



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Emerging Workforce Initiative, Inc. dba The Book Works Project was established as a 502(c)3 organization in 2009.

Organization Leadership

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About Us

The Book Works Project, founded in 2009 as Emerging Workforce Initiative, is a nonprofit organization in Louisville, KY advocating for and with youth and young adults experiencing educational disruptions due to academic skills gaps, childhood trauma, racial or social discrimination, economic hardship and related challenges. The Book Works offers a variety of services for young people (age 12 to 21 years) and families working toward education and life goals.



Principles

The Book Works applies five core principles in our programs, policies, and procedures. We use internal assessment processes to ensure we consistently operate by these principles and to find ways to more fully implement them.

Best Practices: Programs and practices are evidence-based. Our team models and reinforces respect, safety, and positive communication, applying Youth Thrive practices in all program elements.

Equity: Programming promotes access to education and related opportunities equitably for every young person in the community. Our team is committed to anti-discrimination practices and policies.

Skills Focused: Our approach focuses on building the social-emotional and academic skills young people need to reach education goals.

Accountability: The organization seeks and acts on feedback from learners and parents. Donors, funders, and supporters have reliable and accurate information on how their contributions are used. The organization objectively evaluates the impact of its programs and processes and uses the information to improve.

Collaboration: The organization focuses on unmet community needs and seek out partners with expertise to build a network of support for learners. Team members work with families, schools, and other professionals, seeking mutually beneficial and innovative solutions.

For information on our commitment to accountability, check the Better Business Bureau Charity Listing and our evaluation tools and reports on our website.

Every school day, in every part of Louisville, young people are struggling to succeed in school and at high risk of leaving before graduating



In Louisville, approximately one in eight young people left school before graduating and thousands of middle and high school students struggle to attend regularly and fall behind in their classes. The challenge of making up lost credits and missing academic skills compounds when students are experiencing unrecognized mental health problems or living in neighborhoods with few affordable opportunities for support.

At The Book Works, we work with a network of partners to provide innovative, community-based services to help “off track learners” graduate from high school prepared for their future. In our Education Engagement Hubs placed in severely under-resourced neighborhoods, we support middle and high school age youth who are not in school during school time. Youth work individually and in small groups to set goals and build social-emotional skills, get help building academic skills and completing homework, and connect with resources that address the root causes of school disconnection.

During their time in the Engagement Hubs and well beyond, our Education Advocates work one-on-one with students to have the support needed to get back on track. Advocates help youth and families to explore options for making up credits and content, re-enroll in school or transition to a new school/program, identify special education or academic support needs, and navigate disciplinary issues in a way that focuses on learning.

In 2024, The Book Works:

- Served 186 young people in our Education Advocacy and Engagement Services
- Provided Education Self-Advocacy training to 375 youth and young adults
- Facilitated Youth Leadership and Community Engagement programming for 20 youth

Most of the young people we served were in middle school (20%) or high school (71%) and were experiencing significant disruptions to learning:

- 17% had been suspended this school year
- 22% were absent frequently, usually due to concerns about safety or mental health struggles
- 17% were not in enrolled in school nor a graduate
- 8% of students were learning online without instructional support from a teacher in-person

The young people we served in 2024 managed multiple complex challenges to regular school attendance and academic success, usually resulting from chronic exposure to home or community violence, economic stresses, and low literacy skills. While our young people are persistent, they will need a network of support to overcome these challenges:

- Juvenile justice involved: 31%
- Receiving special education services: 20%
- Foster care involved: 9%
- Mental health challenges: 6%
- Multilingual learner: 5%



Our Services

EDUCATION ADVOCACY

The Book Works Education Advocates assist young people experiencing disruptions to their education to reconnect with school and academic support. Advocates help youth and young adults (12 to 21 years) to:

- Identify education and career goals.
- Find out which courses the learner needs to graduate.
- Explore options for making up credits and content.
- Re-enroll in school or transition to a new school/program.
- Identify any special education or academic support needs.
- Access services in school and the community.
- Navigate disciplinary issues in a way that focuses on learning.

2024 Goal: Serve 75 youth and young adults in Education Advocacy

2024 Results: 115 youth received help to reach their education goal





In 2024, The Book Works worked with community partners to pilot the Education Engagement Hub to provide a safe and supportive space for middle and high-school-age students to focus on academics while receiving help with challenges that lead to absences, suspensions, or leaving school before graduating. The initial pilot in Neighborhood House demonstrated the need for innovative, collaborative, and neighborhood-based space and services addressing the root causes of school disruptions. For the 2024-25 school years, Education Engagement Hubs opened in Neighborhood House and Americana World Community Center.

Our Services

EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT HUBS

At the Education Engagement Hub, youth and their families:

- Set and reach education goals
- Find support to improve attendance and behavior
- Develop social-emotional and mental wellness skills
- Explore options for re-enrolling if they are not in school
- Return to school as quickly as possible

2024 Goal: Serve 30 youth in the Education Engagement Hubs
2024 Results: 62 youth attended an Engagement Hub

2024 Goals: 75% of youth return to school immediately following participation
2024: Results: 92.3% of youth returned to school immediately

In 2024, The Book Works offered free programming to youth and young adults on their rights in education and ways they can be strong advocates for their goals and their community.

Educational Self-Advocacy For Youth in Foster Care: 159 youth in foster care, foster parents, case managers, and other caring adults participated in a workshop (one to three hours) on education rights of youth in care, strategies for navigating education systems, education pathway options, and ways to help young people develop self-advocacy skills.

Education Rights and Strategies for Navigating Education Systems: 216 young adults participated in a one-hour workshop on their rights in education and options for completing high school.

Youth Empowerment and Social Action: 20 youth participated in a 12 week program learning about community challenges and building leadership skills. Teams designed and implemented a community safety event attended by more than 100 young people and reviewed youth-led social justice action project proposals for additional funding.

Our Services

SKILL BUILDING PROGRAMS



Financials

Revenue

Individual and Business Donors	\$4,450.55
Public Grants	\$284,387.26
Private Foundations	\$206,425.92
Other Revenue	\$3,956.99
Total Revenue	\$490,663

Expenses

Program	\$353,369.86
Admin and Fundraising	\$9,217.19
Total Expenses	\$362,587.05

Total Assets: \$136,587.05



“Advocates are nice and respect me! Also, the Advocates really have helped me to resolve personal & educational issues.”

The Education Advocacy program at The Book Works is effectively assisting middle and high school students who are struggling with school through services that address the root causes. Our Advocates work at both individual and community levels to understand what young people need to stay focused on learning despite their complex challenges.

Students like Crystal demonstrate how our programming is effectively helping learners overcome challenges. When Crystal, 15, first came to a Hub, she had been suspended for 10 days. Crystal had been removed from her mother’s care recently, placed with a relative, and transferred to a new school. She had trouble making friends in school and felt isolated and unmotivated. An argument with a teacher over missed assignments led to the suspension and the connection with The Book Works. The team at the Education Engagement Hub helped Crystal reach out to her teachers for assignments to keep from falling farther behind. She participated in hands-on learning activities with other participants, building new skills and confidence. When she returned to school, she continued working with an Education Advocate to connect with extracurriculars and classes that interest her. The Advocate also met with Crystal, her family, and the Mental Health Professional at school about ways to cope with difficult emotions. The Advocate will continue to stay in touch with Crystal to offer support.



Funders

All services provided by The Book Works are funded by individual donors, public grants, and private foundation grants. Our work in 2024 would not have been possible without our funding partners:

Aetna SKY - CVS Foundation

C.E.& S. Foundation

Gheens Foundation

Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels

Jewish Heritage Fund

Louisville Metro Government

Louisville Metro Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods

Metro United Way

Serve Kentucky

The board and staff of The Book Works embrace our responsibility to welcome and serve students and families regardless of their immigration status, ancestry, disability, ethnicity, familial status, gender, gender identity, degree of English language proficiency, national origin, political beliefs or affiliations, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. We celebrate the strengths and goals of the young people we serve and will not be impeded or intimidated from advocating for their right to equitable education.