Eskolta School Research and Design is dedicated to helping at-risk adolescents who have struggled in school in the past. We work with public school educators to examine data and jointly redesign and pilot systems and structures to personalize student learning.
Necessity is the mother of invention

- **1970s**: First alternative transfer schools founded in New York City – Satellite, City-As-School, and Boro Academies

- **1980s**: Partnership schools founded: Manhattan Comprehensive (with CDI) and South Brooklyn Community (with GSS)

- **2000s**: Parthenon Study identifies 140,000 disengaged and at-risk kids. Mayor’s office creates a new funding stream enabling the opening of 18 new transfer schools on an innovative model
The Current Landscape

Who? How? Where?

• 52 transfer style schools currently in NYC, serving 12,000 students

• Eskolta is the leading organization in NYC working with these schools – through direct service and our annual conference

• The most successful schools register graduation rates of **50-70%** for students who would otherwise have graduation rates of approximately **23%**.
A Repository of Learning on Supporting OAUC Youth
A Repository of Learning

- Student-centered scheduling systems
- Introductory course content
- Blended learning
- Advisory programs
- Competency-based learning systems
- Common Core mastery rubrics

Study

Convene

Innovate

Student-centered scheduling systems
Introductory course content
Blended learning
Advisory programs
Competency-based learning systems
Common Core mastery rubrics
From Hattie (2009) review of 50,000 education studies:

• Frequent (and quality) feedback from teachers who care

• Student **self assessment** against high expectations

• Formative evaluation data on students for teachers

Farrington (2012) review of adolescent development highlights 3 core mindsets:

• **Effort leads to ability;** I can learn from my mistakes

• School is a place where **I belong** and where adults care about me

• Goals in school have **value to me** and my future
Eskolta’s Principles of Strong Schools

- Strength-based culture
- Feedback and assessment
- Data-guided leadership
- Pathways to success
Feedback for Growth

Develop strong feedback and assessment processes for students to transparently reflect on their own progress and set goals against clear expectations.
Five practical strategies:

- Define 5 to 12 schoolwide skills for all students
- Structures so that staff discuss these skills regularly
- Rubrics and grading policy that make these transparent
- Tools for two-way feedback, used at least once a month
- Assessments that allow for 11-12 grade level of skill
School Experience + Research

Feedback to students and back

+ Student self-assessment of learning toward goals
+ Effort leads to ability; I can learn from my mistakes
+ I am aware of and understand what my learning goals are

Eskolta Principle #1: Feedback & Assessment

Develop strong feedback and assessment processes for students to transparently reflect on their own progress and set goals against clear expectations.
Pathways to Success

Design visualized and customized pathways to success consisting of school programming and schedules that enable students to progress, despite difficulty, on a path forward.
Common introductory experience to re-engage as learners

Redefine grade levels: intro, year 1, near graduate

Student-centered scheduling by skills and needs

Visual that shows staff and students trajectory and expectations
Student self-assessment against high expectations

+ Goals in school have value to me and my future

+ I am aware of and understand what my learning goals are

+ Avoid repeating a grade

We help schools design **pathways to success** consisting of school programming and schedules that enable students to progress, despite difficulty, on a path forward.
Data-Guided Leadership

Design data-guided leadership that gives adults the opportunity to review student data and their own practice, then adjust in response to the specific areas where students struggle.
Data-Guided Leadership

What does this look like in practice?

• “Data is the beginning, not the end…”

• Teachers and counselors working with the same students need time and structure to conference

• Data needs to come out of those conferences which allows for comparisons and groupings according to patterns

• Use daily data to prioritize leadership decisions and create structures
## Data-Guided Leadership

What does this look like in a school?

Create data collection tools that are easy to use and accessible to staff.

Use data to identify trends in real time.

[Excel spreadsheet](#) showing data for student attendance, with notes indicating how data can be used to prioritize action plans.
School Experience + Research

Formative evaluation data for teachers on student needs

+ Effort leads to ability; I can learn from my mistakes

+ Teacher understanding of student developmental level

= Eskolta Principle #3: Data-Guided Leadership

We help schools design data-guided leadership that gives adults the opportunity to review student data and their own practice, then adjust in response to the specific areas where students struggle.
Strength-Based Culture

We help schools design strength-based culture in which adults communicate transparent high expectations and respect for students’ ability to work towards goals that matter to them.
Strength-Based Culture

What does this look like in practice?

• No student should ever be allowed to become invisible: be sure that 1 adult speaks with every student every day they are or should be in school, preferably within 1/2 hour of start of school day

• Use self assessments followed by 1:1 discussions for students to think about their own mindsets and scholarly skills

• Understanding the students' perspective is more important than being cool. Listen. Identify obstacles. Enforce incremental consequences

• Consistent focus on key mindsets and values is key. Don't just list your values, discuss students progress on them at least 1x/ term
Strength-Based Culture

What does this look like in a school?

1. On a scale of 1 to 4 how much effort did you put into this project? (1 being the least amount of effort and 4 being the most)
   
   _1_   _2_   _3_   _4_

2. Based on the rating you have given yourself above, explain the level of effort you put into the task.

Simple student self-assessments that promote key academic behaviors
Value Statements

Just as school-wide skills are central to feedback and assessment, value statements are central to strength-based culture.

The Juan Morel Campos Community is

Founded on Trust.
Community members have confidence in, believe in, and rely on one another.

Dedicated to Safety.
Community members respect and accept differences, and are mindful of their own wellbeing as well as the well-being of others.

Committed to Justice.
Every member has a right to be in the community. All members seek fairness, peace, and equity.

Make values clear, transparent, and public
Staffing Structures

Assistance in developing job descriptions and hiring practices helps get the right people on board.

Align job descriptions to school values
Approaches to Misbehavior

Clear policy documents a part of schools shifting their thinking away from discipline and toward support.

Develop incremental consequences
Communication Protocols

Communication protocols help educators to discuss and identify how to support individual students.

Focus the conversations and document
Supporting Research

Ability to respond thoughtfully to classroom behavior

+ School is a place where I belong and where adults care about me

+ Goals in school have value to me and my future

Eskolta Principle #4: Strength-Based Culture

We help schools design strength-based culture in which adults communicate transparent high expectations and respect for students’ ability to work towards goals that matter to them.
**Eskolta’s Principles of Strong Schools**

**Strength-based culture** in which adults communicate high expectations and respect for students’ ability to work towards goals they value.

**Data-guided leadership** that enables adults to review student data and adjust practice in response to the specific areas where students struggle.

**Feedback and assessment** processes through which students can reflect on their own progress and set goals against clear expectations.

**Pathways to success** yielding programming and transparent maps that enable students to progress, despite difficulty, on a path forward.
Implications for Others

*Over aged, Under-credited, disengaged students are not a singular NYC issue. What can we take away and apply to other practitioners?*

- Think about the 4 elements. Pick one that you may not be focusing on currently, but you feel has relevance to your experience/school setting. Jot down 3 ideas for application or questions about that element.
- Partner with the person next to you. Share out you 3 ideas/questions.
- Through a 3-minute discussion, pare it down to 1 actionable step you will take from this.
- Share out
For further information

- Visit our website www.eskolta.org
- View/share our introduction videos
- View/share our sample reports and tools
- Contact me:
  Tom McKenna, Director of Strategic Initiatives
tmckenna@eskolta.org