

lifted

Educating
for Bright
Futures

(Formerly Known as the Leacock Foundation)

www.liftededucation.org

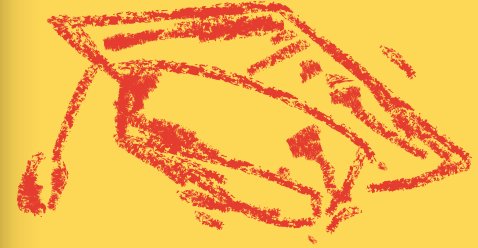
ANNUAL REPORT



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A Message from our Leaders

We Are LiftED.

Formerly The Leacock Foundation (established in 1992), LiftED is a charity dedicated to creating a world where all youth can reach their full potential. Our mission is to confront inequity by empowering youth to develop critical and creative thinking skills, enabling them to become confident leaders today and in the future.

The Need Is Urgent

The rate of children living below the poverty line in Toronto has risen 8.5% since 2020 and continues to climb. In our partner communities—St. James Town, Scarborough, Jane and Driftwood, and Thorncliffe Park—the poverty rate averages 36%, far exceeding the city-wide rate. Despite evidence that after-school programs dramatically improve academic and social outcomes, engagement in such programs remains alarmingly low in these areas.

Youth from low-income Toronto neighbourhoods face stark educational disparities, with many experiencing two to three fewer years of grade-equivalent learning by the end of high school compared to their higher-income peers.

The Toronto District School Board's Learning Opportunity Index consistently ranks schools in our partner communities among the top 54 percentile, highlighting the need for additional resources and support. Nationally, one million Canadian children struggle with below-grade reading skills, and 75% of those who do not overcome early literacy challenges face lifelong difficulties.

Why Literacy Matters

Literacy is more than reading and writing—it is the foundation for academic success, economic stability, health, and civic engagement. Strong early literacy skills reduce the risks of unemployment, poverty, incarceration, and poor health outcomes. By Grade 3, reading proficiency becomes a key predictor of future academic success, high school graduation rates, and overall quality of life.

Why LiftED?

After extensive research and community feedback, we recognized the need for a name that embodies our mission to confront inequity and empower youth. LiftED reflects our commitment to elevating underserved youth, providing them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to build brighter futures.

- **Why the Change?** The new name underscores our focus on education ("ED") and highlights our goal of helping youth succeed. While our name changed, our commitment remains the same: honouring the legacy of our founder, Peter Oliver, by ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive.
- **About Our Logo:** Our bold, modern logo connects to our roots while symbolizing growth and creativity. The emphasis on "ED" represents our dedication to education and a clear pathway to success.
- **Honouring Our History:** As LiftED, we remain deeply tied to our past. Signature events such as The Leacock Debate and The Peter Oliver Golf Tournament will continue to honour Peter's legacy and the foundation of our work.

Join Us

As we move forward, we're excited to continue working with you to make a difference. Visit our updated website (<https://liftededucation.org/>) to explore our programs, resources, and ways to get involved. Together, we can support youth, confront inequity, and create brighter futures for all.

Thank you to our generous donors and key partnerships, LiftED provides free, enriched literacy and leadership programs.


Danielle Cerisano
LiftED Board Chair


Jessica Murphy, Ed.D.
LiftED Executive Director

Our Impact in Numbers



770

individual youth participated in LiftED programs

80%

of participants improved their literacy skills



72%

of participants improved their math literacy skills



78%

of participants gained more self-confidence



78%

of participants demonstrated an increased self-esteem



77%

of participants developed their communication skills

82%

participant retention rate



85%

participant attendance rate



14

Local Partner Schools



94%

youth and parent satisfaction rate

TD Bank Champions Literacy:

A Four-Year Commitment to LEAP into Literacy Summer Camp



LiftED is thrilled to announce that TD Bank has approved a generous funding commitment over four years to support our LEAP into Literacy Summer Camp. This investment underscores TD's dedication to literacy, youth development, and community engagement, ensuring that historically marginalized children continue to have access to enriching learning opportunities during the summer months.



Empowering Young Readers and Leaders

LEAP into Literacy provides students with an engaging summer learning experience, designed to prevent summer learning loss and foster a love for reading and learning. With TD Bank's support, we can expand our reach, enhance program resources, and provide more youth with literacy and leadership opportunities.

Beyond financial contributions, TD Bank is also making an impact through volunteerism. At LiftED, we believe that encouraging young minds unlocks a world of opportunity. Our dedicated volunteers play a critical role in delivering impactful programming, and their stories highlight the power of volunteering.

"I've always had an interest in financial literacy which was what led to me my job eventually at TD. Throughout my school years, my passion was to become a teacher. I love teaching children and I used to tutor kids as a part-time job. Youth literacy is important to me because I realized growing up that I was not aware of a lot of important, essential knowledge in relation to financial literacy."

"It's a great way to give back to the community. I think back to when I was a student, I would love to see professionals come in and share their thoughts and knowledge. I used to tell myself "I want to be like her one day". I hope I was able to make that impact as well."

**—Gajane Gopalakrishnan,
CPA, CA, TD Volunteer**

Looking Ahead

With TD Bank's partnership, the future of LEAP into Literacy is even brighter. Their commitment not only supports educational equity but also fosters a culture of community involvement and corporate leadership in social impact. We extend our gratitude to TD Bank for their support and to the dedicated employee volunteers who bring joy, inspiration, and mentorship to youth. Together, we are making a lasting difference—one book, one lesson, and one child at a time.

Join Us in Making a Difference

Consider joining us as a volunteer and making an impact in the lives of children. Together, we can lift up the next generation through literacy, leadership, and opportunity.



Leadership in Action with Take the LEAD

Inspiring Civic Engagement: MP Rob Oliphant & MPP Stephanie Bowman Visit Thorncliffe Park

MP Rob Oliphant and MPP Stephanie Bowman visited Valley Park Middle School, where they engaged with students in small-group workshops. During their visit, they emphasized the importance of civic engagement and how young people can play an active role in shaping their communities. They also discussed the significance of elected representatives in advocating for community needs and implementing policies that create positive change. The visits provided an inspiring and educational experience, reinforcing the value of civic participation and leadership.



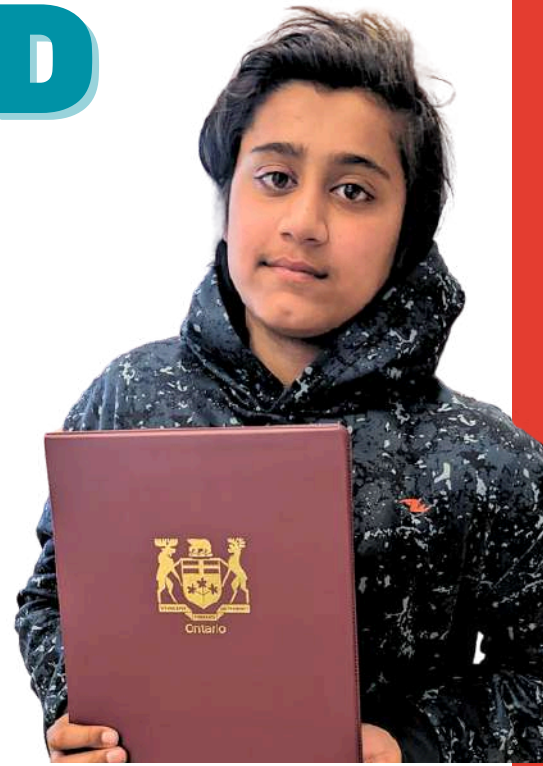
Students Driving Change

Take the LEAD students dedicated the year to developing and implementing their Community Action Plans (CAPs), addressing issues they are passionate about within their communities. One standout initiative focused on recycling and littering, where students organized a community clean-up to promote environmental responsibility and sustainability. Another impactful project tackled poverty and food insecurity, with students leading a food drive to support local families in need. These projects, along with various other student-led initiatives, showcased the dedication and leadership of Take the LEAD participants as they transformed their ideas into meaningful action, making a tangible difference in their communities.



Future Leaders

The Youth Leadership Conference provided students with a meaningful experience fostering leadership and civic engagement. As part of Take the LEAD, students showcased their Community Action Plans. The day began with a public speaking workshop led by Kiwanis Foundation Board Member Ian Kerr, followed by presentations and a special appearance by MPP Stephanie Bowman. After lunch, students participated in a guided tour of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.



Youth Leadership Council:

A Year of Growth, Impact, and Future Aspirations



The Youth Leadership Council (YLC) has had a year filled with learning and growth. Through workshops, guest speakers, and hands-on experiences, participants have developed leadership skills. A major milestone was hosting our Volunteer and Alumni Summit, featuring a Wellness Workshop on mindfulness and stress management, an inspiring talk from Board Member Jessica Oliver on leadership and community impact, and the Peter Oliver Leadership Award recognizing outstanding youth leadership. Looking ahead, YLC aims to expand its reach and opportunities, with plans to host a Career Workshop to support youth in exploring their future paths. As we continue to grow, we are seeking professionals for job shadowing opportunities and workshop facilitation. Join us in mentoring and inspiring the next generation of changemakers!



A Message from Siya, Youth Leadership Council Co-Chair

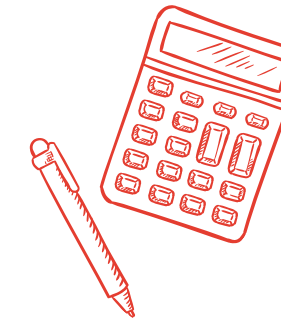
"I have seen and experienced the great work that LiftED does both through the lens of a participant in the programs and also as a volunteer and program assistant. I have learned so much from my roles and now enjoy being involved at a new level, working with like-minded peers to support the LiftED's mission. I envision the Youth Leadership Council positively impacting the community in a number of ways that would enable council members to better serve as leaders in their own communities and to pass on those skills to their own peers."

-Siya S.



Empowering Families Through Financial Literacy:

A Partnership with Wealthsimple Foundation



Wealthsimple Foundation



At LiftED, we believe that literacy extends beyond books—it's about equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate life with confidence. Through our partnership with the Wealthsimple Foundation, we are expanding our work by ensuring that financial literacy becomes an integral part of the support we offer to families in underserved communities.

LiftED and the Wealthsimple Foundation launched a free tax filing initiative designed to support parents in our community. These sessions were created in direct response to the challenges many families face—limited access to free tax filing support, anxiety about making errors, and a reliance on costly paid services. By bringing these sessions directly into schools and community spaces where families already feel comfortable, we made tax education accessible and approachable.

"It's incredibly satisfying to see parents gain the confidence and critical independence to file tax returns themselves, and unlock important benefits, in the future."

— Emily Naddaf, Director and Tax Clinic Educator, Wealthsimple Foundation

Through this initiative, parents not only completed their tax filings with the guidance of trained volunteers, but they also learned essential financial literacy skills that promote long-term self-sufficiency. Each session was led by Wealthsimple Foundation's team who trained volunteers in simple, effective tax solutions tailored to community needs.

The impact of these sessions was immediate and meaningful. Parents expressed relief at finally understanding the tax filing process, and many shared how unlocking government benefits would directly support their families. By meeting parents where they are—both geographically and in their learning journey—we removed barriers to financial literacy and set the foundation for long-term confidence and independence.

- ✓ **100%** rated the effectiveness of the workshop **7/10 or greater**.
- ✓ **79%** rated the effectiveness of the workshop **9/10 or greater**.
- ✓ **100%** of parents are likely to file their tax returns on their own in the future.
- ✓ **71%** of parents felt this workshop helped them increase their self-confidence with regards to filing taxes.
- ✓ **86%** of parents felt this workshop improved their financial literacy skills.

At LiftED, we know that education is the key to empowerment. Partnerships like this one ensure that our families gain not just knowledge, but also the confidence to take charge of their futures. By combining literacy, leadership, and financial know-how, we are helping build stronger, more self-sufficient communities—one family at a time. Check out a resource from The Wealthsimple Foundation:

[Youtube Wealthsimple Foundation](#)

St. James Town Community Corner



What impact have you seen from hosting Take the LEAD program in your space?

Hosting the Take the LEAD program at The Corner has had a truly positive and inspiring impact on both the participants and the broader community. The program has created a safe, supportive environment where youth feel heard and empowered. We've also noticed stronger peer relationships forming, as the activities promote empathy, respect, and collaboration. For many, Take the LEAD has sparked a sense of purpose and the belief that their voice matters. Beyond the individual growth, the program has helped foster a more vibrant, connected atmosphere at The Corner. Overall, it's been a meaningful investment in the future of our youth and our community.

How has the partnership with LiftED supported the youth in St. James Town?

LiftED's leadership training for young children has had a powerful and lasting impact on their personal and social development. By introducing kids to leadership skills early in life—such as communication, teamwork, responsibility, and problem-solving—they become more confident, self-aware, and capable of making positive choices. These programs also encourage empathy, active listening, and respect for others, helping children become not only better leaders but also better community members.

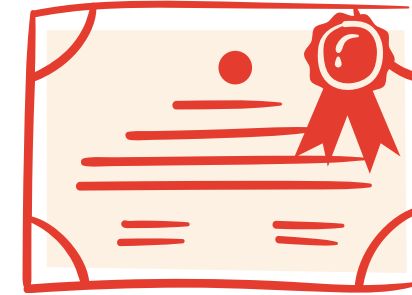


What other programs are offered at the Corner?

The Corner offers a wide range of programs to support individuals and families, including one-on-one services like case management, primary health care, mental health counselling, youth employment support, and settlement services. Youth can access drop-in counselling through the "What's Up Walk-In" program. Community-building initiatives include housing support and Creating Caring Communities, while group programs range from dance and music classes to seniors' activities, parenting support, English classes, sewing, and a youth STEAM Club. The Corner also promotes sustainability through its Share and Reuse program, Re-store, and repair services, and fosters community connection at the Green Café.

Hannan Yousaf

Peter Oliver Leadership Award Recipient



Joined LEAP into Literacy Summer Camp.
(Grade 3)



Joined Saturday Morning Literacy Club and LEAP. Developed confidence in writing and speaking.
(Grade 4-5)



Began volunteering at LEAP into Literacy Summer Camp as a way to 'give back'.
(Grade 9-11)



Promoted to Program Assistant for LiftED programs because of his effective leadership and ambition.
(Grade 11-12)



2024 Peter Oliver Leadership Award Recipient and LiftED Alumni



"Thank you for believing in the potential of every child. Your support ensures that programs like those offered by LiftED can continue to inspire, educate, and empower the youth of today, who will become the leaders of tomorrow."

- Hannan Y.

Reflections on Impact:

Heidi Ng Zheng - My Journey with LiftED



What inspired you to get involved with the LiftED's programs, and what has been the most rewarding part of your experience?

I was inspired to join LiftED because of my passion to create a sense of community and make a meaningful impact in the education system. As a business student, I have always been drawn to social impact and accessibility, and this internship allowed me to develop key skills in fundraising, analytics, and communication.

The most rewarding part of my experience was expanding my public speaking and creative thinking abilities while gaining hands-on experience with data, an aspect I deeply value as an aspiring accountant.

A standout moment was helping organize the LEAP into Literacy Summer Camp. Seeing firsthand how we could engage children in learning through fun, interactive experiences was incredibly fulfilling.



Can you share a moment when you saw your support make a difference in a child's learning journey or confidence?

On the last day of the LEAP into Literacy, I had a conversation with a student who bravely shared her struggles with confidence and belonging. I listened intently, creating a space where she felt truly heard. I reassured her of her strengths, reminding them that their worth wasn't measured by comparison but by her own resilience and growth.

How did the internship experience influence your own skills, perspectives, or future aspirations?

My internship at LiftED was a transformative experience that sharpened my ability to multitask, adapt, and stay curious. I learned to think on my feet, act quickly, and trust my team.

More importantly, it reshaped my perspective on the power of collaboration. Creating a brighter future isn't a solo effort; it's built through collective action, where every person has the chance to reach their full potential. I also discovered the magic of storytelling; how it connects people, raises awareness, and reminds us that, at the heart of everything, it's about being present for one another.

How did the internship experience influence your own skills, perspectives, or future aspirations?

If you're considering volunteering or interning with LiftED, I can't recommend it enough. For me, it was one of the most rewarding and transformative experiences.

My advice for someone interested in joining LiftED is:

Most importantly, allow yourself to fully dive in. This experience will push you to reflect, grow, and see the world through a more humanistic lens. For me, it was truly life-changing, from the people I met to the connections I built. If you're willing to step outside your comfort zone, you'll come out more adaptable, insightful, and ready to make a difference.

Get Ahead Schools



Reflections from the Martin Family

Our family (Stephen and Tracy Martin, with our adult kids Greg and Kelly) spent an incredible 2 weeks at the Get Ahead school in Queenstown in March 2024. The purpose of our trip was to visit the Get Ahead “preschool” named after our father Robert Martin (former Chair of LiftED who worked closely with Peter Oliver), and to hopefully make a positive impact at the school by providing some hands-on “knowledge sharing” with the Get Ahead students.

Working closely with Get Ahead’s Executive Head, Vicki du Preez, we each identified an area that we could share with the students – Kelly (property development and women in the workplace, Greg (info technology and AI), Tracy (totem pole art to the primary students) and Steve (Canadian geography and culture – including hockey!). With our topics identified, we all did our homework and prepared our materials with the hope that they would resonate with the students.



The four of us were all excitedly nervous – none of us are teachers and we didn’t know how we would be received – both at the teacher and the student level – and whether the materials we had pulled together would work with the students. But once we got into it, we never looked back. Each of us interacted with the students in our own unique way, and once each class was over, we looked forward to the next class. It was very busy and exhausting, and personally very rewarding.

Our time at Get Ahead was an awesome and unforgettable experience, both individually and as a

family. Get Ahead has fantastic teachers and staff, and wonderful, friendly, respectful and inquisitive students who made “teaching” so much fun and personally very rewarding. The Get Ahead school truly is a magnificent place and environment, and you can see firsthand what a positive impact it has on the students.

We went to Get Ahead with the hope of making some sort of positive impact at the school, but clearly, Get Ahead made a huge impact on us. Thank you LiftED and Get Ahead, for this incredible opportunity.

Building Champions: The Transformative Impact of Sport and Physical Activity



Sport and physical activity have always been an integral part of Get Ahead Schools' vision to develop well-rounded individuals. Over the past year, they witnessed a remarkable transformation in their sporting culture, with growing participation across all three schools and notable achievements that are steadily placing them on the local sporting map.

One of the most significant milestones in this journey has been the successful implementation of the Playball program at Queenstown Get Ahead Primary. This innovative initiative, designed for children aged 6 to 9, introduced their youngest students to a variety of sporting codes in a structured and engaging manner. Through Playball, students have not only developed essential motor skills and physical fitness but also cultivated teamwork, discipline, and confidence.

Slowly but surely, Get Ahead is making a name for itself on the sporting scene in town. From competitive matches to community tournaments, the students are proving that they have what it takes to compete at a high level, and their achievements are bringing visibility and recognition to the Get Ahead Schools.

Beyond the medals and accolades, the true impact of the sports program lies in its ability to transform lives. Participation in physical activity has not only contributed to improved physical health among the students but has also positively influenced their mental well-being, resilience, and ability to handle challenges. The values instilled through sports—such as perseverance, respect, and teamwork—are equipping them with skills that will serve them far beyond the playing field.

As Get Ahead continues to invest in sports infrastructure and nurture the talent of their students, they remain committed to creating opportunities for all students to experience the joy and benefits of physical activity. Whether they dream of excelling on the national stage or simply finding a sense of belonging through team sports, the school is proud to be part of their journey.



Technology Advancements

In line with the Innovation Mindset pillar of Get Ahead School's Vision for Excellence, Whittlesea Get Ahead Primary recently renovated its computer lab. This relaunch also celebrates the school's 20th anniversary, marking an incredible milestone in the school's history. Equipped with state-of-the-art gaming computers, the lab upgrade ensures students are future-ready, paving the way for gamification in education and opening opportunities to join an e-sports league once the internet speed is enhanced.

This investment not only improves digital literacy but also promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration—skills essential for the future. With these advancements, Whittlesea Get Ahead Primary is set to provide students with a dynamic, tech-enabled learning environment, keeping them at the forefront of educational innovation. The new lab will serve as a hub of creativity, teamwork and exploration.



Celebrating a Legacy of Transformation: The Impact of LiftED

The partnership between the LiftED and the Get Ahead Schools exemplifies the profound change that can be achieved through shared vision and commitment. Over the past two decades, this collaboration has empowered thousands of young lives, opened doors of opportunity, and nurtured the promise of a better future for communities in need.

LiftED's contributions have enabled state-of-the-art technology integration, teacher development initiatives, and enriched extracurricular programs that inspire creativity and critical thinking. More importantly, the investment in scholarships and student support has broken down barriers, providing countless children with access to quality education that would otherwise have been out of reach.

Central to this partnership is the realization of the late Peter Oliver's vision, which continues to inspire our mission. Peter deeply believed in the boundless potential of every child and firmly held that difficulties and constraints should never limit a student's ability to succeed. His legacy lives on in the opportunities provided to Get Ahead students, ensuring that no obstacle is too great to overcome. The impact of his belief in the power of education is evident in the success stories of so many of our students who have flourished despite challenging circumstances.

This partnership has touched lives in immeasurable ways, as reflected in the stories of students such as Lilitha and Agcobile.

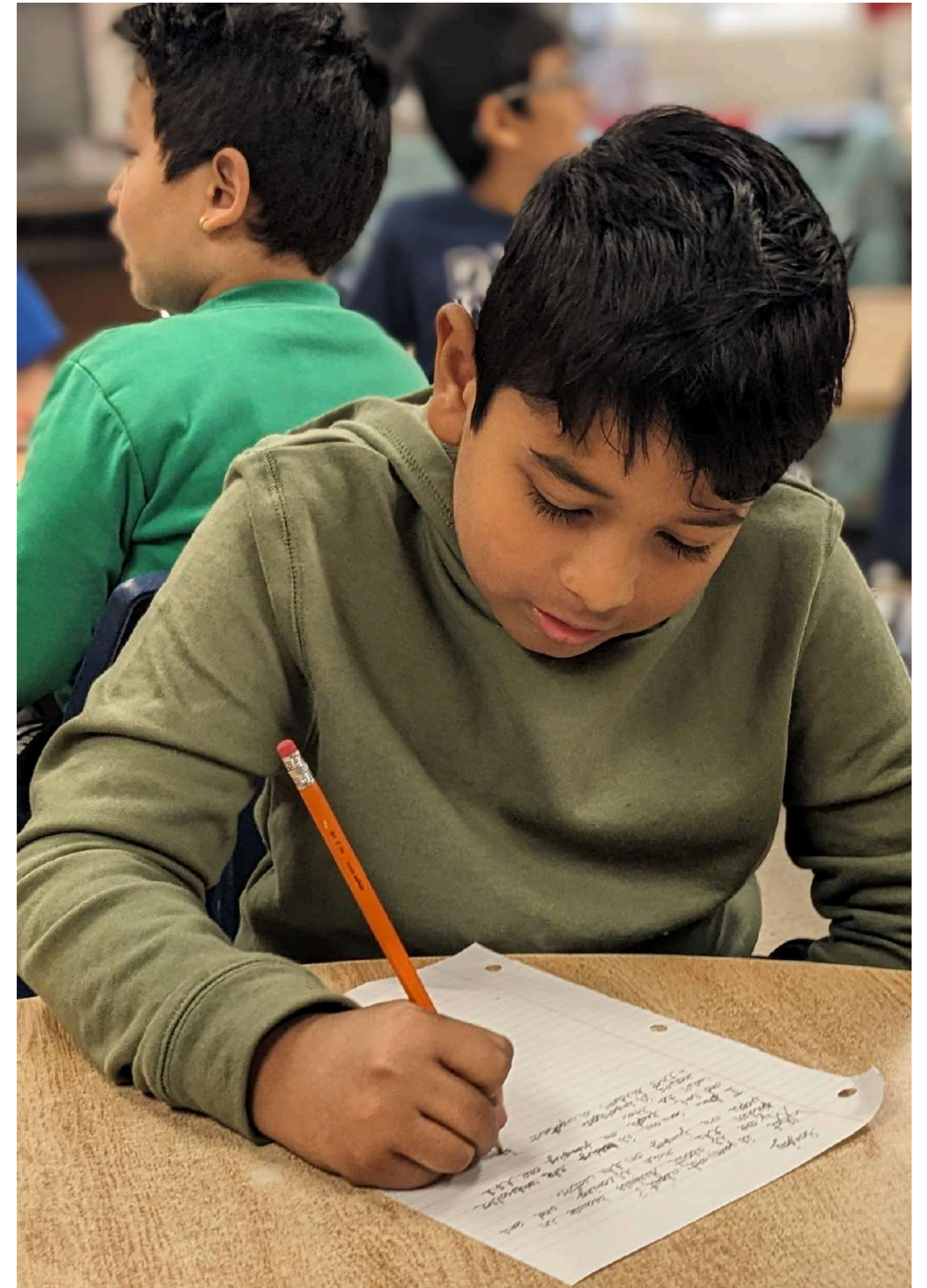
Lilitha, one of our brightest graduates, received a scholarship through LiftED that funded her entire high school education. Coming from a background where opportunities were scarce, she seized every moment to excel academically and personally. Lilitha graduated with six distinctions out of seven subjects, a remarkable achievement that reflects her dedication and the strong foundation laid by her schooling. Her journey continues as she embarks on a new chapter in 2025, studying medicine at the prestigious University of Cape Town. Her dream of becoming a doctor and serving her community is now within reach, made possible by the partnership that supported her every step of the way.

Agcobile's story is one of resilience and potential nurtured through education. Growing up in dire circumstances, where his grandmother's meagre old-age grant was the household's sole income, his future seemed uncertain. However, with a sponsorship through LiftED that covered his transport, tuition, nutrition, uniform, and essential school supplies, Agcobile found a path forward. He is an avid artist with a gift for creativity. Without this support, Agcobile would likely have been forced to drop out of school. Instead, he now has the tools and opportunities to rewrite his story, and an education from our school is changing the trajectory of his life.

These stories represent just a fraction of the profound impact of this partnership. LiftED's support has not only transformed individual lives but has also strengthened entire communities by fostering hope and creating opportunities.

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION:	
ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,472,662
Marketable Securities	\$10,137
Accounts Receivable	\$33,432
Sales Tax Recoverable	\$18,070
Prepaid Expenses	\$238
Total of Current Assets	\$1,534,539
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$24,885
Deferred Contributions	\$935,136
Total of Current Liabilities	\$960,021
Net Assets: Unrestricted	\$574,518
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS:	
REVENUE	
Donations	\$1,160,057
Fundraising Events and Sponsorships	\$455,851
Federal Government Funding	\$20,158
Investment Income and Other	\$44,144
Total Revenue	\$1,680,210
Deduct Direct Fundraising Activities and Special Event Expenses	\$(209,529)
Net Revenue	\$1,470,681
EXPENSES	
Program Support Funding	\$1,155,112
Office and General	\$202,472
Total Expenses	\$1,357,584
EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER REVENUE FOR THE YEAR	\$113,097
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF THE YEAR	\$461,421
NET ASSETS - END OF THE YEAR	\$574,518



Financial Supporters



**Caring & Safe Schools
(TDSB)**

The Catherine and Maxwell
MEIGHEN FOUNDATION



Excellence in Literacy Foundation

**Hodgson Family
Foundation**



Kiwaniis
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Step into Wellness



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THANK YOU

GET IN TOUCH

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