

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16



eskolta
We help schools learn.

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Changing Culture from Desk to District



At Eskolta we are working year by year, school by school, classroom by classroom to change the culture of education.

What is the culture of education today? Too often it is a culture of anxiety. Youth who are harshly judged as failures are monitored by adults who feel disrespected by policies that judge them on test scores in districts that are disparaged as failing. From desk to district, education suffers from a culture of failure.

At Eskolta we are changing this.

In our school-improvement projects alone, we worked with 253 educators in 2015–16 to help them become empowered and reflective practitioners, spearheading change instead of being swept aside by it, solving problems instead of being named as a part of them. In our district-level work we reached thousands more by advising and exploring key policy with the NYC Department of Education.

Through the 3,136 students reached by our improvement projects in 2015–16, we showed how teenagers labeled “at-risk” can instead be labeled “with hope,” as the practices we developed with educators helped those youth believe in their own potential and the value of learning, teaching them to focus on the skills they were developing and the pathways they have to success.

This year, we invested more than ever developing the programming and materials that harness six years of work to serve the schools and students we are supporting. It is an investment that has paid off in our continued and growing impact. I invite you to learn more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Michael Rothman". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, looping "M" and a long, sweeping "R".

Michael Rothman
Founder and Executive Director

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Cover photos, clockwise from top: Educators at an Academic and Personal Behaviors session cohosted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Eskolta staff Catherine Pratt and Cara Frattasi at a staff meeting, transfer school students at Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School during a group discussion, AP English teacher Alex DiAddezio of Bronx Bridges High School, Jive Poetic of Dance Theatre, Etc. facilitating a workshop at the Transfer School Conference, students from P.S. / I.S. 266 engaging in small group work.

WHO WE ARE

Staff

Aaron Boyle, Senior School Design Partner
Damian Bendersky, Data Designer
Ruth Cosse, Program Intern
Amanda Crowell, PhD, Senior Researcher
Mike Davis, Accounts Manager
Nicole DeFino, Research and Design Facilitator
Cara Frattasi, Project Associate
Jessica Furer, Associate Director
Dierdre Faughey, Communications Associate
Katie Gleason, Program Manager
Savanna Honerkamp-Smith, Lead Designer / Project Associate
Emily Kleinman, Senior School Design Partner
P.J. Podesta, Project Associate
Jodie Ly, Research Associate / Office Associate
Tom McKenna, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Jasmine Nasser, Program Intern
Catherine Pratt, Program Intern
Michael Rothman, Executive Director
Richard Shu, Program Intern
Alicia Wolcott, Senior School Design Partner

Board Members

Afsheen Afshar, Managing Director, JPMorgan Chase
Sanda Balaban, Executive Director, Governor's Committee on Scholastic Achievement
Kelli Doss, Chief Talent Officer, iMentor
Cristin Frodella, Head of Marketing, Google Education
Doug Knecht, Executive Director, Bank Street Education Center
Dan Siracuse, Chief Financial Officer, TruMid Financial
David Yeager, Psychology Faculty, University of Texas at Austin



SCHOOL-IMPROVEMENT IMPACT

SCHOOL-IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS BRING
SUSTAINABLE CHANGE TO EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

EDUCATORS

SATISFIED
WITH THE WORK



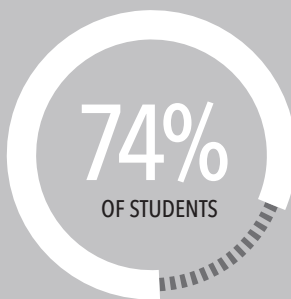
IMPROVED
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES



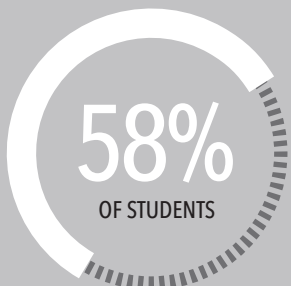
IMPROVED EDUCATION
PRACTICES



STUDENTS



INCREASED
PERSISTENCE,
PROBLEM-
SOLVING, OR
COMMUNICATION
SKILLS



IMPROVED
ACADEMIC
MINDSETS AND
BELIEF IN
THEMSELVES AS
LEARNERS

"Eskolta would ask a lot of questions that would open up our thinking and a pathway forward to goals and identifying goals. By asking questions, they led us to identify what we wanted and then documented this."

—CHESTER ASHER, PRINCIPAL,
ROADS CHARTER TRANSFER SCHOOL 2 (BRONX)

WHERE WE WORK

Manhattan

- Art and Design High School
- City-As-School
- Community Action School
- Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School
- Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics
- High School for Environmental Studies
- Innovation Diploma Plus
- J.H.S. 167 Robert F. Wagner
- Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School
- Manhattan Early College School for Advertising
- Murray Hill Academy
- P.S. 188 The Island School
- Pace High School
- The Opportunity Charter School
- The Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce

Brooklyn

- Abraham Lincoln High School
- ACORN Community High School
- Brooklyn Bridge Academy
- Brooklyn Frontiers High School
- Bushwick School for Social Justice
- East Brooklyn Community High School
- High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology
- International High School at Prospect Heights
- Juan Morel Campos Secondary School
- Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School
- New Heights Middle School
- P.S. 089 Cypress Hills
- Park Slope Collegiate
- Professional Pathways High School
- Research and Service High School
- ROADS Charter School 1
- South Brooklyn Community High School
- Urban Dove Charter Team School
- West Brooklyn Community High School
- Williamsburg Charter High School
- Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design

Staten Island

- Staten Island School of Civic Leadership

The Bronx

- Bronx Arena High School
- Bronx Bridges High School
- Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics
- Bronx Haven High School
- Bronx Leadership Academy II High School
- Bronx School of Law and Finance
- Cornerstone Academy for Social Action
- Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School
- Health Opportunities High School
- Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School
- Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy International High School
- Metropolitan High School
- Mott Haven Community High School
- New Directions Secondary School
- ROADS Charter School 2
- Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship
- The Bronx School of Young Leaders

Queens

- Albert Shanker School for Visual and Performing Arts
- Flushing International High School
- J.H.S. 217 Robert A. Van Wyck
- Martin Van Buren High School
- Newtown High School
- North Queens Community High School
- Queens United Middle School
- Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Education High School
- Village Academy
- Voyages Preparatory High School
- Voyages Prep South

Key

- Introductory Sessions
- School-Improvement Projects
- Research and Innovation Projects

"Eskolta has a really nice way of being able to get people to think about the important things and come to some decisions."

—DAVE DECAMP, PRINCIPAL,
PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS HIGH
SCHOOL

Project Type	Schools	Enrollment	% Black or Hispanic	% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
Improvement	24	8,607	84%	84%
Innovation	13	9,258	67%	77%

"Eskolta is able to develop both qualitative and quantitative tools that measure progress...and are creative in devising strategies to measure student growth."

—MELISSA BIRNBAUM, RESOURCE COORDINATOR,
CITY-AS-SCHOOL



Eskolta Senior School Design Partner Alicia Wolcott listens to teachers share their experiences in the APB Advanced Institute.



Participants in the APB Advanced Institute.

"The Institute has been the best PD series I've attended because it provides tools that result in actionable, school-wide changes."

**-PARTICIPATING TEACHER, ACADEMIC AND
PERSONAL BEHAVIORS INSTITUTE**

CITYWIDE INSTITUTES FOR EDUCATORS

UNIQUE PARTNERSHIPS INTRODUCE EDUCATORS TO RESEARCH-BASED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In 2015–16, Eskolta led two Citywide Institutes providing deep professional development for educators in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. The Transfer School Common Core Institute served ten schools helping overage, under-credited students. The Academic and Personal Behaviors (APB) Advanced Institute served eight schools focusing on efforts to develop student mindsets for school success, and the APB Institute introduced a larger group of educators to these same concepts. Through these Institutes, our work is informing and changing the way educators across the district think about student learning.

The Academic and Personal Behaviors Institute: Changing mindsets across New York City schools

Educators from 29 middle and high schools participated in the second cohort of the APB Institute. This professional-development series provides training and resources on the academic mindsets and noncognitive strategies that research has shown are critical to postsecondary success. Participating teachers overwhelmingly agreed that participation in the Institute had resulted in a change in their practice. Notably, 84 percent indicated they were more actively creating a classroom environment to promote learning mindsets.

**IN 2015–16, ESKOLTA'S CITYWIDE
INSTITUTES
REACHED**

42

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS ENROLLING

21,767
STUDENTS

SCHOOL- IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

HELPING SCHOOLS INNOVATE IN HOW THEY SUPPORT
THEIR MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH



Students in a class that was redesigned through an improvement project at Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School.

Jill Chaifetz Transfer School: Redesigning student feedback

For the last two years, Eskolta and a pilot team of teachers at Jill Chaifetz Transfer School worked together to co-design innovative new conferencing tools and structures to foster dialogue between teachers and advisors and to promote student empowerment.

After calibrating designs through a series of tests and iterations with a small group of students, the Eskolta and JCTS team rolled out a communication protocol and a student conferencing tool to the whole staff. Now these are helping 200 students reach goals and problem solve while developing shared understanding among staff and students.

“By working with Eskolta, teachers grew in their practice and felt empowered to make changes in their classroom. They were equipped with research and tools that were informed by best practices.”

—SHARON AIUVALASIT, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, URBAN DOVE TEAM CHARTER

"Eskolta staff were able to help guide work and keep moving it forward. Eskolta facilitators were good at holding us accountable."

-NAZEEMA BABOOLALL, TEACHER,
NEW DIRECTIONS SECONDARY SCHOOL

IN 2015-16, ESKOLTA HELPED

253

EDUCATORS RESHAPE LEARNING FOR

3,136
STUDENTS



A teacher supports a student engaged in an improvement project at Bronx Haven High School.

ESKOLTA FELLOWS

MICHAEL WOLACH, a change agent in New York City schools



Michael Wolach, Teacher, Jill Chaifetz Transfer School

In the fall of 2015, Eskolta launched a new fellowship to train school- and district-based educators to lead the school-improvement process. Our first cohort of seven Eskolta Fellows spent the year learning the methods and approaches behind Eskolta's successful work for the past seven years. The fellows have been charged with becoming agents of change in our schools, armed with new practices in action research, improvement science, and inquiry-driven systems thinking.

Michael Wolach, an experienced teacher and school founder, has followed a trajectory of development and growth with Eskolta:

- Michael participates in a School Design Project with Eskolta
- Michael presents at Eskolta's annual Transfer School Conference
- Michael launches a second School Design Project coached by Eskolta
- Michael becomes an inaugural Eskolta Fellow

Why the Eskolta Fellowship?

"I know that anything Eskolta does is centered on school needs. This fellowship really was a blessing because I was able to merge what I was learning through the fellowship with my everyday work, whether that is a meeting protocol or a theoretical approach to piloting an initiative."



Michael applies practices from the Eskolta Fellows curriculum in team meetings with his colleagues at Jill Chaifetz Transfer School.



Research and Design Facilitators Nicole DeFino, a former transfer school assistant principal, and Aaron Boyle, a former transfer school science teacher, co-designed the first year of the Eskolta Fellows program.

DISTRICT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

BRINGING INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING TO
INFORM DISTRICT POLICY

Teacher Recruitment and Quality: Action research that is reshaping teacher leadership

Eskolta School Research and Design is unique in the education nonprofit space in that our research directly impacts our design work, just as our design work impacts our research. We are action researchers interested in fixing and iterating on solutions, not being passive observers.

Anne Williams, Senior Director of the NYC Department of Education's Office of Teaching Recruitment and Quality, knows Eskolta brings something to her department that other national research organizations do not: a deep understanding of the intersection between the work of schools and the research around it. In 2015–16, Eskolta compiled a series of research studies for Williams's office on how to leverage teacher leadership to improve some of New York City's most struggling schools.

AS A RESEARCHER FOR NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS, ESKOLTA AMASSED

7,915 SURVEY
RESPONSES,
49 FOCUS
GROUPS,
29 IN-DEPTH
INTERVIEWS WITH
EDUCATORS.
AND

*"Eskolta pushes the thinking in my office on
how to ask questions differently and makes
their thinking grow."*

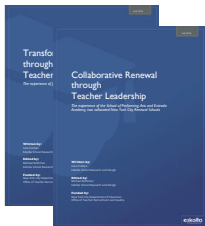
—ANNE WILLIAMS, SENIOR DIRECTOR, NYCDOE OFFICE OF TEACHING RECRUITMENT AND QUALITY

2015–16 PUBLICATIONS



TRANSFER SCHOOL COMMON CORE INSTITUTE REPORTS: Accelerating Learning for Overage, Under-Credited Adolescents

Building Towards Mastery
Placing Student Feedback at the Center of Teaching and Learning
Higher-Order Thinking through Daily Academic Discussion
Strengthening Persistence in Math and Beyond



TEACHER LEADERSHIP CASE STUDIES:

Transformative Instruction through Teacher Leadership
Collaborative Renewal through Teacher Leadership



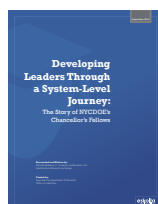
CAREER COMPETENCIES FELLOWS REPORTS: Career Aspirational Practices at Three Schools

The Perseverance to Succeed in School and Career: I.S. 126
Inspiring through Internships: Flushing International High School
Igniting the Spark of Career Aspiration: Thomas A. Edison High School



TEACHER LEADERSHIP REPORTS: Feedback from the Field

Teacher Leadership Support Structures
The Emerging Teacher Leaders Program 2016
Highlights from the Emerging Teacher Leaders Program
Teacher Leadership at Renewal Schools



CHANCELLOR'S FELLOWS REPORT:

Developing Leaders Through a System-Level Journey:
The Story of NYCDOE's Chancellor's Fellows

BUILDING COMMUNITY

TRANSFER SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Eskolta's sixth transfer school conference, sponsored in partnership with the New York City Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Readiness, remains the single largest gathering of educators in schools dedicated to serving overage, under-credited students in New York City. More than 900 educators and support staff representing 38 of the City's 55 transfer schools attended more than 75 workshops and panels designed to speak directly to the needs and interests of the transfer school community. As in every year, the vast majority of workshops were led by transfer school educators for transfer school educators, a community sharing its high-quality practices.



Monique Morris, keynote speaker at the 2016 conference.



Educators engage in a group discussion about ways to support students who are dealing with trauma.



Participants listen during a workshop on using spoken word poetry to address literacy needs.

"I can't say enough about Eskolta's Transfer School Conference. It's a resource-rich, beneficial, good networking space."

—JORDAIN ADDISON, TEACHER, NEW DIRECTIONS
SECONDARY SCHOOL



A transfer school educator shares her practice with workshop attendees.

"As transfer schools, we share unique challenges and it's always good to sharpen our tools together."

—PARTICIPANT, TRANSFER SCHOOL CONFERENCE

FINANCIALS

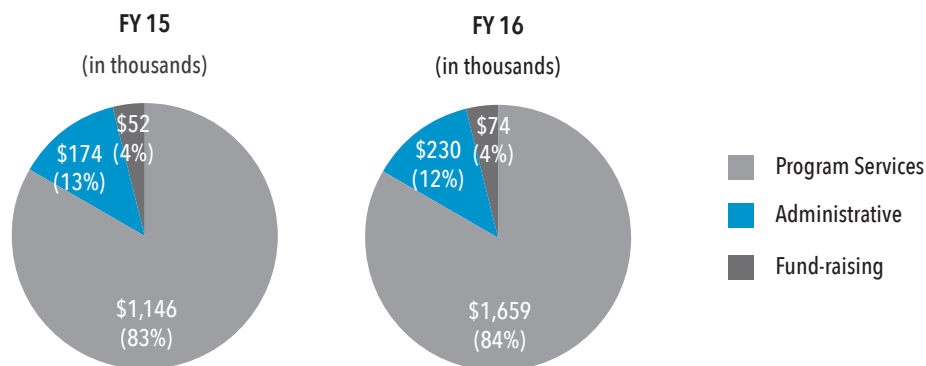
Revenues (in thousands) – Accrual Basis

	FY15	FY16
Contracts with public agencies	\$1,130	\$1,453
Contracts with private funders	\$639	\$372
Total Revenue	\$1,769	\$1,825
Surplus/Deficit	\$397	(\$138)

Net Assets (in thousands) – Accrual Basis

	FY15	FY16
Start of Year	\$550	\$947
Surplus/Deficit	\$397	(\$138)
End of Year	\$947	\$809

Expense by Category – Accrual Basis



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Eskolta would like to thank our gracious supporters in 2015–16:

- **The New York City Department of Education**
- **The Fund for the City of New York**
- **The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching**
- **The National Center for Civic Innovation**
- **SCO Family of Services**
- **Community Foundation of New Jersey**



P.S. / I.S. 266 teacher Pedro Medina helps a student.



Assistant Principal Kristen O'Brian looks on as teacher Erin Lalor of Albert Shanker School for Visual and Performing Arts shares her classroom intervention with teachers from other schools during an Advanced Academic and Personal Behaviors Institute meeting.

