involvement.** The bilingual parent workshop was highly impactful, as it not only promoted STEM but also provided tools for parents to support their children's academic journey.

✓ Observations

- **Event success.** Despite external challenges such as logistics and attendance barriers, the event was overall a

success, meeting its engagement goals and fostering meaningful connections between students, parents, and the community.

- **Long-term impact.** The continued support from organizations such as MBI and higher education institutions will allow the event to build on its success in future years, growing the number of students and participants involved.



SOUTHBRIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCE COLLEGE LIFE AT WSU

A total of 127 enthusiastic 8th graders from Southbridge Middle School—63% of whom identify as Latino or Hispanic, and many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college—recently participated in an inspiring College Exploration Day at Worcester State University (WSU). As they prepare to transition into high school, this experience provided them with a meaningful and motivating glimpse into their future.

Highlights

- Engaged in hands-on activities led by LEI, WSU's Career Development Center, Admissions Office, and Student Ambassadors.
- Gained valuable insights into potential career pathways, the college admissions process, and the lived experiences of current college students.
- Enjoyed a guided campus tour, a dining hall experience, and a lively trivia game that added fun and real-world exposure to college life.

Outcomes from Surveys and Feedback Forms

- One hundred and twenty-seven (127) students participated in the full-day college exposure event.
- 98% of students rated the visit as positive or very positive.
- 95% reported feeling more confident about their college goals after the visit.
- Students gained early awareness of college and career opportunities, including what to expect in high school and beyond.
- The program fostered a sense of belonging, with students reflecting on how welcomed and inspired they felt by WSU students and staff.

Student Voices

- *"It made me want to go to college more." • "Now I know what questions to ask about college." • "I felt like I belonged."*

Key Insights & Observations:

- Interactive sessions with LEI, WSU departments, and student leaders provided relevant college and career information.
- A guided campus tour, dining hall experience, and trivia game provided students with a comprehensive, fun, and engaging introduction to college life.
- The event fostered a strong sense of belonging among students, encouraging their belief that higher education is within reach
- The 98% positive rating for the visit indicates strong engagement and student satisfaction with the program.
- With 95% of students feeling more confident about their college goals, the program demonstrated strong efficacy in inspiring college-bound aspirations.

POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

CLUB EDUCACIÓN (CLUB E)

Club E has continued to maintain its signature programming: English as a Second Language courses for adults in the Greater Worcester community. In addition to providing language instruction for participants in four levels of instruction and covering all domains of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening) Club E has also implemented various workshops and networking events to strengthen student connections and confidence in their local communities.

Total number of participants: 240

Average session attendance: 75%



✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **71%** of adult students demonstrated gains in English proficiency based on pre- and post-assessments.
- **25% average growth** in assessment scores across all ESL levels.
- **85%** identified professional goals such as improving English for work, advancing in careers, or enrolling in training programs.
- **60%** gained job readiness skills through instruction and workforce workshops.
- **80%** participated in community engagement activities, including workshops on financial literacy and public resources.

Club E Success Stories

- Lilly Dominguez, a full-time hotel housekeeper from Mexico, has been hired by WPS as a first grade teacher at Woodland Academy for the 25-26 school year. She had been a teacher in Mexico.
- Marlyse Fornaris, a part-time spa worker from Cuba, has been hired by WPS as a Paraprofessional at Gates Lane School for the 25-26 school year. She had been a teacher in Cuba and also completed an online RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) course. An RBT is a Paraprofessional for a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA).

These are two examples of individuals who were working in roles that did not align with their professional training and readiness. Due to the support and guidance provided by Club E, they were able to validate credentials, connect with professional leaders and engage in the application and interview process with the Worcester Public Schools. They were coached to be ready for their interviews and were successful in landing new roles for the 2025-2026 school year.

In addition to these placements, four women with medical backgrounds completed a phlebotomy training program and have all earned certifications in that work. Two of those individuals will begin a medical assistant training program in Fall 2025.

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Students Enrolled	229	240
Retained	75%	77%
Attendance Rate	75%	75%

✓ Key Insights

- **Enrollment increased** from 229 (FY24) to 240 (FY25), a 4.8% rise.
- **Retention also improved**, with 190 participants retained in FY25 (77%) vs. 172 in FY24 (75%).
- **The gap between enrolled and retained participants has narrowed**, indicating continued program success and adult students' engagement.
- **The attendance rate remained steady**: 75% in FY24 vs. 75% in FY25.
- While the rate is consistent, this metric may suggest an opportunity to explore strategies that can further enhance day-to-day attendance and engagement quality.

✓ Observations

- **Navigating uncertainty in adult learning access**: While enrollment increased from 229 to 240 in FY2025, retention and attendance gains were modest, which reflects the external barriers that continue to shape adult learner participation. Community members, particularly immigrants or English learners, often experience hesitation around joining formalized programs — especially if concerns around documentation, employment status, or systemic barriers are present.
- **Competing priorities**: CLUB E's steady attendance rate (75%) reflects high interest — but also highlights real-world challenges. Many adult participants are juggling multiple roles: caregiver, employee, patient, and learner. Even with a strong desire to improve their language and digital skills, participants may miss sessions due to job conflicts, medical needs, or family emergencies.
- **Data-informed success with room to grow**: The 5% increase in enrollment and 2% rise in retention show that the program is effectively reaching more people and keeping them engaged longer though attendance remained the same.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Family and Community Engagement Program is a cornerstone of the Latino Education Institute's mission to empower Latino youth and families. In the 2024–2025 academic year, LEI deepened its community outreach by both hosting a series of culturally relevant workshops and representing the institute at city-wide health and education events. Family Engagement initiatives created safe spaces for dialogue, identity exploration, and resource-sharing, especially among first-generation Latino families. Through bilingual and culturally affirming facilitation, these programs helped foster trust between schools and families while reinforcing LEI's role as a vital community anchor.



Total families engaged: 469

Average session attendance: 34

Number of sessions conducted: 14

✓ Outcomes from LEI's Surveys and Feedback Forms

- **100%** of participants in the "The Many Benefits of Gratitude" session said they would recommend the workshop to others.
- **88%** of participants in "The Power of Your Name" rated the session as "positive and valuable."
- Sessions like "The Power of Your Name" allowed families to reclaim cultural identity through personal storytelling and dialogue.
- Workshops created safe spaces to address depression, anxiety, and stress management using culturally relevant frameworks.
- Many events offered both youth and parent tracks, promoting intergenerational bonding and mutual learning.

Parent Feedback:

- *"Being able to be seen, heard, and understood in a room full of Latinos was healing."*
- *"The staff truly care. I feel at peace knowing my daughter is in a program that values her culture."*
- *"These workshops help us talk with our kids about hard things, like feelings and even mental health."*

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Total Families Engaged	439	469
Average Session Attendance	37	34

✓ Key Insights

- **Family engagement showed positive growth**, with the number of participating families slightly increasing from 439 in FY24 to 469 in FY25.

✓ Observations

- **Heightened safety & trust issues.** Families voiced hesitation about public gatherings due to safety concerns, particularly in communities affected by immigration enforcement or discrimination.
- **Competing priorities.** Families often had to prioritize employment, healthcare, or legal obligations over participation, especially due to increasing economic pressures.

COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

PROMOTORES DE SALUD

The Community Health Education Program embodies LEI's commitment to community-informed wellness. In the 2024–2025 academic year, LEI expanded its health equity outreach by hosting multilingual, culturally rooted conversations at city parks, community centers, and city-wide events. The *Promotores de Salud* (Health Promoters) served as trusted messengers offering diabetes guides, listening to lived experiences, and creating moments of human connection. LEI deepened relationships with residents and sparked the interest of institutions like the Worcester's Department of Public Health, opening new doors for future collaboration. By meeting people where they are physically and emotionally, the Program continues to position LEI as a responsive, grounded, and healing presence in the community.



Total number of people reached: 3,303

Average people reached per activity: 27

Number of activities: 125

✓ Outcomes

- Throughout the year, our *Promotores de Salud* connected with hundreds of community members in city parks, schools, senior centers, and at local events. Whether offering resources on diabetes or simply listening to someone's story, the impact was deeply felt.
- **100% of community members** consistently expressed strong interest in resources related to mental health, diabetes, and healthy living.
- Participants shared personal stories. For example, a woman seeking diabetes support and an unhoused community member sharing his experience, highlighting the trust and dialogue our *Promotores de Salud* helped foster.
- LEI's collaboration with city departments such as Worcester's Department of Public Health sparked new interest in ongoing partnerships for future programming.
- Exercise and wellness programs for elders drew particular enthusiasm, signaling a growing demand for culturally inclusive senior health initiatives.

Health Promoters' Voices

Below are some of the powerful reflections that illustrate the heart of this work:

- “Being able to share the diabetes guide with a woman who said, ‘That’s exactly what I’ve been looking for’ - moments like that remind us why we show up.”

- “Speaking to a homeless man, who’s been living in the park for a year, and hearing him share his experience with such honesty. It was a powerful reminder that connection is care.”

✓ FY24 vs FY25

METRIC	FY 2024	FY 2025
Total Participants Engaged	4,062	3,303
Average Session Attendance	33	27

✓ Key Insights


- There was a decline in the total number of people reached for community health-related education: from **4,062 in FY24 to 3,303 in FY25**, a 19% decrease. This reduction may be attributed to heightened safety concerns and decreased mobility within the community due to a shift in the political climate.

✓ Observations

- **Navigating uncertainty in community health access.** The political climate, especially surrounding immigration, created hesitation among families. For some, attending public wellness sessions felt risky, particularly for those in mixed-status households. This reduced turnout despite the relevance of the *Promotores de Salud*-led offerings.
- **Trust barriers in health-based engagement.** Although the *Promotores de Salud* are trained to build bridges between families and wellness resources, broader safety concerns limited families’ comfort with participating in in-person sessions. These concerns underscore the need for continued trust-building and outreach.
- **Competing priorities.** Despite high interest in the *Promotores de Salud* educational workshops, families often had to weigh session attendance against urgent needs like jobs, childcare, or health emergencies. The data suggest that while community desire for support remains, external stressors shape actual engagement.

WPS CLUB E PROGRAM

Outcomes



✓ **FY24 vs FY25**

✓ **Key Insights**

✓ **Observations**





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