Leah Gavilan
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Education

Dwight Englewood School, Englewood, NJ — September 2023– Present
GPA: 3.90
SAT: 1540

Pre-college Experience

Juilliard Pre-College Division — 2019–Present

- Awarded the Kathy Condon Scholarship ($17,000/17,250)
- Piano Studies under Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky
- Classes taken: Piano Performance, Ear-Training, Music Theory, Youth Chorus, Chamber Music, Chamber Music Intensive, Conducting

Summer Experience

JCamp 2026 Participant (~6.75% acceptance rate) 2026

Kenyon Young Writers Worshop (Residential) 2026

Kenyon Young Writers Workshop (Online) 2025

- Summer student of Julia Grawemeyer

Rutgers University Summer Scholar 2025

Classes taken: U.S. HISTORY 1945 - PRESENT (Course Grade: A)

The School of The New York Times 2025

Classes Taken: Writing the Big City: Reporting in NY

Attended the program for 2 weeks under the tutelage of journalist Dodai Stewart

Kaufman Music Center Summerfest 2024- 2025

Harlem Quartet Workshop at Music Mountain 2023-2025

ARCO Youth Orchestra Festival 2018-2026

Aspen International Music Festival 2024-2025

accepted, could not attend due to scheduling conflicts

Bowdoin International Music Festival 2023-2024

- Summer piano student
- Performed in solo and chamber music recitals

Selected Attendee (1 of 8), Valissima Institute for Young Female Conductors 2022

The Conducting Institute, Conducting Participant

accepted, could not attend due to scheduling conflicts

Leadership and Extracurricular Activities

In Her Words, Co-Founder and President 2024-present

In Her Words is a global creative writing mentorship reaching girls across 7 states and 3 countries. Through this project, I organized free programs in libraries, empowering underrepresented girls to express their voices through creative writing and journalism. I also started a podcast, interviewing renowned women journalists such as those who work at The Washington Post, CNN, and ESPN.

Conductor 2024-present

- NYYS Conducting Program
- Harlem Quartet Workshop at Music Mountain (assistant conductor)
- The Conducting Institute Summer Participant (**accepted, could not attend due to scheduling conflicts**)

In Tune Contigo, Founder and Director 2024-present

In Tune Contigo is an organization with a mission to unite Cuban and American musicians by breaking barriers, aiming to promote cultural exchange. Through virtual collaborations, interviews with successful Cuban artists, and video exchanges between Cuban and American students, we've created a space where young artists can gain inspiration and see one another as peers.

Back To Bach (Regional Director) 2024-2025

I help lead outreach events at local schools to promote music education among children and played an active role in recruiting new members for the Bergen County chapter, expanding student engagement and participation in the program.

Dwight-Englewood Selected Sophomore Ambassador, HOBY Youth Leadership Program 2025

9th and 11th Grade Class Representative 2023-2024, 2025-2026

- Worked in both the School Life and Technology Initiative

Lead Vocalist, Pianist, & President, Jazz Rock 2025-present

President & Founder, Bible Study Club 2024-present

- Led weekly meetings
- Managed social media account
- Recruited 80+ members
- Prepared activities for our school's Spring Carnival

- Organized school-wide events, including a Christmas event and an Easter Egg Hunt

President, Dwight Englewood Chamber Music Society 2025-present

- Managed social media account
- Brought group to advance in CMS competition (finalist performance at Alice Tully Hall)
- Increased membership

Editor-in-chief, Spectrum (School Newspaper) 2025-present

Staff, Calliope (School Literary Magazine)

- Columbia Press Association National Gold Crown Award (contributing writer)

Peer Tutor (1/20 selected) 2025-present

Pen & Quill Operations Coordinator(2026) 2024-present

- Ensuring timely responses and follow-ups on all incoming emails
- Acting as a point of contact for team and external communication
- Maintaining a highly organized system for tracking logistical tasks, deadlines, and documentation
- Overseeing the organization and management of the Google Drive
- Supporting clear and efficient communication across staff

Co- Principal Cellist (year-round) & Teacher's Assistant of the Arco Youth Orchestra 2019-2024

Juventus Pro Musica, Chamber Program 2023

New Jersey Recruitment Director/Piano Tutor, DoReMi Project 2025-present

Selected Fellow, Artemisia Foundation (Akademie at Juilliard, 1 of 10) 2024-present

Research

Conformity and Resistance: The Domestic Cold War and the American Struggle for Freedom (accepted 2026, JRHS/30% acceptance rate)
https://www.journalresearchhs.org/_files/ugd/ebf144_7bd39a148cbd4676a81c30f079d9c74d.pdf

The Making of a Racial Divide: Black-Korean Tensions and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots (pending publication 2026, JRHS/30% acceptance rate)

Buck v. Bell: When The Supreme Court Endorsed Sterilization
National History Day, State Qualifier

The Cognitive Effects of Listening To Different Genres of Background Music on Academic Performance
(Dwight-Englewood School research paper)

Work Experience

Ban Ki-Moon Foundation (Intern) 2024-2025

1) Inaugural Global SDG Youth Advocate (1/17 selected)
    - Fundraised $2,750 for grassroots SDG initiatives in Africa in one month, using Korean skills to make a video to get donors in South Korea
    - Participated in project pitching and training
2) SDG Emerging Policy Leaders Program *selected but could not attend due to scheduling conflicts*

Englewood Historical Society (Intern)

1) Started an inventory system
2) Helped with organizational and technological tasks
3) Helped with grant writing and reseearching

Music Awards and Honors

National YoungArts (2026)
Winner, Classical Piano

CMS Competition Finalist (2026)
Performance at Alice Tully Hall

Hired as a pianist for HBO's "*And Just Like That*" (2024)

Guest Soloist: Havana Chamber Orchestra (2023), Arco Youth Orchestra (2024), Ensemble 212 Orchestra (2025), Lancaster Symphony Orchestra (2025), Bravura Philharmonic Orchestra (2025)

Ensemble 212 Concerto Competition (2024)
Cash Prize and First Prize Winner, Senior Division
Recorded Florence Price Concerto in One Movement with Orchestra

Juilliard Pre-College Piano Concerto Competition (2025)
Alternate Winner

Coltman Chamber Music Competition (2025)
Semi-Finalist, one of ten groups selected internationally

VITAS International Music Competition (2024)
Scholarship Winner, $400

Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition (2025)
Qualified as a Quarter-Finalist, could not attend due to scheduling conflicts

Great Composers Competition (2025)
First Prize Winner, Best Mozart Performance

Kaufman Music Center International Piano Competition (2024)
Senior Division Semi-Finalist

Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center Competition (2024)
Semi-Finalist

Charleston International Piano Competition (2025)
Second Prize Winner

International Grande Music Competition (2025)
Second Prize Winner, no first prize awarded

Lancaster Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition (2025)
Finalist, $500 cash award

IMM Concorso (2021)
First Prize and Grand Prix Winner, Tres Gracias Trio

NYYVC (2020)
First Prize and Grand Prix Winner, Tres Gracias Trio

ENKOR International Competition (2021)
First Prize and Grand Prix Winner, Tres Gracias Trio

Bella Grande International Competition (2021)
First Prize and Grand Prix Winner, Tres Gracias Trio

CAIC International Competition (2021)
First Prize and Grand Prix Winner, Tres Gracias Trio

CAI Competition (2025)
Second Prize Winner, Soloist and Chamber categories

Nordmann and Bachauer Scholarship Competition (2020)
Competitor, one of nine selected from Juilliard Pre-College

Writing Awards and Honors

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

- **National Gold Medal**, Critical Essay
- Gold Key (Poetry)
- Gold Key (Personal Essay/Memoir)
- Honorable Mention (Journalism)
- Honorable Mention (Poetry)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), First Class Distinction Award (2025)

Top 15 percent of entries to the 2024-25 Tiny Memoir Contest, NY Times (2025)

Additional Honors

NSLI-Y Semi-Finalist (Korea)