



# ACE African Community Education

embracing culture | building community | creating change

## FY 2021 Annual Report



# A Letter from ACE Leadership



Dear Friends of ACE,

Thank you for making FY2021 yet another remarkable year for African Community Education. We are excited to share with you all that we have accomplished over the past year in the following pages.

Perhaps more than any other, this past year serves as a testament to the resilience, commitment, and creativity of the ACE community as we worked to transform and improve our programs and services during the ongoing pandemic. Throughout the year, we provided a combination of virtual, hybrid, and in-person programs and services, developing creative solutions that prioritized both the health and safety of ACE students and families while offering the assistance ACE has always provided.

We also took an active role in combating the pandemic. During the year we hosted seven vaccine workshops for members of the community, created and distributed over 100 audio messages, posters, and videos, and provided tech support and safety supplies for dozens of students returning to in-person schooling.

We cannot say enough about how all members of the ACE community - staff, volunteers, students, and supporters - went the extra mile to help make these necessary adjustments. All of the credit in the world goes to the students, who met every challenge and made every effort to successfully continue their education.

This year, we enrolled 85 youth across our After School, Saturday, Mentoring, and Summer Programs. Including our Family Education Program and Outreach Department, we directly served 1,317 individuals, more than double the amount we had served in any prior year.

We are thrilled that 17 students who attended ACE during their academic careers graduated this year, bringing our total number of graduates to 278 since our founding in 2006.

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.



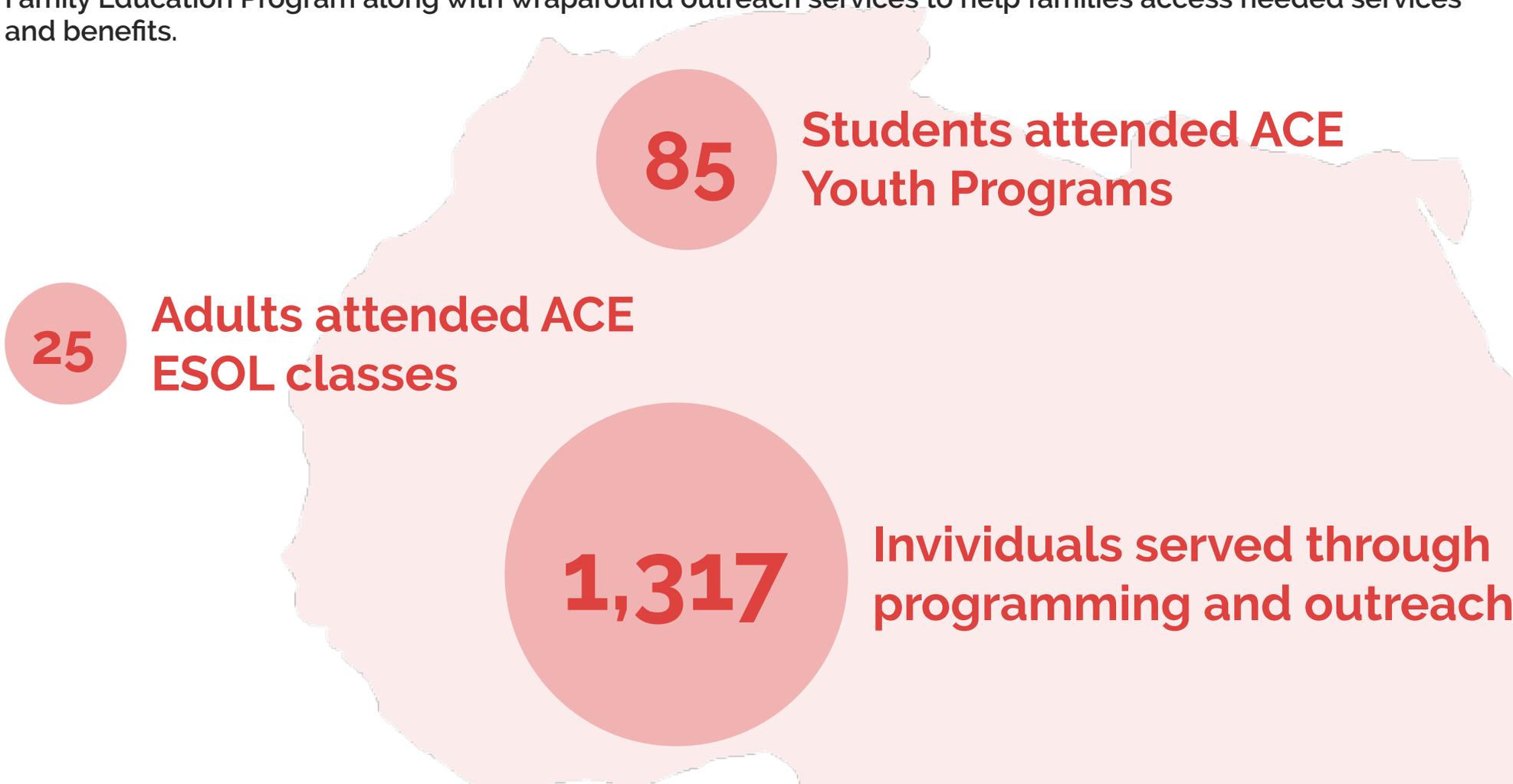


# PROGRAMMING

# Programming Fast Facts

For youth ages 10 and up, ACE hosts After School, Saturday, Mentoring, Summer Reading, and Workforce Development Programs. Through these programs, ACE provides access to tutoring, supplemental classroom time, experiential learning activities, and one-on-one mentoring which help students succeed academically. ACE also serves as a liaison between the student, family, and local public schools to ensure each student's home and school lives provide environments for success.

For parents of our students, ACE provides English as Second Language and Citizenship classes as part of our Family Education Program along with wraparound outreach services to help families access needed services and benefits.



**85**

**Students attended ACE Youth Programs**

**25**

**Adults attended ACE ESOL classes**

**1,317**

**Individuals served through programming and outreach**

# Programming Fast Facts



**83% of students are ELL's and 100% are low income**



**20 languages spoken at home**



**209 Program Sessions**



**780 Program Hours**



**11 Countries of Origin**

# Volunteer Spotlight

This year, **178 volunteers** contributed **4,054 hours** of service to help ACE students and families.

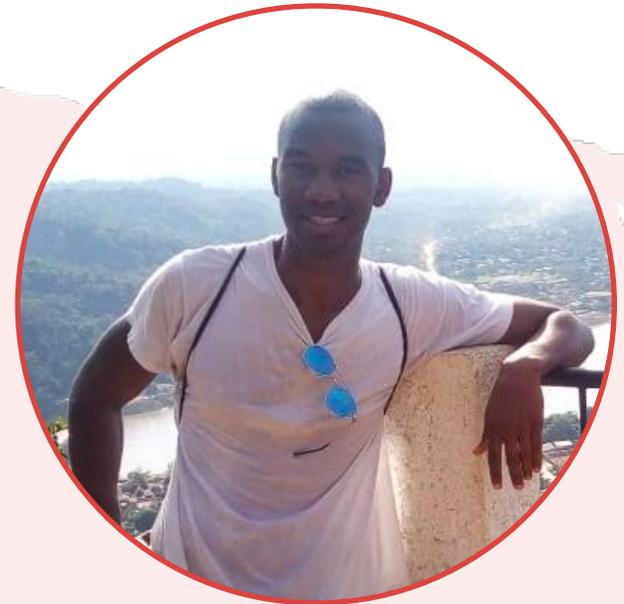
This includes **40 mentor-mentee matches** who participated in our Mentoring for Empowerment & Exchange Program.

## ERIC YAKUZE

Eric is originally from Uganda and moved to the Boston area with his family in the early 2000s. He currently works a Physician Assistant. Eric began volunteering with ACE in December of 2020 within the Saturday program. Eric was involved in both extracurricular and academic activities. He worked with students on homework & school assignments and participated in the soccer matches during activity time.

Eric was one of the key volunteers in preparing students for the Africa Day event held in the Saturday Program. He worked 1-on-1 with Michael to help him construct his presentation on South Africa.

Says Ayman Abdelgadir, ACE Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator of Eric, "Overall, Eric is a superb role model and volunteer within the program, and his presence has a significant impact on ACE students."



# Post-Secondary Success

This year, ACE hired our first-ever **Post Secondary Education Liaison, Melvin**. Working 1-on-1 with **15 students and alumni**, we have already seen a tremendous impact in improving post-secondary outcomes for ACE students, including recent graduates like **Sharlotte**.

This summer, Sharlotte took her first steps on the campus of Worcester State University. The campus tour involved about one dozen people, including prospective students and incoming students. The tour began in the auditorium, where one could see a very giddy Sharlotte, unable to sit still.

"She's been this excited since I picked her up," Melvin said with a big smile.

While the sun beat down on the group, Sharlotte's excitement carried everyone through the tour. Sharlotte plans to commute to Worcester State University, but she re-considered living on campus after seeing the dormitories for the first time. She took several photos of the room to show her mom later. Sharlotte felt all the more thrilled upon learning that the student tour guide studies Sharlotte's dream major — psychology.

"I want to study psychology because I faced a lot of challenges," shared Sharlotte. "I want to understand the science, the experience, behind every challenge."

For Sharlotte, going to school meant striving after her dreams for herself and her family. Sharlotte was born in Tanzania and speaks four languages: English, Swahili, Kirundi, and Kibembe. Her passion for education is visible to all who see. When asked, Sharlotte shared that her family serves as one of her biggest motivations in school.

"I live in a very big family — there are twelve of us. When we were in Africa, we struggled a lot.

I saw them stress about how they would find food for us, and I saw how they overcame those struggles. I saw them do their best. I saw them never lose hope. I saw my mom work very hard for us. I witnessed how my mom would cry, but she never gave up with us."

(Continued on next page)



# Post-Secondary Success

Sharlotte persisted. She kept striving after her goal of going to college. Soon, Sharlotte would learn that she would not have to take this journey on her own. In the spring of 2021, while Sharlotte focused on finishing up her last year of high school and any final forms needed for college, she received a phone call from the newest staff member at ACE — Melvin Kaska, the new Post-Secondary Education Liaison.

Starting in a new role, Melvin reached out to all the graduating seniors, including Sharlotte. Over a phone call, Melvin introduced himself to Sharlotte and asked about her progress. Remembering the moment she learned about the new support from ACE, Sharlotte says, “I was so happy! I had someone I could call when I needed help.”

Diving into her plans, Sharlotte and Melvin connected right away. “I love his mood and energy. It’s best to get advice from someone who went through college like Melvin. I get motivated from Melvin because he knows all this stuff about college.”

When Melvin began working at ACE, many of the students connected with Melvin right away. While each person holds a unique experience, Melvin could relate to many of the ACE students, such as moving from the continent of Africa to the U.S., growing up in Worcester, and being one of the first in his family to attend college.

“I was born on the Ivory Coast and lived in Liberia,” Melvin shared. “I came to the U.S. when I was five or six years old. I spoke some English in Liberia, but I had a deep accent, and the English wasn’t the same as the one used in American public schools. Sharlotte said she doesn’t like to speak up because of her accent, and I was the same way.”

Many of Melvin’s life lessons came from school. His love for school inspires his position as the Post-Secondary Education Liaison every day.

After a successful first year, Melvin plans to expand the program even more. Originally, Melvin started with a focus on seniors. This fall, Melvin will start connecting with juniors and younger students. Melvin also wants to send care packages to enrolled college students, support high schoolers through learning during the pandemic, and talk to existing and prospective college students about the unique challenges of attending college as first-generation and Black students.

When asked what they would say to younger ACE students, Sharlotte and Melvin hope their experiences will inspire perseverance.

Sharlotte said, “I used to cry and wonder how I would get everything done today, this week, and next week. Just cry, relax, then don’t waste your time. Keep in touch with your deadlines before it’s too late.”

In response, Melvin added, “She brought up a good point. School is hard, especially remote learning. It’s easy to put things off, but at least figure out and go over what you need to do before you put it off. Keep working hard and never give up.”

And Melvin certainly looks forward to being there for every step of the journey.



# ACE Graduates

This year, **17 students** who attended ACE during their academic careers graduated high school, bringing our total number of graduates to **278!**

## MOHAMED

Mohamed's life began in Ethiopia. His family found themselves moving to Somalia for a short time, but they returned to Ethiopia. For most of his young life, Mohamed called Ethiopia home, eventually moving to the U.S. in 2014. It was Mohamed's first time in the U.S. Upon entering the new country, he remembers feeling shocked by the cold but amazed with the culture.



When Mohamed arrived in the U.S., he was still learning English. He spent the first couple of weeks completing documentation and mandatory vaccinations. Immediately after, he launched into his new life and school career at the New Citizens Center (NCC).

Mohamed began attending ACE about one year after moving to Worcester. He learned about ACE through his friends from school. Mohamed enjoyed the program activities and opportunities to improve his school work.

"Going to ACE helped me a lot," Mohamed recalls. "When I went to NCC, my English was not good, and I didn't get a lot of homework done. I went to ACE, and they helped me with homework and introduced me to lots of new friends. My English got better, too."

Mohamed eventually transferred from NCC to North High, where he built onto his academic success and participated in the school's track and soccer teams.

"When I joined ACE, I was a little boy, like a kid. ACE helped me mature. ACE has always helped me, and I feel like ACE will always be there for me."

Reflecting on his proudest accomplishment, Mohamed said, "I am the first one to graduate from high school and to attend college in my family. All of my family is so proud of me."

While walking the graduation stage, Mohamed saw his family cheering him on. In the crowd of happy family members, he focused his gaze on his six siblings.

"I was just so happy that day because I could show my brothers and sisters that I did it. I want to be a role model for my little brothers. I want them to all know that it is possible — to have a better life in the future and to finish high school and college."

Mohamed faced many challenges coming to Worcester, but these difficulties have shaped his fearless mentality going forward.

"When I was entering high school, people told me it would be hard. People tell me now that college will be hard. But I feel like the transition from high school to college will be just like going from NCC to North High. If you do your work and get your stuff done, it's going to be easy."

# Student Spotlight

## MICHAEL

Four years after fleeing hostilities as the result of the protracted Civil War in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Michael's parents welcomed their new household member who was born in Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania.

So far, Michael's transition from a refugee kid in Tanzania to his resettled life in the United States brings nothing but hope and aspirations.

Michael and his family moved to the U.S. on May 2, 2018. Before then, Michael attended school under difficult circumstances in refugee camps where basic school materials were lacking and classrooms were mostly overcrowded, with up to 80 students.

A new world of schooling was revealed to Michael when he was enrolled at the New Citizens Center secondary school in Worcester. He attended classes there for two years, after which he received admission to North High School, where he currently attends as a junior.

Michael brings a clear sense of brilliance and shows leadership among his peers. His amazing soccer skills give him a comfortable home in extracurricular activities. He has taken advantage of the academic and life skills opportunities at ACE is rising fast as a promising leader and problem solver.

Recently, Michael starred at ACE's first-ever African Day program and was selected as the second-best presenter of the day. Michael was also selected as one of two ACE students to participate in this year's Worcester Community Action Council YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program.

Says ACE Saturday Program Coordinator, John Yormie of Michael, "So much of Michael's excellence is still to come and we are honored that ACE is a part of guiding him to higher heights."



# Programming Highlights

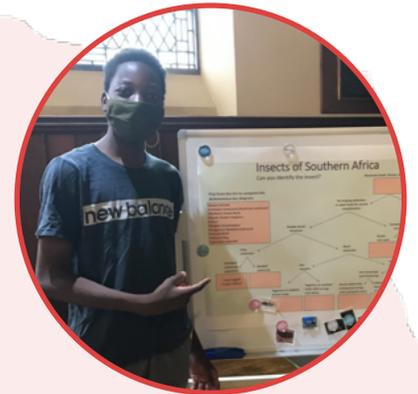


## Africa Day

This two-part Model UN-style event invited students to represent African countries in front of their peers. Representatives shared country profiles, covering social, political, economic and cultural facts of their country. The second day included a panel of experts, who discussed key issues with ACE students including culture, education, public policy, immigration, and identity. This year's celebrations and panel were inspired by the theme: "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development and Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic."

## Summer Reading Project Day

To conclude our Summer Reading Program this year, ACE students presented their work at a Project Day. Students were divided into different reading groups for the summer, each reading a different book. Students completed a variety of projects based on the books they read including poster presentations, personal essays, and arts projects. Topics included climate change, personal biographies, insects, African mask-making, women in science, and more.



## World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day marks a day to celebrate, support, and advocate for refugees around the world. During this year's World Refugee Day, we asked ACE students what they wanted others to know about their experience as refugees. ACE students were given the chance to express themselves through photo and video messages and passed on insightful messages, including, "When you leave your country as a refugee, care and empathy from others make you feel at home again." – Attahir

# Ongoing Pandemic Response



**160 attendees at 7 vaccine workshops hosted by MDs**



**72 audio outreach messages created and sent via WhatsApp**



**47 students received tech support for remote learning**



**56 back-to-school kits delivered to students**



**34 informational videos & flyers created and distributed to families to spread awareness**



# DEVELOPMENT



# Key Facts & Figures

31

Grant funders

\$1.2M

In grants awarded

31

Corporate & event sponsors

443

Individual donors

\$412K

Raised from individuals & events

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Thank you to our grant funders and sponsors. Without them, 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 kids and families know there is one more person in their corner.

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# Kupanda: ACE's Monthly Giving Community

In 2018, ACE launched **Kupanda**, our new monthly giving community. Today, **111 Kupanda members** have helped us raise over **\$36,000** for ACE programs.

Thank you to our Kupanda Members!

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Cecilia Lafontaine  
Samuel Lamptey  
Charles Land  
Rebecca Larrivee  
Dan Larrivee  
Katherine Larrivee  
David LeBoeuf  
Jesse Lehman  
Margaret LeRoux  
Rees Linville  
Megan Lorenz

Larry Masselink  
Sheeba Mathew  
Katie Mazzeo  
Kimberly McCullen  
Sarah Monteith  
Kari Mruz  
Uyanga Mungunchimeg  
Nathaniel Needle  
John O'Neil  
Timothy O'Neil  
Deborah O'Neil  
Kwasi Ofori  
Nathalie Perez-Cino  
Jp Perkins  
Bonham Pierce  
Joshua Plisinski  
Deanna Poirier  
Lila Pope  
LeNola Potami  
David Powers  
Lillie Rosen  
Charlotte Rosen  
Maryan Ryan

Adja Sackor  
Ebenezer Sartiah  
Joshua Jackson Selly  
Kathleen Sheehan  
Anywhere Sikochi  
Karen Sikola  
Susan Stukas  
Alex Swenson  
Luladay Tekalegn  
Waitta Vainga  
Olga Valdman  
Janet Vignaly  
Mike Walker  
Bonnie Walker  
Hannah Weinsaft  
Natalie Wellen  
Janet Wine  
Rose Wine  
Kaska Yawo

# Fundraising Spotlight

Several local businesses and student organizations held fundraising campaigns on our behalf throughout the year. Thank you to

Alpha Gamma Delta, WPI  
Alpha Phi, WPI  
Beta Theta Pi, WPI  
Redemption Rock Brewing Co.  
The Queen's Cups  
The Strength House

for collectively raising  
**\$6,790.72** for ACE!



# Expressions: The 14th Annual ACE Gala

The 14th Annual ACE Gala took place on November 12 and was a night we will never forget. We overcame many challenges presented by the pandemic to host our first virtual Gala, and raised over \$65,000 for ACE programs and families!

We welcomed hundreds of guests throughout the country and partnered with organizations and individuals throughout the community to put on a one-of-a-kind virtual event, including The Cahn Fund for Social Change, The WPI Black Student Union, Crocodile River Music, Gold Coast Catering, Redemption Rock Brewing, Sail to Trail WineWorks, Prosperity Candle, Equal Exchange, Eldior Sodeck Design, Frederick Joseph, and Abu Mwenye.

In keeping with our event theme of Expressions, we highlighted all of the ways ACE students share their personalities - through storytelling, fashion, art, and more!

Thank you for helping to make the 14th Annual ACE Gala the best yet!





# FINANCIALS

# Financial Overview

**FY 2021\***

## REVENUE

Foundation & Trust Grants	\$836,485
Government Grants & Contracts	\$370,880
Corporate Grants	\$8,000
Nonprofit Grants	\$960
General Donations	\$412,295
Fiscal Sponsorship Fees	\$6,525
Interest Income	\$576
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,635,721</b>

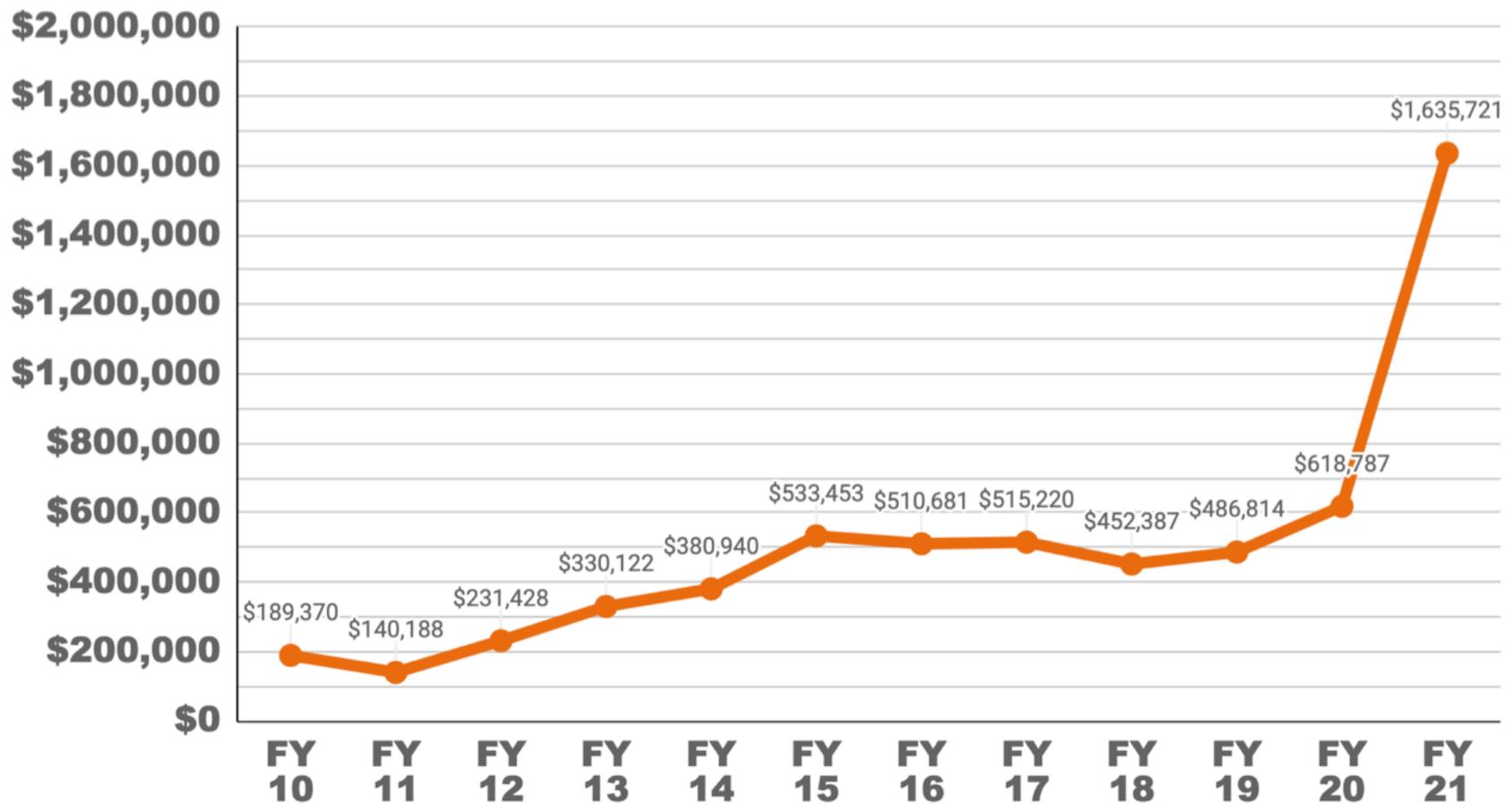
## EXPENSES

Management/Admin	\$127,232
Operations Staff	\$123,090
Outreach Staff	\$87,602
Program Staff	\$206,774
Payroll Taxes	\$50,595
Benefits	\$16,500
Program Expenses	\$39,212
Office Expenses	\$49,593
Fundraising Expenses	\$23,096
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$723,695</b>

\*Financial estimates—audited financial statements will be available in November 2021

# Financial History

## African Community Education Revenue vs. Time



# OUR FUTURE



# Future Focus Areas

As African Community Education continues to grow and thrive, we have identified and made progress on **9 Focus Areas** as part of our current strategic plan to take us through the conclusion of FY 2022.

## PROGRAMS & SERVICES

ACE will ensure our programs and services meet the needs of our community. We will improve existing programs and services and provide additional services that help students and families achieve academic and socio-economic success as we continue to carry out ACE's mission.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ACE seeks to identify new partnerships and expand current partnerships in order to provide improved services to our constituents and grow our impact in the most efficient ways possible.

## ALUMNI RELATIONS

ACE will reestablish relationships with its alumni members through the founding of a formal Alumni Association, provide better alumni support through additional programming, and share alumni success stories to enhance marketing and outreach efforts.

## EVALUATION & MONITORING

It is essential for ACE to better evaluate and monitor key indicators of organizational performance and program outcomes in order to improve performance over time. ACE will enhance existing evaluation and monitoring systems and implement new ones to fill current gaps in information.

# Future Focus Areas

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

It is essential for the organization to be financially stable and viable. Despite annual growth, ACE continues to have additional needs for funding diversification and further growth of funding streams. In particular, ACE aims to increase unrestricted funding to fund operational needs, especially staff sustainability initiatives.

## STAFF SUSTAINABILITY

Retaining talented and knowledgeable staff is essential for ACE to grow as an organization, execute a successful strategic plan, and better serve our students and families. ACE will take impactful steps to increase employee happiness and their sense of value to the organization and will improve financial compensation for its employees.

## LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

ACE will improve its leadership and governance to ensure a lean and effective organization with strong leadership possessing the tools and resources necessary to carry out the organization's mission.

## CULTURAL BRANDING

ACE will better define its brand and values, build its organizational culture, and work to incorporate each of these elements throughout everything we do.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

ACE will evaluate facilities, transportation, systems, and technology to determine where improvements and efficiencies are needed to carry out the strategic plan. ACE will take the necessary steps to explore and, if appropriate, execute a capital campaign to improve infrastructure as needed.

# Our Team



## OUR STAFF

KASKA YAWO, Executive Director & Co-Founder  
AYMAN ABDELGADIR, Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator  
AMY CORNELIUSSEN, Grants Manager  
TIMON DHEGO, Family Education Program Coordinator  
WINNIE DOE, Worcester Public Schools Liaison  
REGINA ENGEL, Director of Finance & Operations  
VAUGHN HATHAWAY, Information Technology Specialist  
BENJAMIN KAGIGI, Outreach Manager  
MELVIN KASKA, Post-Secondary Education Liaison  
CECILIA LAFONTAINE, Finance and HR Coordinator  
WIVINE MAKOKO, Family Ed. & Outreach Worker  
TEREZA NGENDAHORURI, Outreach Worker  
TIM O'NEIL, Marketing & Fundraising Manager  
JP PERKINS, Program Director  
DONOVAN SNYDER, After School Program Coordinator  
MONICA TWAROG, Administrative Coordinator  
ROSE WINE, Marketing & Development Coordinator  
JOHN YORMIE, Saturday Program Coordinator

## OUR BOARD, FY 2021

BIODUN "MR. B" AKANDE, Chairperson  
LILA POPE, Treasurer  
JOANNE GRAVELL, Secretary  
ELIZABETH AHMADI  
BOB BUREAU  
SAINT CYR DIMANCHE  
KWAME GAYLE  
ABIGAIL MENSAH  
PATIENCE NOAH  
OLGA VALDMAN, Co-Founder  
BONNIE WALKER

# Thank you from the ACE family!



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