

2023 YEAR END REPORT



A PROSPERUS COMMUNITY SOLUTION

IGNITE ACADEMY



PROSPERUS
Unlocking Potential - Cradle to Career



**United Way
Centraide**
Windsor-Essex County

YEAR IN REVIEW

Ignite Academy is the first community-designed Cradle-to-Career solution from ProsperUs. Aimed to bolster literacy and math competencies, the program operates after school four days a week, targeting students from grades 2-7. The participating schools are in priority neighbourhoods with the highest rates of childhood poverty: West Windsor, Downtown Windsor, and Leamington.

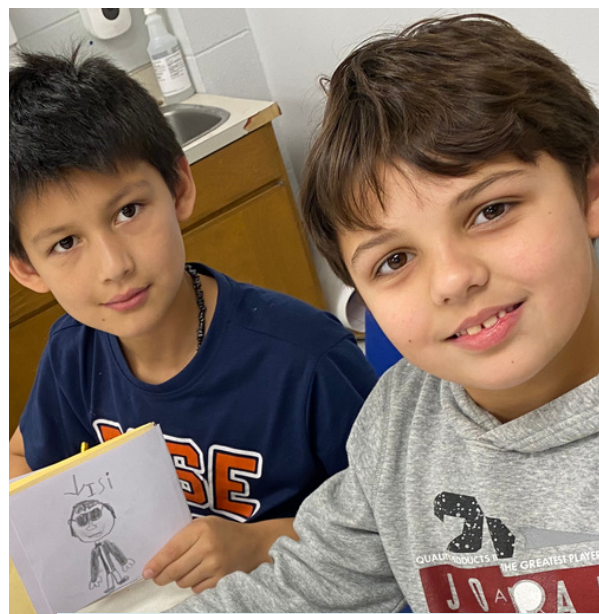
Children in priority neighbourhoods are farther behind in reading, writing, and math than their peers in more affluent neighbourhoods. Compounding the issue, these families frequently grapple with economic hardships, including low income, food, and housing insecurities, among other socioeconomic barriers.

Neighbourhood residents, front-line service providers, and subject matter experts collaboratively created Ignite Academy to address some of these concerns. Adopting a human-centred design approach, residents pinpointed the obstacles hindering their children's foundational education. This collaborative effort then carved out a new model for afterschool programming, which resulted in the creation of Ignite Academy.

“ At Ignite Academy, we believe that every child has the potential to be successful despite the postal code they live in or the challenges that they face. And in the pilot year we saw the immense potential for this program to grow.

- Kelsey Boire, Ignite Academy Community Coordinator

The pilot year of Ignite Academy has been a year filled with excitement and success! Any new program comes with challenges to overcome, and opportunities to learn and grow. Ignite Academy had many in its first year. Programming runs for a two-hour period at the end of the school day, for participants in grades 2 through 7, Mondays through Thursdays. During programming, participants are greeted by Ignite staff from community partners at South Essex Community Council (SECC), and the MultiCultural Council of Windsor-Essex County (MCC). Students are then served a nutritious snack or meal and supportive programming begins. No one day is the same as any other in Ignite Academy. In addition to the great educational, engaging activities facilitated by our Ignite staff, Ignite Academy had incoming programming teams that rotated through the schools. Arts Can Teach (ACT), Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), and United Way Academic Team (UWAT). But what visitors didn't see during programming hours with participants was the intricate work happening behind the scenes to ensure participants were reaching their full potential. This looked like regular communication with participant families to discuss needs and support within the community. This is called barrier removal and can include referrals to things like speech therapy, or translation services. This work also looked like in-depth data tracking on retention of academic skills and progress through new content areas. This is called diagnostic testing and continuous evaluation. This even looked like building relationships within the community and schools to bring awareness to the program. Program staff call this finding new opportunities to support Ignite Academy youth.



Did you know?

If children do not meet provincial standards in reading by grade 3, research tells us they are less likely to graduate from high school on time.

If kids do not meet provincial math standards by grade 6, they are less likely to complete post-secondary education.

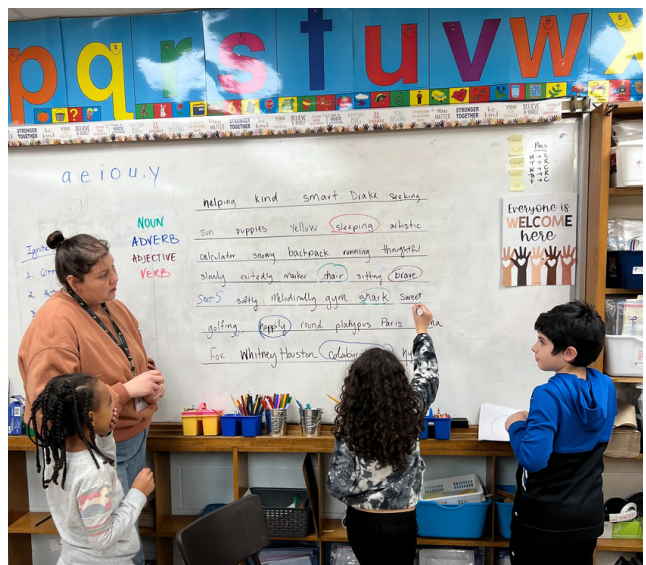
THE MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL (MCC)

The Multicultural Council (MCC) of Windsor and Essex County began the pilot year of Ignite Academy in two of our catholic schools in Windsor: St. James and Immaculate Conception. MCC's process began with training program staff, planning, establishing connections and outreach within the community, as well as scheduling and planning student assessments to build relationships with the Ignite Academy participants and their families. With these strong foundations in place, MCC experienced much success with the program including:

- Strong staff relationships with community partners, participants and their families, and schools
- A robust snack and hot meals program
- A rotation of skilled volunteers
- Student placements from the University of Windsor and Windsor Enterprise Skills Training (WEST)
- Guest speakers from: Windsor Fire & Rescue Services, Windsor Police Service, MCC Nurse Practitioner – Personal Hygiene, Smile Wagon Oral Hygiene, Anti- Bullying/University of Windsor, and Multicultural Awareness/Walden University
- Barrier Removal Packages for school breaks – snacks, activities, gift cards and more
- Yearbooks for participants to keep.
- Time Capsule to commemorate the first year of Ignite Academy!



While supporting the participants with educational activities, engaging programming, and guest speakers, MCC made sure to include a multitude of positive reinforcement to encourage Ignite Academy as a safe space to all. Students were offered exciting opportunities to bridge the school gaps; for example, over the summer, MCC gifted Ignite Academy participants with summer passes to Windsor's own Adventure Bay to many cheers from the children. MCC is excited to be supporting the four Windsor schools for Year 2 of Ignite Academy and looking forward to furthering the relationships with the community and youth they serve.



SOUTH ESSEX COMMUNITY COUNCIL (SECC)

South Essex Community Council (SECC) supports the two Leamington Ignite Academy programs at St. Louis Catholic School and Queen Elizabeth Public School. SECC had a great first year of programming. The staff knew right from the beginning that they needed to work from the ground up to build new relationships with the students in programming. One of the most important things in getting children comfortable and ready to learn is nutrition. SECC partnered with Leamington United Mennonite Church (LUMC) to create healthy, filling, delicious snacks for the children. Every Monday Ignite staff dropped off snack supplies, instructions, and veggies donated by Mucci Farms. The LUMC team got to work and surpassed any expectation or thought of what we could accomplish together. The partnership grew stronger, and they still help create snacks for the program in the 2023-2024 school year including fresh muffins, meat and cheese skewers, pancakes, fruit kabobs, and fresh baked goods.



Queen Elizabeth and St. Louis also had committed volunteers throughout the year. The dedicated volunteers provided over 240 hours to the program. Volunteers helped with tutoring, homework help, recreational activities, snacks, and daily supervision, in addition to becoming a trusted adult and source of support to our youth. The program also relied on other community organizations when specialized assistance was needed for a family. SECC staff made a total of 61 referrals to places such as the mobile medical service, Jump Start, WECHC healthy smiles program, Regional Children's Centre, John McGivney, and many more.

Addressing the needs of the children is very important to the staff and allows them to build rapport with families. Once the rapport had been built, SECC really got to jump into the fun stuff with the children. Every opportunity for fun also gives staff an opportunity to teach something new to the students. A few examples of special programming that SECC offered the children was Kat and Sav Valentine Black History Month presentations, a pioneer program presenter from the Canadian Transportation Museum, Youth Diversion, The Leamington Library, and a Chartwell Pen Pal Program. Each one of these led to our children getting some kind of new information, perspective, or thought-provoking questions. Many of these activities happened on-site, but Ignite Academy also managed to go off-site to broaden the program's horizons. The program had field trips to the movies, the Leamington Library, and Leamington United Mennonite Church. Overall, year one for Queen Elizabeth and St. Louis was a big success. The children enjoyed it, the staff loved it, and SECC plans to do bigger and better things this year and moving forward!

All Ignite Academy programs are infused with incoming programming teams to deliver a variety of activities to support student growth.



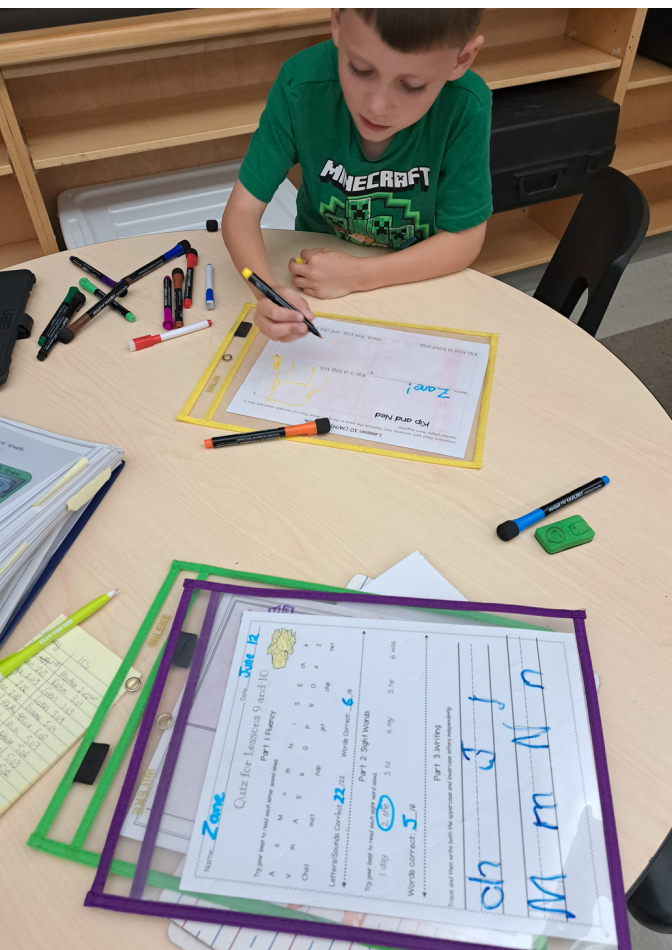
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF WINDSOR ESSEX (BBBS)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Windsor Essex (BBBS) visited each Ignite Academy location once per week to deliver social mentoring programming. This supports the Ignite Academy participants with skills for emotional regulation, self-esteem, handling conflict, developing healthy relationships, mental wellness, and more. The BBBS programming was facilitated with selected St. Clair College students from the Child and Youth Care program. Furthermore, the mentorships developed during BBBS programming gives the Ignite Academy participants a trusted, communicative, and supportive relationship with an adult that fosters independence, self-esteem, and strong mental health practices. BBBS programming is always received well by participants and the value of mentorships is readily apparent the moment BBBS arrives at Ignite Academy. BBBS is looking forward to working with the participants in the coming years while maintaining the ones from the pilot year of Ignite Academy!

ARTS CAN TEACH (ACT)

Arts Can Teach (ACT) brought its four most experienced, skilled, and sensitive artists to Ignite Academy, including two artists with close to 25 years in elementary classrooms. Arts Can Teach's expertise is integrating school core curriculum (math, science, etc.) with hands-on arts-based lesson activities. The Ignite Academy artists - in Drama, Puppetry, Dance and Visual Arts - began with once-a-week programming at all schools in four-week placements. With math and literacy support as the larger goal, the artists also prioritized lessons that helped build engagement, confidence, and connection. Each of the artists adapted and modified their lesson activities to the students' interests. With Puppeteer Matthew Romain, students explored geometry by creating puppets adorned with 2D shapes associated with their 3D solid heads. When Dance Artist Louise Paquette invited students to share dances from their cultures, two formerly reluctant participants became eager, enthusiastic leaders. Visual Artist Ainslee Winter created an engaging Math and Media Literacy lesson plan based on the students' interest in board games. Students worked together to create a group and individual board game using patterns and 3D paper structures. They created their own board game character and a poster promoting their character's strengths. Students were encouraged to share their creations in a supportive atmosphere, to help build their confidence and sense of accomplishment. Moving forward, the artists look forward to longer placements of 8 to 12 weeks at each site, to deepen their connection with students and continue to adapt lesson activities to meet their needs as learners and young creatives.





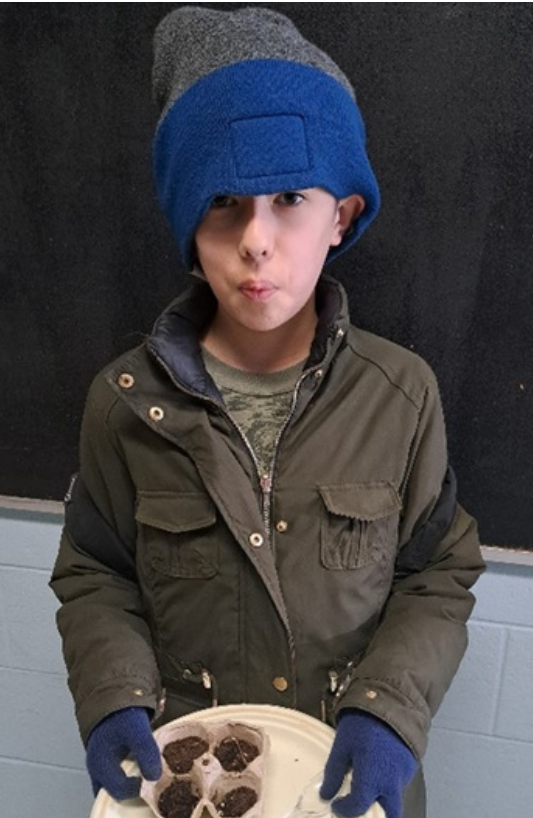
UNITED WAY ACADEMIC TEAM (UWAT)

United Way Academic Team (UWAT) began the pilot year of Ignite Academy with one day per week at each school and by the end of the year worked towards two days per week in each school. During Ignite Academy, UWAT worked with groups and individuals to engage participants in literacy and mathematics activities catering to age range and academic ability. Program staff noticed early on that the individual needs were varied across students, groups, and schools, so much so, that they adjusted the programming to academic interventions instead of activities. This meant that they identified gaps in literacy and mathematics knowledge for each participant and worked towards closing those gaps with targeted, individualized skill building.

UWAT staff consistently tracked progress and adapted to each participant as their academic needs changed. For four weeks, a successful literacy intervention pilot was conducted to showcase the impact these targeted, consistent, interventions could have on participant academics. Comparing data from a school that did not receive academic interventions to a school that did receive academic interventions, the interventions correlated an average increase in over half a grade level in literacy ability. Ignite Academy expanded UWAT programming to four days per week in every school with two days of targeted literacy interventions and two days of targeted mathematics interventions.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: DANIEL



Daniel and his family were referred to Ignite Academy in 2022 at the start of the program's pilot year. At the time, Daniel was in his last year at St. Louis school in Leamington and was experiencing some challenges academically and socially. Daniel is diagnosed with high functioning autism and struggled with social interactions with his peers. Over the course of the school year, Daniel worked closely with Ignite Academy staff and community partners to address both academic and social struggles. Daniel was a part of small groups throughout the year and worked on further developing his social and emotional regulation skills and techniques. Daniel was eventually able to vocalize his emotions and identify specific triggers. This allowed him to fully participate and enjoy his time during activities and assisted in interactions with his peers. Daniel also partook in many new and exciting experiences during his time at Ignite Academy. He made butter and ice cream from scratch, grew, and cared for a plant from a seed, and went on several picnic and outdoor learning excursions. He attended Holiday parties with his peers, a trip to the movies, community outreach with seniors in the community and learned more about the community he lives in, with visits from Heritage Village and Windsor Police Services. Daniel also received extended educational opportunities with visits from Youth Diversion, who taught him about online safety and cyber security.

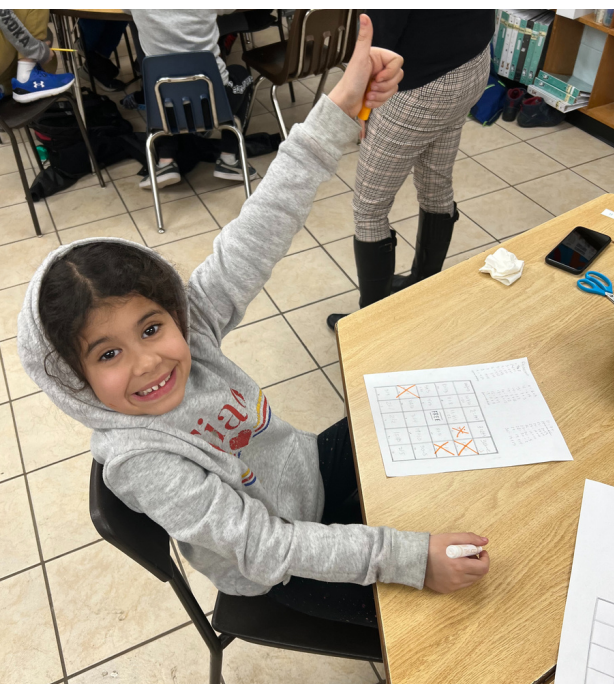
As a part of the systems navigation aspect of Ignite, Daniel's family became reacquainted and further connected with autism resources within the community that had been lost to them during the lockdowns during the pandemic. Some of these referrals include parent support groups, SPARK Pediatric Services, John McGivney, and WETRA Summer Program. Over the course of the year, Daniel helped to teach staff about his uniqueness and what it means to live and work with an autism diagnosis. Daniel's smile, humor, and eagerness to succeed and participate helped to educate staff and shaped the future structure of how the Ignite program functions for students in need of specialized support. As a part of Ignite's first graduated class, Daniel has been referred to another Youth Program for his age group where he is flourishing. Daniel and his family keep in contact with Ignite staff, who are so proud to see how he is growing. His parents have continuously vocalized their appreciation to staff for their ongoing support for their child and family. The Ignite team cannot wait to see what Daniel will achieve in the years to come.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: HAVIR

Getting to know Harvir over the past two years has been an absolute pleasure. Harvir has been in Ignite Academy from the start and continues to come to programming every day. From day one Harvir has been happy to be in the program but leaned on his brother being there to help guide him. In the 2022/2023 school-year Harvir was quiet, a little shy, and enjoyed participating, but sometimes chose to sit back and watch. This year we have seen a big improvement in Harvir's social skills. Harvir's brother has now aged out of Ignite Academy and attends another community program. Without his big brother, Harvir can meet new people and engage in different activities during Ignite. We've seen a huge shift in what Harvir is willing to participate in. He participates in activities, branches out to meet new friends, and has come out of his shell completely! Harvir enjoys community partners, loves suggesting new activities, and completes homework whenever he has it. His academics have improved with his self-assuredness! From last year to this year, from quiet to confident, Harvir has done an amazing job and continues to shine in our program.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: RHIANNON



One student we have seen a notable positive difference in is Rhiannon. Rhiannon was in the Ignite Academy program for the pilot year. Rhiannon was eager to do mentoring activities and loved doing one-on-one academics. From time-to-time, Rhiannon would sometimes have difficulty staying focused on a task. However, she thrived with support and gained many skills within the scope of literacy and mathematics in her time at Ignite. This year we have been working with her to continue to develop her skills in working in group environments and we have noticed that she loves to help others when needed. We know that she feels encouraged to do her work when she gets some support from the team. Rhiannon always tries to set a good example for her sister in the class as well as all her younger peers. We know Rhiannon is a great success of Ignite Academy because of her drive to participate in the program and her self-improvement from last year to now. We look forward to seeing her grow from within the program and to many more milestones being achieved.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: DOMINIK

Ignite Academy represents hope for students like Dominik and their families. For Dominik's Grandmother Soheila, the program is incredibly important because it brings out generosity and kindness in students and provides a sense of safety.



“When my kids were little, there was nothing like this. It shows kindness in the world. It shows support. Positivity. Kids need it. The program is the backbone that the kids need. The teachers and Family System Navigators are like angels with no wings. The staff supports us emotionally, refers us to community services, and help in every possible way that they can without embarrassing us or making us feel different. This program is a big support for my grandson because when he comes home, he doesn't have stress. My grandchild is happy. Sometimes you know your kid is feeling miserable because they are being bullied or have other problems at school. But the Ignite Academy program makes things better; you can tell his body is happy, his face is happy, and is not feeling miserable. Kids really need this program because it really works. It makes a difference and for a better future and a better world, this program is really necessary.”
- Soheila, Dominik's Grandmother

PROGRAM STATS



In our first year at Ignite Academy, we kicked off in October 2022 and wrapped up in June 2023. The program ran for two hours each day, Monday through Thursday, with flexible start times between 2:30 p.m. and 5:45 p.m. Altogether, it spanned about 113 days, totaling 226 hours of educational support for Ignite Academy students. Ignite Academy is hosted at a 1 GECDSD school and 1 WECDSB school in West Windsor, Downtown Windsor, and Leamington.



153 Ignite Academy students supported this year

74%

Student Retention Rate - Primarily due to personal reasons like school relocations & scheduling conflicts

75%

of students on average attended weekly core activities



Student Investments: \$14,049 for removing barriers and \$13,140 for participant incentives

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- **1,411** Service Interaction with Parents
- **387** Arts & Cultural Activities
- **330** Barrier Removal Activities (ex. grocery/gas gift cards, hygiene products)
- **446** Recreational Activities
- **13** Field Trips
- **744** Incentives Delivered
- **471** Service Interactions with School Staff
- **275** Language Interpretation Supports Used
- **298** Referrals Initiated for Community Support
- **1,861** Service Interactions with Parents



IGNITE ACADEMY DONORS

Ignite Academy would not be possible without the generosity of donors. We are grateful to all those who are creating opportunities for local youth, and supporting children from Cradle to Career.

\$5,000 - \$9,999

- Windsor Volunteers for Literacy Foundation

\$10,000 - \$24,999

- Tom Weber

\$25,000 - \$49,999

- Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan

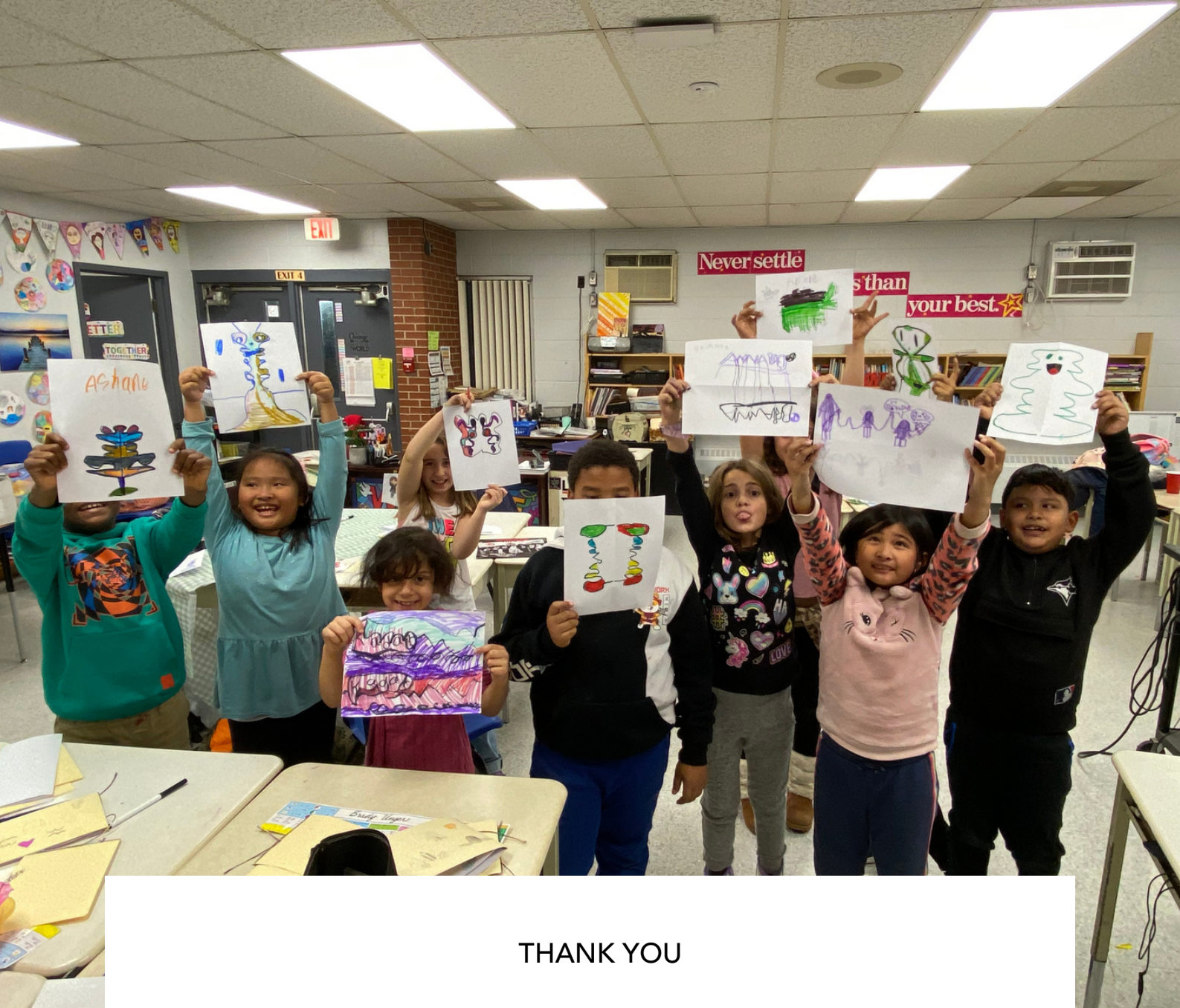
\$50,000 - \$99,999

- BMO Financial Group
- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
- County of Essex
- GreenShield Cares
- Libro Credit Union
- Rick & Donna Farrow
- ScotiaRISE
- TD Bank Group
- Windsor and District Labour Council

\$100,000 +

- The Bill & Rochelle Tepperman Foundation
- O'Neil Family Foundation

*The donors on this list supported Ignite Academy from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.



THANK YOU

Visit www.weareunited.com/igniteacademy to learn more about our incredible donors, volunteers, and students. To see how your donations are being invested visit weareunited.com/Impact. United Way strives towards the highest standards of accountability and trust.

Your donation to support the work of ProsperUs is made through United Way, the backbone organization and legal entity for all charitable gifts for ProsperUs. Your gift is stewarded by United Way but 100% goes towards the Cradle to Career community strategy.

Our 2022-23 audited financial statements are available on the website.

If you have any questions about this report, please call 519-259-6164 or email info@weareunited.com

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