

# Letter from the Director, Great Expectations 2022

There are many wonderful programs here on the North Shore that provide safe, supportive and engaging places for students to attend after school. So what makes LEAP special?

Over our 20 years we have listened to what our students, schools and community need. For those who have followed us for 20 years, this has meant a lot of change. While change is expensive and hard, requiring the retraining of staff, changes or additions to curricula, and customization of program models to fit community needs, it is essential. In a recent internal survey, we asked our staff what are the essential qualities needed to succeed as an employee at LEAP, and one overwhelming answer was adaptability.

Over the years, LEAP has adapted its success model that staff follow when we design programs that include academics, social-emotional skill development, post-secondary education and career exploration and readiness, and opportunities to build social capital. However, what makes our programs so successful are three essential ingredients: relationships, relevance and rigor.



### **On relationships:**

For LEAP staff, relationships are everything. Once students know you care, and can be trusted, they are so much more open to learning. Youth resilience comes from being part of a community where there are strong, trusted adult and peer relationships, and as a result, an empowering sense of belonging.



### **On relevance:**

Building on these relationships, LEAP staff and volunteers listen to their students' voices and work to understand their needs from which they can design meaningful programs and provide unique advice that is relevant for each student. This is a gift for staff and students alike and one which empowers and engages.



### **On rigor:**

Once you have relationships and relevance, LEAP staff can set even higher expectations and support students as they accept more challenges and strive to reach their potential.

Twenty years is a long time, and there is much to celebrate in the thousands of youth who have traveled for both long and short periods through LEAP programs and achieved their vision of success.

We are still learning and will continue to adapt to the needs of our students. We will continue to use all of these principles as we expand and strengthen our programs in Salem, Lynn and Peabody, addressing the unique needs in each community. I suspect in another 20 years, we will look a lot different as we continue to evolve with our students and world. Our students and community depend on it.

Thank you for your passion for our work and your generosity of dollars and time.

Happy anniversary to you all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda E. Saris".

Linda E. Saris  
Executive Director