Liberty LEADS

Liberty LEADS at Bank Street College is a high school completion and college access program that has served more than 1,800 students between 5th and 12th grade since 1989. Founded to empower underrepresented youth, our program impacts students' lives 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 over three decades, our program has worked to successfully address these 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, 9th, and 11th 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 youth summer camp programming. The Liberty LEADS youth development model supports students in social-emotional growth, college preparation, leadership skill building, social justice advocacy, and English language, arts, mathematics, and STEM learning.

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. Advisors meet with families and regularly attend school meetings and parent-teacher conferences alongside parents and primary caregivers.

Through youth development programming, Liberty LEADS 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:

- 99% are eligible for free/reduced-price school meals
- 73% Latino, 21% African American/Black, 4% Asian, 1% Multiracial/Other, and 1% Native American
- 68% come from households where English is not the main language spoken
- 5% are current or former English Language Learners (ELLs)
- 23% have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Our Impact

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

- Our program has maintained an 85% retention rate since 2004.
- Since 2004, an average of 95% of our students have graduated from high school on time.
- An average of 90% of our students have matriculated into college since 2004.