A YEAR IN REVIEW

Annual Report 2016–17
Words from the Founder

At the founding of Eskolta, we asked if we could redesign urban public schools to be motivating, empowering, and personalized for students who have been left behind. This was not only an issue of helping vulnerable youth, it was an issue of righting wrongs: of recognizing that too many children suffer because of economic inequality, racism, gender biases, and societal injustices that have saddled them with burdens that should not be placed on any child’s shoulders.

Eight years later, the impact of our efforts stretches across New York City. We have helped 1,000 educators reach 20,000 underserved students—in schools where 84 percent of students are black or Hispanic and 84 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. From a high school in the Bronx where students who once felt disempowered by teacher feedback now use that feedback to gradually build their skills, to a middle school in Queens where students who once thought that they just weren’t the “smart” kids now work harder and smarter because they believe they can, to a transfer school in Brooklyn where teachers revise and improve lessons based on close observation of student skills.

In 2016–17, we engaged in 34 design projects to help schools transform education for their most struggling students. By arming teachers and counselors with the latest research on the science of learning and development, our teams helped them turn knowledge into action. We acted as the strategists, analysts, and facilitators to make change possible.

But it is not only up to us to make this change. Knowing that teachers and counselors cannot succeed without support from the district, in 2016–17 we expanded our work. As research partner and strategic coaches, we worked with leaders in the school district to help them support school improvement and teacher leadership in hundreds of schools.

At the heart of our work is the belief that every child should be able to access a quality education that fosters their individual potential to succeed, and that the adults in school have powerful influence to help them make this happen. With thoughtful support of our partners, we will continue to empower educators to help students who have struggled the most reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Michael Rothman
Founder and Executive Director
Overview of Programs

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
School leaders and educators used the latest research on the science of learning and development to re-engage students who had fallen behind. In 2016–17, Eskolta’s work helped 218 educators to redesign practices to be motivating, empowering, and student centered for 3,508 students.

NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITIES
Educators at 20 schools used research-based school improvement methods to address specific needs of their students while connecting and exchanging effective practices across a network of colleagues tackling the same problem of practice.

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING
Coaches and professional-development providers from the school district received training, coaching, and guidance on school improvement strategy and methods. A total of 45 coaches participated in School Improvement Fellows or engaged one-on-one with a Senior School Design Partner.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
Research projects helped education partners explore and rethink how educators are empowered to drive positive change in the classroom. By straddling change in school with change in the district, these efforts help to translate change in the lives of some students to change in the lives of thousands.

COMMUNITY BUILDING
The Seventh Annual Transfer School Conference brought together more than 950 teachers, students, alumni, and district and organizational leaders who shared a commitment to helping disengaged youth reignite a love for learning.
In School Improvement Projects, the talent of educators, guided by the latest research, drives changes in practices from the classroom all the way to the school level. In 2016–17, Eskolta teams worked side by side with principals, teachers, and counselors at 17 schools—helping 218 educators to reach 3,508 students.

At ELLIS Preparatory Academy, which serves 16-to-21-year-old English Language Learners in the Bronx, Eskolta helped a teacher team rethink how they give feedback to help students monitor progress toward their own learning goals. As a result, students who had once shied away from feedback were motivated to build their skills, revise their work, and engage as learners.
In 2016–17, Eskolta worked with a team at Voyages South Preparatory High School, a transfer school in Queens serving students who are overage and under-credited, to deepen their understanding of the skills of determining importance. One of the tools the team explored was I.C.E. (Introduce, Cite, Explain), a strategy for students to break down details in text, pull evidence out of reading, and explain their ideas. Chyna Hardy, an eighteen-year-old student, talks about her experience.

**What did things look like at your previous school?**
In my old school, the teachers were not really interested in me and my learning. It’s different here. The teachers give me chances to ask questions and make time to explain things to me. I don’t feel like I have to work alone anymore.

**What do you find most helpful about I.C.E.?**
I.C.E. is most helpful for me because it gives me a guideline to write—it’s a one-two-three-step process. When I write an essay, I make sure now to have a clear introduction, cite evidence from the reading, and explain my ideas. I didn’t really know how to exactly do that before.

**Has your writing changed since you’ve been here?**
Before I was unmotivated and I wasn’t into writing. Now being here and getting introduced to I.C.E., I like writing much more. Another thing that I’ve learned to do through using I.C.E. is instead of jumping into the reading right away, I would look at the questions of the assignment first, and this helps me to put things into context and to remember the key things I’m supposed to be looking for in the reading.

**What are you thinking will come after school?**
I already have two scholarships to go to college. I have one from Buffalo State College and one from Queens Community College. I want to study business—I play basketball too, so maybe something with sports and business.
Collaboration is key to deepening and sustaining change and spreading good practices from schools to systems. In 2016–17, Eskolta partnered with the New York City Department of Education to facilitate the Advanced Academic and Personal Behaviors Institute (AAPBI) and the Career Counseling Initiative, two networked improvement communities. Through this effort, 95 educators used research-based, school-improvement methods to address specific needs of their students while connecting and exchanging effective practices across the network. In AAPBI, for example, nine schools worked together on the challenge of improving students’ sense of value and purpose of learning.

**Networked Improvement Communities**

**Building School Communities to Address Problems of Practice around Student Needs**

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**Impact**

**Educators Report Improvement On...**

- How they codify and share what works: 96%
- How they create environments that promote learning mindsets: 96%

**Students Show Improvements In...**

- How they persist despite challenges: 66%

Figures on improvement are based on data collected from a sample of respondents at projects involving related practices.
In the Advanced Academic and Personal Behaviors Institute, Eskolta worked with Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship, a middle school in one of the poorest districts in the Bronx, through the to increase student persistence in the face of rigorous learning challenges. Anlois Penolo, a seventh-grader, talks about his experience.

**How has this year been different from last year?**
This year we don't have to go through some of the systems that we went through in sixth grade. Now we know what our teachers expect of us, so we can really focus on our work. I was failing math in the middle of last year, but then I learned to get better.

**How did your teacher help you get better in math?**
We reviewed my grades from fifth grade and [they] gave feedback on ways I can improve, and it actually made me realize that I was good in math and made me question why I was failing. I kept working with my teacher and asked her for extra help. That process helped me a lot and changed my mindset about math. Now I’m in seventh grade and I’m already doing better.

**How is the feedback you’re getting helping you?**
One of the things that has helped me a lot is getting to conference with my teachers. We have those moments where we have student-to-teacher meetings to check in on our writing and the progress we’re making. I’m not bad at writing but getting feedback like that is very helpful.

**How has your writing changed from before to now?**
Well, I first discovered I love writing in second grade but I didn’t speak much English because I came from the Dominican Republic. People would tell me, “Please speak proper English.” I used to mix up my *w*, *m*, and *v* but I just kept practicing and I got better, and my writing got better. Last year we had a lot of writing and reading. I even wrote a whole story about a hero, but I didn’t have a villain in my story because I feel like you don’t have to fight a bad guy to be a hero.

**Has this changed how you persist through challenges?**
I have learned to not be shy and to speak up for myself. For example, because I asked for help in math and got the one-on-one feedback with my teacher, I got better.
In 2016–17, a total of 45 district and school staff received coaching and guidance to turn their support to schools into strategic school improvement. For example, when the mayor of New York announced his Equity and Excellence agenda for education reform, a chief promise was to provide college access to every student. In 2016–17, the first year of the College Access for All initiative, the school district hired a team of former college counselors to help make this happen for 100 New York high schools. Eskolta led a school improvement fellows program, providing a series of training sessions to teach the coaches methods of school improvement.

**Leadership Capacity Building**

Spreading School Improvement Efforts by Training Agents of Change

**IMPACT**

- Empower educators to make change
- Facilitate iterative adaptation of work
- Use research and data to inform improvement
- Codify and share practices

2016–17 School Improvement Fellows from College Access for All with Eskolta Senior School Design Partner Nicole DeFino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COACHING FOR</th>
<th>REACHING</th>
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<td>45 DISTRICT AND SCHOOL STAFF</td>
<td>500+ SCHOOLS</td>
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2016–17 Annual Report
Research projects helped our partners in the school district explore and rethink how educators are empowered to drive positive change. In one research partnership, Eskolta worked with New York City to study its innovative approach to fostering teacher leadership. In another partnership, our study of principals’ approaches to continuous learning is helping shape an ambitious effort across the district to promote continuous learning across the system.

It is impossible to re-engage students who are alienated by the system without changing the system itself. By straddling change in schools with change in the district, Eskolta translates change in the lives of some students to change in the lives of thousands.

2016–17 PUBLICATIONS

Beyond Incentives: Three Years of Cultivating Teacher Leadership Career Pathways in NYC Schools. Findings and Recommendations

Collaborating to Improve: Using the District Partnership Pilot and Distributed Leadership to Align Priorities in Teacher Leadership Work

Growing Academic Behaviors: How to Scale Up Classroom Practices for Teaching Mindsets

Finding Small Wins and Making a Large Impact: An Improvement Science Approach to Adult Learning at KAPPA International

From Knowledge to Action: Showcase and the Diffusion of Innovation

From Research to Practice: Supporting Student Achievement through Academic and Personal Behaviors

Showcasing Success: A Preliminary Study of the Experience of Three Schools Hosting Visits in the NYCDOE

Showcasing Success: Three Case Studies on the NYC Showcase Schools Program

Strengthening by Sharing: Creating Internal Coherence through the Showcase Schools Program
On June 8, 2017, nearly **950 district and organizational leaders, teachers, students, and alumni** attended the Seventh Annual New York City Transfer School Conference, an initiative of the NYC Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Readiness in partnership with Eskolta. Representing **38 transfer schools** that together serve more than 8,000 high school students who were once considered at risk of dropping out, educators participated in **more than 70 workshops, panels, and lectures** exploring a wide array of topics uniquely chosen to meet the needs of the transfer school community.

The conference keynote speaker, Dr. Christopher Emdin of Columbia University, passionately challenged listeners to engage deeply in their work: “Being in a transfer school means consistently being a revolutionary about the work... If your pedagogy is a replication of the system of oppression that [students] were pushed out of, you ain’t doing nothing.” Speaking from his own learning experiences as a teacher and an advocate, Emdin urged educators to consistently get to know the evolving culture of their students, however unfamiliar or uncomfortable that process may be.

**Community Building**
Connecting Educators to Examine the Critical Issue of Re-engaging Learners

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**IMPACT**

**THE 2017 NYC TRANSFER SCHOOL CONFERENCE BY THE NUMBERS:**

- **Attendees**: 948
- **Schools**: 38
- **Workshops, panels, and events**: 73
- **Student presenters**: 37
Change-Makers

On October 16, 2017, Eskolta held our first Change-Makers Cocktail Reception, celebrating the work of five phenomenal change makers making an impact on New York City education. With more than 150 attendees, the event brought together donors, media, nonprofits, and educators from around the city.

The event honored Tanell Pendleton, an English teacher who has worked at Bronx Haven High School for eight years; Michael Wolach, founding teacher and instructional coach at Jill Chaifetz Transfer School; Cristal Cruz, a graduate of Brooklyn Frontiers High School and group leader at Good Shepherd Services; and Jeff and Tricia Raikes, co-founders of the Raikes Foundation, who have established national initiatives such as the Mindset Scholars Network.

“Every day, I work to embody the idea that education promotes equality and lifts people out of poverty. It is an idea that is wholeheartedly embedded into my pedagogy.”

—Tanell Pendleton, 2017 Change-Maker
Supporters and Partners

Eskolta is grateful for the generous support of our partners and donors. Your generosity has made it possible for us to deepen school change efforts through our research, design projects, and fellows programs—helping students who had fallen behind reach their full potential. Thank you for your trust and partnership!

Our Partners

› Booth Ferris Foundation
› Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
› New York City Department of Education
› Queens Community House
› SCO Family of Services
› The Fund for Public Schools

Our Donors and Supporters

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› Brian Cohen
› Michael DeAddio
› Allison Devore and Ross Levinsky
› Kelli Doss
› Cornelius Finley
› Rachel Forsyth
› Cristin Frodella and Conor Sheridan
› Dana Guyet
› Brian Hale
› David Hermer
› Evan Herring
› JPMorgan Chase & Co.
› Rebecca Klein
› Doug Knecht
› Steven Konstadt
› David Levithan
› Jeffrey and Danielle Lumby
› Merilll Martin
› Chelsea and Jonathan Miller
› Shane Mulhern
› Alexandra and Matthew Murray
› Smita Narula
› Dan Nathan
› Laura Nichols
› Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
› Leonexy Oyola
› Tanell Pendleton
› Patricia Priolet
› Kartik Raghavan
› Raikes Foundation
› Dan Rothman
› David Rothman
› The Rothman Family
› Dan Siracuse
› Fred Steinke
› The Ready Foundation
› Kristen Thiede
› Jenny Tolan
› Sophia Tsororos
› Gretchen Wiker
› Stephan Winkler
› Jennifer Woodruff
Financials

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Current Assets  
FY17
Cash  $1,183,231
Accounts Receivable  $46,776
Prepaid expenses and other current assets  $16,266
Total Current Assets  $1,246,273
Fixed Assets  $56,684
Total Assets  $1,302,957

Liabilities and Net Assets
Total Liabilities  $16,322

Net Assets
Unrestricted  $1,175,885
Temporarily Restricted  $110,750
Total Net Assets  $1,286,635
Total Liabilities and Net Assets  $1,302,957

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenue and Support  
FY17
Program Service Revenue  $1,982,758
Unrestricted contributions and grants  $6,281
Interest Income  $2,751
Total Revenue and Contributions  $1,991,790

Expenses
Program Expenses  $1,592,621
Management and General  $160,653
Fundraising  $101,743
Total Expenses  $1,855,016

Change in unrestricted net assets  $136,774
Change in temporarily restricted net assets  $110,750
Net assets - Beginning of year  $1,039,111
Net assets - End of Year  $1,286,635

Figures may not add up to totals due to rounding
Who We Are

2016–17 Staff

Sara Arcia, Research and Writing Intern
Aaron Boyle, Senior School Design Partner
Mai Brand, Development Manager
Amanda Crowell, PhD, Senior Researcher
Ruth Cosse, Project Intern
Adonia Dale, Transfer School Alumni Fellow
Mike Davis, Accounts Manager
Nicole DeFino, Senior School Design Partner
Cara Frattasi, Research and Design Facilitator
Jamie Ferrel, Research and Design Facilitator
Jessica Furur, Associate Director
Dierdre Faughey, Research and Design Facilitator
Katie Gleason, Research and Design Facilitator
Savanna Honerkamp-Smith, Manager of Communications and Design
Emily Kleinman, Senior School Design Partner
Ben Lorr, Research and Design Facilitator
Tom McKenna, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Karenna Martin, Project Associate
Catherine Pratt, Research and Design Associate
Michael Rothman, Founder and Executive Director
Alicia Wolcott, Senior School Design Partner
Brian Zimbler, Project Associate

2016–17 Board Members

Afsheen Afshar, Managing Director, JPMorgan Chase
Sanda Balaban, Cofounder/Director, YVote and Civics Unplugged
Kelli Doss, Chief Talent Officer, iMentor
Cristin Frodella, CS Education, Google
Doug Knecht, Executive Director, Bank Street Education Center
Dan Siracuse, Chief Financial Officer, Trumid Financial
David Yeager, Psychology Faculty, University of Texas at Austin
Where We Work

The Bronx
- Bronx Arena High School
- Bronx Bridges High School
- Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics
- Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School
- Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School
- KIPP NYC College Prep
- Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy International High School (KAPPA)
- New Directions Secondary School
- Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship
- University Heights Secondary School

Brooklyn
- High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology
- Nelson Mandela High School
- P.S. 089 Cypress Hills
- Professional Pathways High School
- Research and Service High School
- South Brooklyn Community High School
- Transit Tech Career and Technical Education High School
- Urban Dove Team Charter School
- Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design

Manhattan
- Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School
- City-As-School
- Innovation Diploma Plus
- Murray Hill Academy

Queens
- Albert Shanker School for Visual and Performing Arts
- Information Technology High School
- John Adams High School
- Newcomers High School
- North Queens Community High School
- Queens Community House
- Voyages Prep South Queens
- Voyages Preparatory

Key
Site was engaged in...
- School improvement project
- Networked improvement project
- Both

Staten Island
- Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical Education High School