**2020–21 Eskolta Network Application**

***Applications Reviewed on a Rolling Basis. Due July 8, 2020.***

The Eskolta Network is an improvement community designed to connect educators in the shared challenge of transforming learning for all students. With the support of funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and in partnership with the Boston Compact, the Eskolta Network offers schools the opportunity to engage in a multi-year effort to build educators’ capacity to make meaningful, sustainable change in their school communities. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is having a dramatic impact on our schools and on the lives of Black, Latinx, and low-income youth, this Network brings together schools that are committed to fight against that impact and to foster equity.

**Our Network Aim and Approach**

Everyone in schools must transform school practices to respond to current health and safety needs. The aim of the Eskolta Network is for participating educators to ensure that in this moment and into the future, we maintain and increase the percentage of previously underserved Black, Latinx, and low-income high school students who graduate prepared for the future. To this end, we will track improvements in the number of students who (1) post a GPA above 3.0 or demonstrate a significant improvement over their past; (2) earn all of the credits expected in one year of high school or post large increases in course passing rate; and (3) enroll in and pass college-readiness level math and ELA courses.

To achieve this aim, school teams that join the Network will engage in a continuous improvement process and connect with colleagues in other Network schools who are grappling with similar challenges. Through this process, teams will

* Identify pressing needs and key problems of practice within their schools that align to core school goals
* Gather student perspectives and data to help them better understand the issues and how to address them
* Explore cognitive psychology research alongside practices from other schools that cultivate culturally sustaining practices, a strengths-based culture, and mastery-based learning
* Design and test prototype solutions that meet the current needs and potential of their schools within the current realities of the school day and structures
* Study and share lessons learned as they continually adjust and refine practices to make their schools communities of compassion, trust, and high expectations for their students

**Network Focus for 2020–21:** *Confronting Inequity and Developing Culturally Sustaining Schools*

Historically, structures within public education have replicated the systems of oppression in U.S. society that maintain existing white socio-racial hierarchies. One of the ways that this has happened is with pedagogy that does not harness the funds of knowledge that students of many diverse backgrounds and cultures bring with them to elevate historically marginalized voices and to foster positive academic outcomes for all students.   
  
The COVID-19 crisis further highlights inequities in our school system, forcing educators to grapple with rethinking how they design schools to support their students. We will work with schools in the Network to create and rethink learning environments that not only meet the needs of the current crisis but do so in a way that is culturally responsive, strengths-based, and skills focused. This year, school teams that join the Eskolta Network will explore and develop culturally responsive approaches to education that foster strengths-based environments, supportive student feedback, and mastery-based learning.

**Engaging in the Work**

Participating schools will be introduced to research and practice-based examples as they work on multi-year improvement projects related to their problems of practice. Network activities vary based on each school’s level of engagement and are described further on the following page.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Exploration**  *Typically Year 1* | **Pilot**  *Typically Years 2–3* | **Fellows**  *Typically Years 2, 3, or 4* | **Codification**  *Typically Years 3 or 4* |
| *Deeply understand research on culturally sustaining, strengths-based, skill-focused practice* | *Use multiple cycles of inquiry to design and refine a research-based practice with and for your students* | *Scale a practice so that the whole school is doing something you have designed and tested*  (NYC only in SY 20–21) | *Document an effective practice at your school to contribute to the research base for others*  (Beginning SY 21–22) |

**Responding to COVID-19**

We know that schools continue to navigate uncertainty and are working to meet students’ most immediate needs. Anticipating that this will likely be the case as we begin the 2020–21 school year, we are committed to adjusting our support and means of convening teams to be responsive to school team needs.

**School Leader Commitments**

At all levels of engagement, school leaders will facilitate data collection to help gauge school and Network-level impact. This includes

* Hosting visits (in person or via videoconference) by Eskolta staff to learn about your school
* Supporting the administration of a student survey and/or writing task (provided by Eskolta) in October and May
* Providing requested data reports from source systems to understand the starting point of students who have had traumatic past experiences in schools, as reflected in prior absenteeism, suspensions, course failures, test failures, and school transfers. These data reports may include specific reports available from DESE and BPS.

To maintain momentum between Network convenings and touchpoints with their Eskolta coach, school leaders will provide time and support for the team to work together as they develop their school improvement project. The school leader will

* Engage in a strategic planning process with Eskolta to set goals and create an action plan
* Attend a launch meeting with the team and regularly check in with the Eskolta coach
* Identify a team of 3–5 educators who will lead the work (see further commitments for this team below)
* Set a regular time for the team to meet about 2–3 times per month between Network sessions. (Work progresses most effectively when teams can regularly dedicate a 60- to 90-minute block of time structured into the school schedule, such as a common planning period or after-school professional time.)

In addition to the commitments outlined above, the key activities and estimated time commitments for school teams vary by level of engagement. To determine the level of engagement that is appropriate for your school, please review the guidance outlined on the next page.

**Determining Your School Team’s Level of Engagement**

All school team members as outlined below are eligible for stipends for participation commensurate with the rules and regulations of their school.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Exploration**  *Typically Year 1* | **Pilot**  *Typically Years 2–3* | **Fellows**  *Typically Years 2, 3, or 4* |
| *This is the right level for your team if...* | | |
| * You and your team may have some familiarity with research behind culturally responsive practices, but it is neither widespread nor deep yet * You and your team of 2–5 staff members are ready to learn more about key research and lead the effort | * You and your team are familiar with the research behind culturally responsive practices * You and your team have identified a preliminary problem of practice related to the Network aim * You and your team have worked together before for at least a year and have some experience with data-driven inquiry cycles | * A team lead is ready to engage in deeper leadership at your school with principal support * Your prospective Fellows have engaged in inquiry cycles through the Eskolta Network or other Eskolta projects for *at least two years* and are ready to scale practices across classrooms |
| *Key Activities* | | |
| * Become familiar with the research base * Gather student perspectives and administer opening and closing assessments to understand problems confronting your school * Define a problem of practice * Engage in at least one inquiry cycle to try out a new practice and become familiar with the process | * Deepen understanding of the research base * Explore an existing problem of practice through student perspectives and assessments * Design and test a prototype of a change idea through multiple inquiry cycles * Document and share practices developed through inquiry cycles | * Develop the leadership of a team lead through 8–10 collaborative Eskolta Fellows training sessions focused on learning continuous improvement methods * Refine and spread existing research-based practices * Document and share practices developed through inquiry cycles |
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| *Estimated Time Commitments for School Team Members* | | |
| * Attend the Network Summit * Engage in 1–2 coaching calls per month with an Eskolta facilitator * Meet online or in person at least once between each coaching call * Attend a series of workshops on research and practice | * Attend the Network Summit * Meet twice a month with face-to-face (online or in-person) support from an Eskolta facilitator * Attend a series of five Network Convenings to connect and learn from other schools | * Team attends the Network Summit and Convenings every other month * Fellow engages in regular calls and collaborative training sessions with an Eskolta facilitator * Fellow meets with a team twice monthly to conduct a school improvement project |

**Eskolta Network Application**

Please use this application to tell us your ideas for utilizing involvement with the Eskolta Network to advance both how your school serves students who are currently off-track to graduate and how your school will meet the commitments entailed with Network participation. We look forward to hearing from you by or before July 8, 2020!

**School Leader Contact Information**

Please provide contact info for the principal, headmaster, or another school leader who is the point person for this effort.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School Name** |  |
| **Name** |  |
| **Role** |  |
| **Phone Number** |  |
| **Email** |  |

**Data Point Person Contact Information**

One of the great benefits of involvement in the Eskolta Network is contribution to a system-wide study of students we support, and the use of an opening and closing assessment to understand your students’ academic mindsets and/or critical reasoning and critical awareness skills. As mentioned in the School Leader Commitments section, we will be requesting data reports from schools at the beginning and end of the school year to enable us to help you track student progress. To facilitate the collection of data from your school, please share the contact information for the staff member who will be able to support these requests.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Data Point Person Name** |  |
| **Role** |  |
| **Email** |  |

**Identifying Focus Students**

The Eskolta Network focuses on students who may be off-track to graduate based on a number of early warning indicators and experiences. In the table below, provide estimated numbers of students at your school who have had the following experiences. Please indicate if you had trouble locating or do not have access to any of the data described.

While there is not a need for a completely accurate accounting in this application, this data will be necessary by October 15, and we will work with you to collect this, as is outlined in the School Leader Commitments on p. 3.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Estimated Number** |
| Total number of students on your register during the 2019–20 school year |  |
| Students who were chronically absent (less than 85% attendance) in at least one of the past three school years |  |
| Students with credit accumulation that is significantly less than expected for their age (*15 with 0 credits, 16 with below 9th-grade credits, 17 with below 10th-grade credits, 18 with below 11th-grade credits, or 19+ and still enrolled*) |  |
| Students who failed 1 or more courses in 9th grade |  |
| Students who received a score deemed failing by state standards on state math or ELA middle school exams |  |
| Students who are 16 years old or older with 0 Regents or MCAS exams passed |  |
| Students who had one or more suspensions last year, or three or more suspensions in the last three years |  |
| Students who have 2 or more midyear transfers between schools at non-typical matriculation points (i.e., in the middle of a school year or after 9th grade) before entering your school |  |

**Identifying a School Team**

Schools in the Eskolta Network build a team of 3–5 educators to attend Network sessions and implement an improvement project at school between the sessions. All team members are expected to maintain active involvement with Network activities and related school-based work. Additionally, members of the team should represent the diverse backgrounds and perspectives present among your full staff and be well positioned to test out new ideas and eventually share learning and strategies with colleagues. There are key mindsets that participants should both bring to the team and expect to further develop and reflect on in the course of the work:

* **Critical Self-Awareness.** Reflect on your own culture and identity and that of the students and families of your school. Examine and deconstruct your own implicit biases and view yourself as a learner.
* **Adults are anchored in equity and justice.** Examine how your work and your students’ lives are affected by societal inequity and injustice, and how your own students’ culture and identity shape their development. This can be seen in staff professional development, educator self-awareness, intentional grouping and learning across staff, and development of materials.
* **Adults reflect on action and act on reflection.** Reflect on and use data, including and drawing on student voice, to investigate student growth and learn from their own setbacks.

Identify members for your proposed school team below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name and Role** | **How will this person contribute to the racial, cultural, and experiential diversity of your team?** | **How will this person work with your focus students?** |
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**Determining Your Level of Engagement**

Based upon the levels of engagement outlined on p. 3, do you envision your school engaging at the Exploratory, Pilot, or Fellows level during the 2020–21 school year? Why is this the right level of participation for your school?   
*Note:* If you are interested in the Fellows level, please indicate which members of your team would engage in this work. We will then follow up with a separate application for those Fellows.

**Aligning the Work to Your School Goals**

Describe an established school goal related to re-engaging and advancing students who are currently off-track to graduate (if possible, please paste directly from an existing school planning document).

***For returning applicants:*** How will you build on and scale the work your team started during the 2019–20 school year? How will this work help advance the school goal described above?

***For new applicants:*** How do you see your participation in the Eskolta Network supporting your school’s progress toward school goals? What differences do you aim to see in your school after this year and after three years of work?