



ACE African Community Education

embracing culture | building community | creating change



FY 2025 Annual Report

A Letter from ACE Leadership



Dear Friends of ACE,

Thank you for making 2024-25 yet another remarkable year for African Community Education. We are excited to share all that we have accomplished over the past year in the following pages.

When ACE began in 2006, we envisioned one day owning a space that was truly ours; a permanent location that would serve as a second home for ACE students, families, and community members. In 2023, we realized that dream, moving into The ACE Center in January. Since then, our new home has had a tremendous impact on our organization and on ACE families, and that impact continued to grow this year. The new space has given us the capacity to add new programs and services, expand existing ones, and serve more students and families than we ever have before.

This year, we enrolled 226 youth across our After School, Saturday, Mentoring, Early Literacy, and Summer Programs. Our Adult ESOL classes welcomed 145 students, and we provided career services to 540 individuals. We helped eight seniors graduate from high school, with seven attending colleges across Massachusetts this fall. Our Outreach team provided wraparound services to 615 families, more than three times the number of families we served during our first year in our new home. Across all of our programs and services, we directly served over 2,250 individuals, more than we ever have before.

We continued to introduce new programs and activities to better serve ACE students and families. This year, we introduced an entrepreneurial sewing program and digital literacy courses for adults and SAT prep courses, mental health classes, hydroponics courses, and more for ACE youth.

At The ACE Center, we have welcomed several other immigrant and refugee-serving organizations and hosted regular community events that have helped to activate our space as a community hub for Worcester's refugees and immigrants.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the dedication of our hundreds of volunteers, the generosity of our donors and funders, the talents of our partners, the tireless work of our staff and board, and, most importantly, the passion, resilience, and determination of ACE students and their families.

Every sign of support we receive shows that more and more people believe in the work we do and in what we are building at ACE. We cannot thank you enough for that belief.

With deepest gratitude,

Kaska Yawo

Executive Director & Co-Founder

Biodun "Mr. B." Akande

Chairperson, ACE Board of Directors

Our Mission & Vision

The mission of African Community Education is to assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression, and community outreach.

Our vision is a community where African refugees and immigrant youth and families are empowered, self-sufficient, and secure.





PROGRAMMING

Programming Overview

After School Program

The After School Program (ASP) served 147 students during the 2024-2025 school year, with an average daily attendance of 69. Students attend the ASP for homework help and tutoring with classroom facilitators and volunteer tutors. In addition to help with their homework, students had a variety of program offerings to choose from. This year, students participated in hydroponics lessons, athletics including soccer, basketball, and lacrosse, community and mental health classes run by CHANGE and RISE, and drumming and dance lessons from Crocodile River Music. The program also hosted a holiday party and honored students on the honor roll each quarter, with 30 students making the year-long honor roll.

Saturday Program

The Saturday Program conducted 29 sessions during the 2024-25 school year, serving 103 students. The program offered STEM and English classes, as well as ThinkGive, a social-emotional learning curriculum. Students took dance and drum lessons and received support in computer skills and homework assistance. The 5th Annual ACE Africa Day celebration was a major highlight of the year. This event featured a model summit where students presented on various African countries and participated in cultural performances celebrating African music and dance in collaboration with Crocodile River Music. Student representatives also took part in the 3rd Annual Worcester Education Collaborative WooLabs STEM Project-Based Learning Student Showcase.

Summer Program

The Summer Reading Program was a tremendous success, with over 130 students enrolled and an average daily attendance of 90 students. This year, there was a greater focus on STEM lessons and workforce development. Students supported the program as camp counselors, assisting younger students with reading and project activities. To wrap up the summer, students enjoyed Spree Day, featuring various "minute-to-win-it" style games, such as a ping pong toss and a challenge called "noodling around." Participants earned prizes, including ACE t-shirts, water bottles, and stickers, for completing the challenges.

Programming Overview

Workforce Development Program

This summer, 17 students attended our Workforce Development Program. The program offered a range of lessons to prepare students for real-world work experiences, including résumé building, writing cover letters, and interview preparation. Students gained insights into career education requirements and the overall importance of education. The program featured activities designed to help students align their career goals with their personal interests. A field trip to UniBank provided students with an overview of banking operations, services, and HR policies. Each student completed a paid internship at ACE, where they supported the ACE Summer Reading Program as staff. The program concluded with a Career Day, during which students explored various career paths, including medicine, business, technology, engineering, education, and public service. Students had the opportunity to ask questions to professionals from different fields and learn about educational paths and stories of resilience.

Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program offered students one-on-one mentoring relationships, with mentors and mentees meeting for at least one hour each week. They also participated in several group activities during the school year, including attending Worcester Railers hockey games, Worcester Bravehearts baseball games Woo Sox, and a neighborhood clean-up. Mentors supported students with both educational and personal challenges, providing access to opportunities they might not have otherwise had. This year, the program successfully recruited more students and volunteers, ending with 44 active mentor-mentee matches.

Post-Secondary Success Program

The Post-Secondary Success Program supported eight ACE seniors through their high school graduation, with seven now attending college this fall. ACE high school students had the opportunity to tour colleges, including Assumption University, Nichols College, and Framingham State University. The program hosted a workshop on the college admissions process led by representatives from Assumption University and Quinsigamond Community College. We also held an academic success workshop led by Lawreta Kankam of UMass Lowell and the NKD Foundation. The session focused on strategies for thriving in college academically and personally. Lawreta shared valuable insights and encouraged students to take ownership of their academic journey. Additionally, the Post-Secondary Success Liaison maintains close contact with ACE alumni who are attending local colleges or beginning their careers to provide ongoing support.

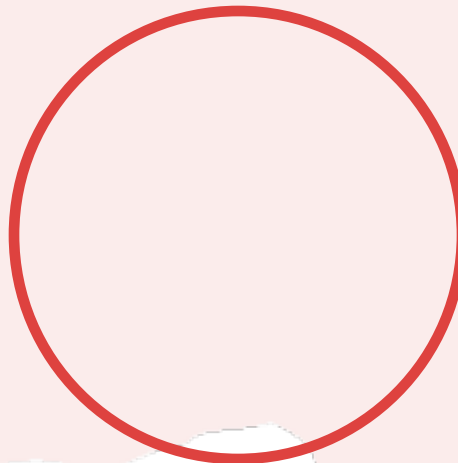
Programming Overview

Adult ESOL Program

Our Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program continued to serve large numbers, offering ESOL classes to parents of our students and other adults in the community. The goal of the ESOL Program is to enhance the skills of parents so they can better navigate their new country, secure better employment, and improve their family's quality of life. This year, 145 adults attended the program, which taught English skills while helping participants navigate topics like job readiness, citizenship and immigration, housing, health insurance and other benefits. We provided five different levels of instruction, ranging from beginner to advanced. This year, we also offered digital literacy classes in partnership with UMass Lowell. Students also visited educational facilities such as the Worcester Art Museum and Worcester Public Library to help familiarize parents with local educational resources.

Early Literacy Playgroup

The Early Literacy Playgroup enrolled 41 children during the 2024-2025 school year. The program provides free childcare for parents while they attend ESOL classes. The playgroup focuses on learning through play, music, and movement. Children are encouraged to develop literacy and math skills daily by reviewing letters, and shapes, engaging in fun rhyming activities, and reading stories with their instructors. The structured routine and monthly themes such as community, plants, presidents, and summer fun provided a safe and secure learning environment for the students. Additionally, the program organized visits to child-friendly sites outside the classroom.



Programming Overview

Career Development Program

Over the past year, the Career Development Program served a total of 540 individuals through outreach, employment support, and career development initiatives, including 518 ACE clients and 22 participants from the Human Services Career Support Program in partnership with Open Sky and Seven Hills. A total of 165 individuals secured employment across diverse sectors, including hospitality, retail, food services, university dining, logistics, school-based food services, and construction. Over 100 individuals participated in the first ACE Job Fair hosted in partnership with MassHire. The program also provided résumé building, mock interview preparation, job application support, job readiness workshops, and training initiatives. These services led to successful employment outcomes. The Human Services Career Support Program supported Cohorts 5 and 6, resulting in an additional 22 participants earning full-time employment opportunities.



Programming Fast Facts

2,650

Individuals served through programming and outreach services

615

Families served through ACE services

226

Students attended ACE youth Programs

145

Adults attended ACE ESOL classes



30 Countries of origin



37 Languages spoken at home



570 Program sessions



1,788 Program hours

ACE Graduates

This year, **8 ACE seniors graduated high school!** They are now attending colleges, including Nichols College, Assumption University, and Quinsigamond Community College.

KOUBRA

Koubra is from a small town called Amboko in Chad. She resettled in Worcester in 2016 with her family in hopes of a good education and a better life. Koubra remembers feeling very alone when her family could not meet others who spoke their language. This soon changed when they met a man named Ali, who brought them to a mosque where they met people they could connect with regarding their religion, customs, and traditions.

"I remember being scared when I first came to Worcester because I did not see any Black people. I felt so scared," Koubra remembers while laughing, "The food was also so different. It was really hard at first, not knowing what food was halal."

Soon enough, Koubra began to adjust to her new surroundings. Some of her favorite memories are from Clark St. Community School, where she met other young students like herself from different countries. She felt so connected and happy. Around this time, Koubra learned about ACE from her elementary school teacher and she began attending ACE programs.

Says Koubra of her time at ACE, "When I first came to ACE, I felt a strong connection with the other students there. Many of us have similar stories about moving from Africa, even though our experiences are different. ACE has helped me in many ways. It gave me support when I needed it most, and it helped me grow into the person I am today. I'm very thankful for everything ACE has done for me. ACE is a place where I feel like I can be who I am. I do not need to hide where I am from."

Koubra attended Burncoat Middle School, Burncoat High School, and then North High School. During her senior year, ACE's Post Secondary Success Liaison helped Koubra navigate the college application and admissions process. With several school to choose from, Koubra decided to attend Assumption University as part of their nursing program, where she began classes this fall.

Koubra currently aspires to become a travel nurse, hoping to help people back in her home country. She fondly remembers seeing nurses in Chad administering vaccinations to people, and she wants to be able to do the same in the future. We are incredibly proud of Koubra and honored to be a part of her journey.



Alumni Spotlight

ACE's Post-Secondary Success Program ensures the ongoing success of ACE graduates as they pursue life after high school.

ANGELA

Angela Wounda was born in Chad and moved to the United States in 2011 at the age of six. Her family fled from war in the Central African Republic and moved for safety and better opportunities for their family. Angela has five brothers and one sister and grew up in the U.S., where she attended school from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Adjusting to life in a new country presented many challenges, including learning a new language. Angela met these challenges head-on and eventually became fluent in English. In 2014, she and her family began attending ACE, where she found a welcoming community of people who, like her, were adjusting to a new life in the U.S. Though she stepped away for several years, Angela returned to ACE in 2021 and became actively involved.

At ACE, Angela learned how to dance, volunteered her time to help her fellow students, and took part in a ThinkGive class—where she was recognized as one of the ThinkGive Students of the Year. In 2023, she was awarded first place for her presentation during Africa Day and also participated in the ACE Student Fashion Show.

Angela graduated from Freedom Christian Academy in 2024 and is now attending Quinsigamond Community College, majoring in Criminal Justice. Her long-term goal is to study Forensic Science, determined by a desire to understand how different cultures influence society—and how society, in turn, shapes the criminal justice system.

Angela's journey reflects resilience, growth, and a strong commitment to giving back. Through her experiences, both in and out of ACE, she continues to achieve new goals and build a future through her dedication and passion.



Volunteer Spotlight

This year, **314 volunteers** contributed **2,720 hours** of service to help ACE students and families.

OZ

Azad Chaparian, better known as “Oz,” was a standout volunteer at ACE this year. Oz’s background, ability to relate to ACE students, and career as an educator made him a tremendous asset to the ACE program.

Oz’s parents immigrated to the United States to escape persecution. Oz was born in Worcester and attended Worcester Public Schools. The son of immigrants, Oz shares, “I remember well the challenges my parents faced adjusting to the language and customs in the U.S. Like all immigrant parents, they wanted their children to take advantage of the opportunities they never had, especially getting a good education.”

Before retiring, Oz served as the head of the science department at Worcester Technical High School for 18 years. During his time teaching, he had students from many African countries and wanted to continue his work with African youth while using his 30 years of science teaching experience and ESOL training. Oz began to volunteer in ACE’s Saturday Program this year, during which he helps to prepare and teach hands-on science projects with the kids and also helped them with this year’s Africa Day projects.

We are extremely grateful for Oz’s continued support of ACE students.



Mentoring Spotlight

This year, **27 mentor-mentee matches** participated in our Mentor-Mentee Programs.

JEEVIKA & FRANTZCESCA

Mentor Jeevika and mentee Frantzcesca met in November of 2024 at the beginning of Frantzcesca's senior year of high school. Still unsure about her post-secondary plans, Frantzcesca was navigating the college application process while trying to find a job. Together, Frantzcesca and Jeevika set goals for her senior year and worked on her application essays.

Through their time together, they found a shared interest in spirituality and fitness, and they formed a close connection. Through college applications and job searches, Jeevika provided Frantzcesca with guidance as she pursued her dream of working in healthcare. Over the phone and in person, they bonded.

Ten months later, Frantzcesca is working at a local college and beginning her first semester at Quinsigamond Community College. Though Frantzcesca has graduated high school, the pair makes time to check in on one another and connect outside of the ACE program. Their bond is a reminder of the lasting impact that mentorship can have on both mentor and mentee, and embodies the mission of African Community Education.



DEVELOPMENT



Key Facts & Figures

33

Grants
awarded

\$1.1M

In grants
awarded

46

Corporate &
event sponsors

360

Individual
donors

\$252K

In annual
fund donations

\$302K

Committed
to Campaign

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Thank you to our grant funders and corporate sponsors. Without you, our work would not be possible.

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Thank you to all of our donors. Whether it's \$1 or \$1,000, each gift lets ACE families know there is one more person in their corner.

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Kupanda: ACE's Recurring Giving Community

In 2018, ACE launched **Kupanda**, our recurring giving community. These donors have made a long-term, recurring commitment to support ACE. **98 donors** were members of the Kupanda community this year.

Thank you to our Kupanda Members!

Abil Dhee
Alex Mooradian
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Zachariah Combs

Taking Up Space!: The 18th Annual ACE Gala

The 18th Annual ACE Gala took place on Saturday, November 9, and celebrated our theme of "Taking Up Space!" We had a record number of 360 people in attendance at Mechanics Hall and raised over \$150,000 for ACE programs and families!

The highlight of the evening was the ACE Student Fashion Show conducted in partnership with various African fashion designers, including two graduates of ACE's new sewing program. The evening also featured stellar performances from Crocodile River Music, Africano Waltham, and the ACE Drum Team. The event was an incredible success thanks to dozens of amazing sponsors, raffle donors, vendors, performers, and partners. We are especially grateful to UniBank for serving as our Title Sponsor for the event.

Thank you for helping to make the 18th Annual ACE Gala the best yet!





FINANCIALS

Financial Overview

FY 2025*

INCOME

Foundation Grants	\$644,044
Government Grants	\$571,533
General Donations	\$316,570
Rent Income	\$120,058
Interest Income	\$26,560

TOTAL INCOME **\$1,678,765**

EXPENSES

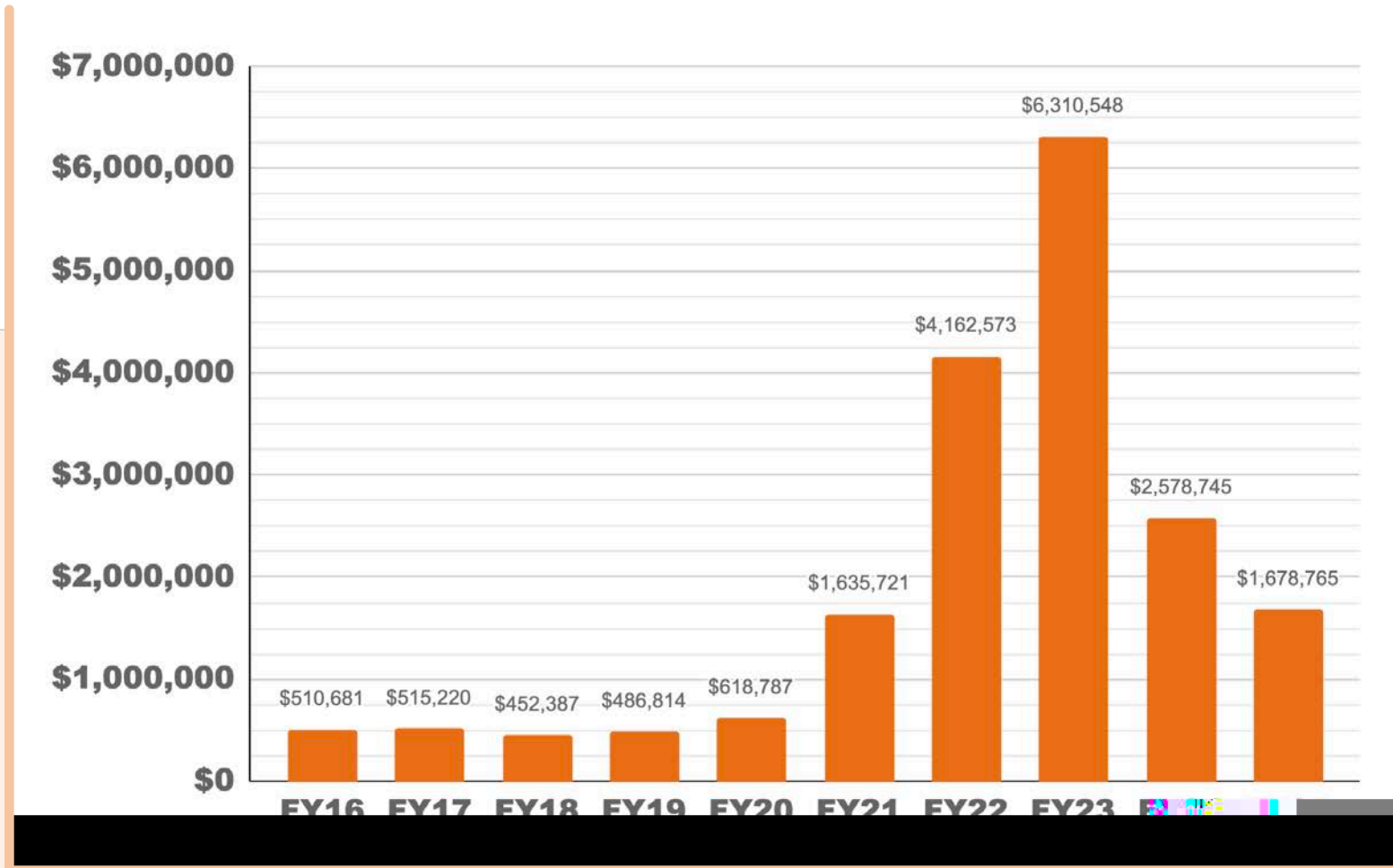
Payroll	\$1,682,553
Payroll Taxes	\$140,934
Contractors	\$50,771
Program Expenses	\$38,130
Fundraising Expenses	\$51,377
Other Admin Expenses	\$129,424
Software Expenses	\$24,519
Transportation	\$23,256
Depreciation	\$126,344
Rent and Facilities	\$127,385

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$2,394,693**

*Financial estimates—audited financial statements will be available in November 2025

Financial History

African Community Education Revenue Over Time*



*Large increases in FY 2022 - FY 2024 were the result of large contributions to capital projects.

OUR FUTURE



The ACE Center

Since 2007, ACE has operated our youth and family programming in rented and in-kind spaces in many locations, causing inefficiencies and barriers for staff and clients, frequent moves, limited program hours and accessibility, and a lack of space to expand.

Recognizing these longstanding and critical needs, ACE purchased a 56,000-square-foot facility located at 51 Gage St. in January 2022 with the help of the leadership giving of support Daniel Ivascyn and moved into the new facility in January 2023. This facility has allowed us to consolidate all programming and offices, improve accessibility, and significantly expand programming. We are actively raising funds to renovate this space and realize a long-held dream that ACE would create a cultural and community center for the city's and region's vibrant and growing African, immigrant, and refugee populations.

We began renovations last year, creating 11 academic and enrichment spaces, including dedicated youth classrooms, a STEAM lab, a dancing and drumming studio, dedicated adult education classrooms, and a room to host our early literacy playgroups. We also renovated three dedicated office spaces for our programming and outreach teams.

We will continue renovations this year, continuing to transform this facility into the home ACE families, community members, and partner organizations deserve. Ultimately, renovations will include:

- Modernizing 16 multi-use education and activity rooms through cosmetic improvements, educational technology, and updated furniture to fit the needs of each program and age level
- Renovating the gymnasium to serve as a multifaceted space for recreation and sports, community gatherings and events, performances, conferences, and more
- Building a commercial kitchen to prepare African meals for ACE and other community events
- Creating spaces to celebrate African arts and cultures
- Reconfiguring the entrance ways, hallway layouts, and building flow to create a welcoming space
- Making needed upgrades for ADA compliance, security and safety, and energy efficiency modifications



Our Team

ACE STAFF

KASKA YAWO, Executive Director & Co-Founder
BEV ARCARO, Grants Manager
DAVID BEH, Outreach Data Entry Specialist
EDICIA BORLOH, Outreach Services & ESOL Coordinator
ABIL DHEE, Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator
SAINT CYR DIMANCHE, Career Development Coordinator
FLORENCE DOE, Early Literacy Coordinator
REGINA ENGEL, Director of Finance & Operations
SEAN ENGEL, Information Technology Specialist
PRINCE GWEH, Building Manager
BENJAMIN KAGIGI, Community Outreach Liaison
MELVIN KASKA, Saturday Program Coordinator & Post-Secondary Success Liaison
CECILIA LAFONTAINE, Accounting & HR Manager
GINA LANDRIN, Outreach Worker
MOUBARAK MAHAMAT, Transportation Coordinator
ROSALID NGANGA, Administrative Assistant
TEREZA NGENDAHORURI, Outreach Worker
TIM O'NEIL, Director of Development
JP PERKINS, Program Director
ROSE WINE, Marketing & Development Coordinator
JOHN YORMIE, JR., Saturday Program Coordinator

ACE BOARD, FY 2025

BIODUN "MR. B" AKANDE, Chairperson
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MARYAN RYAN
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INEZ WILLIAMS-GAYE
STEVE WINSTON

Thank you from the ACE family!



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