



Because Learning Doesn't Stop When School Does

## Learning Edge Tutoring: Year in Review, 2023-24

### Dear Friends and Supporters of Learning Edge Tutoring,

As a proud member of both the tutoring team and the Board of Directors at Learning Edge Tutoring, I am honored to share a few reflections on the invaluable work of the organization. Six years ago, I joined Learning Edge with the hope of making a difference, but I never anticipated just how profound that difference would be—not only in the lives of our students, but in my own life as well.

Many of our students struggle with more than just academics; they grapple with the weight of personal circumstances, community challenges, and sometimes a lack of belief in themselves. At Learning Edge, we see these struggles as the very reason why we exist. Our tutors—passionate, dedicated individuals—bring so much of themselves to every session: We strive to be the hand that lifts, the voice that encourages, and the place that reassures each student that they are capable, worthy, and deserving of every opportunity life has to offer.

But while our mission is to support these young learners, I have found that this work is not one-directional. Again and again, I have seen that our tutors are lifted by the relationships they build. We don't just teach; we learn. We learn from our students about perseverance, creativity, and the power of different perspectives, reminding us that growth is a shared journey. We learn from each other, finding new ways to reach students who are often left behind. And when any of us, students or tutors alike, face moments of doubt—when progress seems slow or obstacles too great—our Learning Edge family is there, encouraging us to push on, to believe, and to remind us that small victories build the foundation for lifelong success.

Thank you for standing by our side, supporting our mission, and believing in the transformative power of encouragement and education.

With gratitude and hope,  
Spencer Baker  
*Board Member and Tutor*





## Our Mission

To strive for more equity in education by providing Chicago-area students who live in underserved communities free one-to-one tutoring and academic enrichment opportunities enhanced by caring, mentoring relationships.

# By the Numbers\*

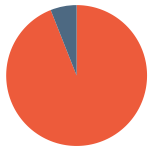
\*All data is based on the **completion** of the 2023-24 school year.

## Who are Learning Edge Students?

**110** students served in grades K through 12.



Students primarily come from the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side.



94% of students are African American, 6% are Latino/a. Our Latino student population has steadily grown year over year.

**82%** of students returned from the prior year.

**83%** of students are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch.

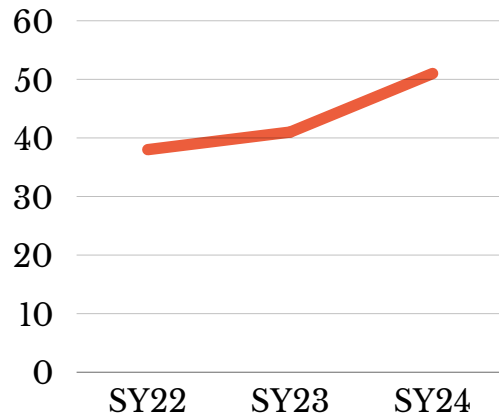
**27%** of students have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), meaning they qualify for extra supports in school.

## Student Outcomes

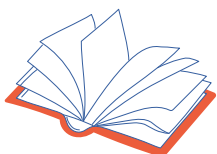
**95%** of students reported enjoying their time in the program.

**98%** of students reported that their tutor helps them learn.

**67%** of students improved or maintained their GPA.



The percentage of students who improved their grades has increased year over year since 2021.



All measures of reading mastery improved. 100% of our first grade students improved their word reading fluency. In grades 2 through 6, 64% of students improved reading fluency and 49% improved vocabulary.

## By the Stories

### A Bounty of Benefits: How Learning Edge has Helped One Family

When one of our sixth graders, Kevin, began struggling in academics a few years ago, his family found Learning Edge. Andrew Thompson, father to Kevin and first grader Ava (and uncle and friend to many other Learning Edge students), described their experience and a myriad of benefits:

**No cost:** Before the family knew about Learning Edge, they enrolled Kevin in a paid-for tutoring organization that they knew could not be a long-term solution in their family budget. They became aware of our free, volunteer-run program two years ago and we've had the privilege of working with Kevin and Ava ever since!

**Academic support:** Kevin struggled in math and reading. His scores in both areas have improved! Ava started with Learning Edge as a kindergartner. Andrew feels that tutoring serves as a checkpoint to keep her on track so that if she were to struggle in a subject area, they can address it right away.

**Tutor-student relationship:** Andrew explained that the relationship between Kevin and his tutor is "awesome." He said "not one time has he fought me on coming to tutoring." (An added benefit: **seeing your child look forward to learning.**)

**Tutor-teacher relationship:** Andrew spoke about how Ava's tutor is directly in touch with her teacher. He laughed that they now skip the middleman since Ava's tutor always knows exactly what Ava is working on at school.

**Behavioral improvements:** Like many students, when Kevin began struggling academically, he started to act up in school. After two years with Learning Edge, Andrew said behavioral issues have gone away.

**Community and more:** Andrew said that, in addition to his kids, his cousin and niece come to Learning Edge. He recalled they were surprised to show up one day and run into Ava's best friend from school!

"The Learning Edge family is awesome," Andrew affirmed. "It's been a breath of fresh air. They're helpful even beyond tutoring; it's just been awesome."



*Maleah (Andrew's niece), Ava, Andrew, Cassidy (Ava's best friend), and Kevin*

## Dad Jokes, Banter, and Learning

Meet Alexis and Lloyd, a tutoring duo who should have their own podcast. They get the work done—Alexis is a straight A student and Lloyd is a CPS teacher—but they also spend time bantering and laughing. In this relationship, there is respect, trust, growth, fun, and dad jokes. *Lots of dad jokes.*

There is nothing we could write about them that would embody their special relationship more than excerpts from our interview, and we hope you'll enjoy this glimpse as much as we did:



Interviewer: How long have you worked together?

Lloyd: A year.

Alexis: Since I was in 7th grade.

Interviewer: What grade are you in now?

Alexis: 8th.

Lloyd: Check my math.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about your working relationship?

Alexis, looking to Lloyd: The truth!

Lloyd: There's never a dull moment. She brings a lot of...

Alexis: Potential?

Lloyd: Yes, potential. And she brings out the best in me.

Lloyd: How can I be a better tutor for you?

Interviewer: Yes, how can he be better?

Alexis: Fewer Dad jokes. (Pauses, looks thoughtfully to interviewer.) He doesn't need to improve anything.

Alexis: I have good news!

Lloyd: Grades have gone up?

Alexis: I have straight As! No, I have my list of high schools.

Lloyd: I guess I'll be going to her graduation! (Wipes fake tear)



We're wishing the quick-witted Alexis good luck as she chooses her high school and finishes 8th grade, and we're looking forward to enjoying how Lloyd's dad jokes evolve in the next four years.

## Program Updates

### Jamiya Scott joins the Learning Edge Board



Jamiya Scott brings a unique perspective to the tutoring table: that of a program alumni! Jamiya was a student with Learning Edge Tutoring from 2nd grade through her senior year of high school. After completing college at Illinois State University and starting her career, Jamiya returned as a tutor and expressed wanting to do more: “Learning Edge made a lot of impact on me. I don’t want to help just one student, I want to be a part of how we help each student.” Joining the Board was a natural fit.

Jamiya brings 15 years of historic knowledge to the Board and is proud of the evolution and growth she’s witnessed within the organization. She is passionate about recruitment and retention and believes that her experience as a young student helped bake tutoring into her life and routine– “As students get older and busier, tutoring becomes less of a priority. But because it was always a part of my routine, tutoring stayed a top priority.” Jamiya looks forward to helping Learning Edge Tutoring recruit more young students who can be a part of this community for a long time to come.

### St. Catherine-St. Lucy Program Growth

Learning Edge saw a 39% increase in students enrolled in the St. Catherine-St. Lucy program. One hundred percent of our 2022-23 tutors came back to this program. A special thank you to Dan Doody for recruiting new volunteers to support the growth!

### City Colleges Visit

In February, our students, their families, and their tutors joined us in person and virtually for a first-of-its-kind presentation from City Colleges of Chicago spearheaded by Learning Edge Board member, Cathy Rennau. City Colleges of Chicago is a system of public community colleges with seven unique campuses throughout Chicago. Marisa Lugo, a counselor at Malcolm X College, spoke about the network's offerings, scholarship opportunities, and pointers for students as they plan for the next steps of their academic career.

## Community Updates

### In Memoriam - Dave Holmes



*Dave and one of his students, Da'Vione*

In April 2024, Learning Edge lost a beloved member of our community when Dave Holmes, a 15-year volunteer tutor, passed away suddenly.

Dave was kind, caring, and dedicated to his students' personal and academic successes. Dave tutored many students over the years and, this year, was tutoring twice weekly so he could support two students concurrently. In addition to tutoring, he served on our Board and

founded an extension of our tutoring program for the students of St. Catherine-St. Lucy School. He generously shared his gifts with many people in many community spaces.

Thank you to those who chose to commemorate Dave with donations to Learning Edge; your donation will help to continue the work that he loved so much. Our thoughts are with his wife Suzanne (another treasured Learning Edge volunteer), his children, and the many people who were so lucky to know and love him.

### Congratulations, Graduates!



*Danisha, class of 2024*

Congratulations to Danisha and Eychaja, our graduating seniors. Both are long-time Learning Edge students, with Danisha having started in kindergarten!

Danisha is attending Illinois State and majoring in legal studies. Eychaja is attending University of Illinois Chicago and plans to major in business or nursing.



*Eychaja, class of 2024,  
with her uncle and  
Grandmother*

Learning Edge is more than tutoring, it's a community.



*Leslie Hodes & her student, Evan*

## Learning Edge Board of Directors 2023- 2024:

Leslie Hodes, President  
Faye Graham-Floyd, Vice President  
Lenetta Thomas, Treasurer  
Spencer Baker  
Karrah Cullers  
Patricia Feeley  
Karen Heller  
Amy Lazzeretti  
John Lurain  
Cathy Rennau  
Jamiya Scott  
Amy Stearns  
Keiona Wright

## Learning Edge Staff 2023-2024:

Kara Kalnitz, Executive Director  
Erin Agboola, Program Coordinator, Student Services  
Bernadette Diaz, Reading Specialist  
Joseph Price, Program Assistant  
Lena Thomas, Program Assistant  
Nancy Schroeder, Marketing Coordinator

## Thank you to our outgoing Board members

**Faye Graham Floyd** first joined the Learning Edge community in 1994 when she enrolled her son Danton in tutoring. For a time, she was a Program Assistant, she has worked as a volunteer tutor, and she served on the Board for 24 years.

**Karen Heller** began tutoring in 2002 before joining the Board of Directors in 2005. She served as Board President for many years.

Both of these dedicated individuals helped the program grow in both student numbers and to four locations. In their time on the Board, they fostered the reading program, college prep, and career development. We are so grateful for their service.



# Thank you to our donors: August 2023-July 31, 2024

## Individuals

Lauren & Francisco Achurra	Mike & Nancy Edwards	Carrie Kalina
Lisa Ackerman	Michael Enright	Joanne Kalnitz & Marshall Sorkin
Andi Agrimonti	Liza Espinoza-Achurra	William Katt
Anastasia Alexander	Karen Faust	Ralph Kazer
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Gail Brown & James Fisher	W. Carlisle Hamrick	John Lurain
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Melanie Brown	OPRF IWS Circle 2	Alyson Lushpynskyj
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Linda Dunne		

## Individuals, continued

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Beth Emet Synagogue Tzedakah  
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First United Church of Oak Park  
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Ricki Roer Family Fund  
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Sugar Beet Food Co-Op  
Wilson, Elser, Moskowitz, Edelman, & Dicker LLP

# Thank you, Learning Edge volunteers!

Collectively, our tutors provided more than **4,130** hours of free tutoring and mentorship for the 110 students who worked with Learning Edge Tutoring in 2023–2024.

Andrea Agrimonti  
Brigid Anderson  
Nancy Angel  
Spencer Baker  
Karen Bardeen  
Robert Becker  
Sue Beckman  
Geri Bensen  
Mary Lou Bleeg  
Janice Bratt  
Julie Brich-Scheuring  
Lloyd Coaker  
Lynette Colmey  
Ann Courter  
Joe Crosetto  
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Christina Darley  
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Paul Dickerson  
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Angela Farnham  
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Patricia Feeley  
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Ryan Gaul  
Mim Geraghty  
David Gilbert  
Ron Haas  
Mari Hans



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Shea Sturtevant  
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Seana Valentine  
Gordon Waldron  
Linda Walther  
Sher Watts-Spooner  
Clarence Wellington  
Kathleen Yannias  
Victor Yipp  
Brian Zaander



Visit our website to learn more about becoming a Learning Edge volunteer.

**<https://learningedgetutoring.org>**