



Liberty LEADS

Liberty LEADS at Bank Street College is a dropout prevention and college access program that has served more than 1,500 students between 5th and 12th grade since 1989. Founded to empower underrepresented youth, our program makes an impact in the lives of students every day by helping them attain higher education, embrace leadership engagement, and create a positive future for themselves and others.

Research shows that underserved youth face challenges that can impede their academic success, social emotional development, on-time high school graduation, and ability to succeed in college and career. For nearly three decades, our program has worked to successfully address these risk factors by providing our students with access to the resources necessary to realize their potential.

Our Program

Most students enter Liberty LEADS in 5th, 7th, or 9th grade and continue through high school graduation. Students regularly attend our program several days during the week and on Saturdays and have access to our summer camp programming. Liberty LEADS offers support for students in social-emotional development, college preparation, leadership skill building, social justice advocacy, and STEM opportunities.

Our approach ensures that our students develop ongoing stable relationships with caring adults, which is proven to support healthy development and learning. Each student is assigned an advisor who acts as a mentor and becomes someone the student can count on. They meet with families and regularly attend school meetings and parent-teacher conferences alongside parents and primary caregivers.



Liberty LEADS also encourages students to build relationships with their peers. Hearing about the challenges and triumphs of other students in the program helps them connect deeply with one another, avoid feelings of isolation, and build social-emotional competence. Finally, our model encourages family involvement. We acknowledge that the only way we are able to work with students effectively is if they participate regularly in program activities and make the most of our resources. Families are our best allies in this regard.

Student Population at a Glance

The majority of our students are children of color and come from under-resourced communities in Harlem, Washington Heights, and the South Bronx:

- 96% are eligible for free/reduced price school meals
- 68% Latino, 23% African-American/Black, 2% Asian, 4% Multiracial, and 3% White
- 68% come from households where English is not the main language spoken
- 9% are current or former English Language Learners (ELLs)
- 18% have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Our Impact

Liberty LEADS provides an alternative learning environment that helps students achieve success as learners. Our activities and resources enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, and academic wellbeing of our students and reduce their risk of engaging in negative behavior.

- Our program has maintained a 92% retention rate since 2004.
- Since 2004, 94% of our students have graduated from high school on time.
- An average of 88% of our students have matriculated into college since 2004.
- 57% of our students have completed college, while 15% are still in school.