



Our mission is to develop engaged readers and writers in underserved NYC public schools by designing and delivering programs that are multi-disciplinary, culturally responsive, and promote deeper connections to books and their authors.

Dear Friends of Behind the Book,

We are excited to share our year-end report with you, the people and organizations that make our work possible. So much has happened over the past 12 months and despite some chaos in the world around us, Behind the Book continues to grow steadily and is now in our 17th year of bringing inspiring, motivating, and empowering programs into NYC public schools.

This year we welcomed a new Director of Programs, Denise Cotton, and saw our own Myra Hernandez take on the role of Curriculum Specialist, working with Denise across all programs. With a strong programming team in place, Jo has—with some reluctance—stepped back from running programs directly in order to focus on organizational growth and strategic planning. She's still getting into the classroom every time she can, but this shift is another sign that BtB continues to grow and evolve as we plan to be around for a long time to come.



Our programs are constantly growing and evolving, too: this year we ran our most extensive summer programming yet, working with 253 students in 11 programs at P.S. 4, P.S. 154, and M.S. 223. We grew our book donation program, too, donating 14,000 books to kids in our schools, community groups, and—our favorites—the kids that show up at our office, looking for books and for people to talk to about them.

While our programs are always specific to the class and our teacher's goals, we've continued to emphasize topics related to social justice and to focus on creating culturally responsive programs; we work hard to find books and authors that reflect the lived experiences of our students while connecting them to worlds far beyond their own. We love to take our students on field trips, and some highlights from the past year include visits to: City Growers, RoboFun, National Geographic Ocean Odyssey, the Caribbean Cultural Center, and the Skyscraper Museum.

We can't fit all the excitement that is BtB into this letter, so please make sure you're signed up for our monthly newsletter, where you can read about programs and upcoming events, such as *New York Times* Counsel and author of *Truth in Our Times*, David McCraw's appearance and reading at BlueMountain Capital this past spring. You can also sign up for volunteer alerts, as we want you to join the ranks of the 460 people who stepped into our classrooms and our world: we pretty much guarantee you're gonna' love it.

Lots more numbers and statistics can be found in this report, but the heart of BtB can't be captured on the page. It lives in our students, our authors, our staff, our volunteers—in all the people who believe that discovering a love of reading can change a young person's life. Thank you for your support—this wouldn't be possible without you.

Happy Reading,

Susan Elman Board Chair

Jo Umans Executive Director



## Empowering. Inspiring. Motivating.

We asked BtB's community to describe our work in just three words. We received a lot of submissions in response to our challenge, but none better summed up what we do than these. Volunteer Leena Parikh came up with this combination and we take these words not just as accolades, but as our responsibility to the students we serve.

## Inspiring Literacy Every Day.

This summary of BtB came from a former principal, Jake Michelman. Jake, Leena, and so many other principals, teachers, authors, volunteers, and supporters — people just like you—not only make our programs possible, they help us see their success and the impact we have every day. Join us in a classroom in 2020 and see for yourself!



# How Behind the Book Incorporates The Seven Rules of Reading Engagement

Young people who enjoy reading and who read for pleasure in their own time perform better across the curriculum, do better in school, and demonstrate a wider general knowledge.

### Students become engaged readers when:

the reading tasks and activities are relevant to their lives.

### Behind the Book:

Works with diverse and representative authors whenever possible

Provides books with diverse characters and stories whenever possible

Emphasizes themes to which students can relate

Encourages students to make connections to their personal lives

they have a wide range of reading materials.

### Behind the Book:

Increases access to and awareness of varying types of reading materials

Gives books of a wide variety of genres, reading levels, and topics

Donates a rich variety of reading materials to classrooms, school libraries, and students

they have the opportunity to read for sustained amounts of time.

### Behind the Book:

Provides anchor texts around which teachers can structure independent reading time

Encourages teachers to add independent reading time to daily schedules

Gives students books to own, add to their home libraries and read on their time

they can choose what they read.

### Behind the Book:

Provides books to classrooms so that students always have many options from which to choose

Ask students to vote on anchor texts for some programs

they can interact with others about the reading.

### Behind the Book:

Creates programs that facilitate student discussions and encourages them to think critically and creatively about the subject

Focuses activities around students' connections to the anchor

Supports discussions between authors and students as well as peer to peer interactions

they feel successful and competent.

### Behind the Book:

Scaffolds program materials and reading assignments so that students of all levels will feel successful

Works with volunteers in the classroom who treat students as smart, capable, and successful

Programs culminate with a celebration showcasing each students' work which could include a publishing party for a student anthology, an unveiling of a neighborhood guidebook, an art show, or a poetry slam.

the classroom emphasizes the importance of reading.

### Behind the Book:

Emphasizes the importance of reading enjoyment in every program

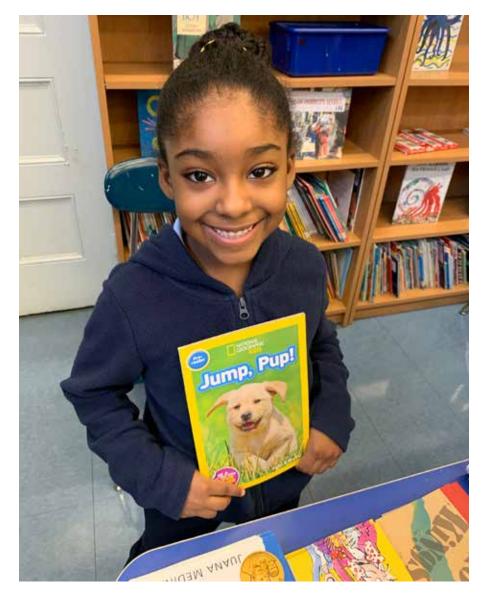
Begins every program by explaining Behind the Book's original idea was to share the love of reading with every student we meet Supports students with praise and encouragement for reading and writing achievement

Works Cited: Gambrell, Linda B., "Seven Rules of Engagement," The Reader Teacher. Vol. 65, Issue 3, pp. 172-178. Nov, 2011.

"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books."

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop,

Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors



# Inspiring Literacy Every Day. Book Giveaway Initiative

Book ownership and book choice are two cornerstones to reading engagement. And being able to read a book that reflects something about yourself and your lived experience can supercharge engagement.

Three years ago, Behind the Book began a new initiative to give books to our students, classrooms, school libraries, and communities.

Last year we donated 14,000 books, all of which were thoughtfully chosen with our students in mind.

These are books we give to enhance the pleasure of reading. We all still get excited when our kids choose the perfect book.

Special thanks to KPMG's Family for Literacy (KFFL), Scholastic Book Clubs, Penguin Random House, and others that have supported our efforts.



## Our Partner Schools

### Elementary

**Brighter Choice Community School** Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

The Reading Team Harlem, Manhattan

C.S. 21 Crispus Attucks Elementary School Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

P.S. 4 The Duke Ellington School Washington Heights, Manhattan

P.S. 125 The Ralph Bunche School Harlem, Manhattan

P.S. 154 The Harriet Tubman School Harlem, Manhattan

P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm School East Harlem, Manhattan

P.S. 241 Emma L. Johnston School Crown Heights, Brooklyn

"The writing I did with Behind the Book was the real me, because I showed how I felt inside and who I really am."

### Middle Schools

The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology: X223 South Bronx

M.S. 328 Community Math & Science Prep Washington Heights, Manhattan

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning & Social Change Harlem, Manhattan

Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters Mott Haven, Bronx

### **High Schools**

**Explorations Academy High School** Morrisania, Bronx

Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School Borough Park, Brooklyn

Frederick Douglass Academy III Morrisania, Bronx

High School for Dual Language & Asian Studies LES, Manhattan

International Community High School Mott Haven, Bronx

The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology: X223

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning & Social Justice Harlem, Manhattan

4th grader, The Reading Team, Harlem

# Our Year in Review

1,895 **Students Served**  **Workshops** 

**Published** 

Classroom Programs 5 **Classes** 

**Schools** 

**Published Student Authors** 

14,000 Books Donated

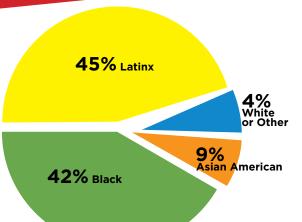
460 Volunteers 2,140

**Hours of** 



**78%** of our books had main characters of color.

**40%** featured authors of color.



# Our Average Student

**86%** qualified for free lunch.

**27%** of programs were customized for Special Education classes.

\* Estimates are based on the most recently available data from the Department of Education for each of our partner schools.



### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT Grace Hopper, Queen of Computer Code

Grace Hopper revolutionized computer coding by teaching computers to recognize words. Working with Ms. Fahy and Ms. Moss at P.S. 154 in Harlem, we designed an immersive, multimedia program to introduce students to the excitement of innovation in technology.

Our 5th grade class read Laurie Wallmark's biography of Grace Hopper and learned about a groundbreaking inventor who had a passion for science and math and believed in breaking rules and taking chances.

In her first workshop, Laurie Wallmark told them about herself, her writing process, and more about Grace Hopper. Laurie led the class in several activities using binary arithmetic as well as an activity where students were paired up, one as the "robot" and the other as the "programmer." The programmer had to give the robot precise directions to make sure it went where the programmer wanted, modeling how a programmer thinks when they create code. In her second workshop, Laurie gave the students a sneak peek at her new book and shared her step-by-step process for writing a biography.

The 5th graders went on a field trip to RoboFun, a New York-based science center where

students built their own robots, wrote code, and ultimately operated their robots using their new coding skills. Through this process they learned the importance of curiosity and perseverance, two traits Grace Hopper embodied, and with a deeper appreciation for her dedication to her work, they wrote essays on how Grace Hopper and her story inspired them. Finally, the class worked with Behind the Book teaching artist Candice Humphries to create vision boards of their goals, challenges, and inspirations. The final writing and art were then published in a student book titled *Aim to* Do and Dare. This program included writing, art, and hands-on activities, giving students an in-depth experience with a pioneer in STEAM.



### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT Fish for Jimmy

Our programs strive to reflect the lived experiences of our students and to address issues of social justice. We invited Katie Yamasaki to Ms. Duran's 7th grade class at M.S. 328 in Washington Heights to explore her story, *Fish for Jimmy*, about a Japanese family sent to an internment camp during World War II. In their first author workshop, students met Katie and learned how the story is based on her own family history.

Over fifty years ago, hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps after the U.S. declared war on Japan. Today, thousands of immigrant children are separated from their families in U.S. detention centers. With the help of volunteers, students researched the current status of children detained in the U.S. and had a discussion about that policy—where it comes from, what it might mean, and where we might go from here.

In the second author workshop, Katie led a discussion about how art can be used to send a message. Our class compiled their own words and images into collages and, with the help of volunteers, wrote letters (in English and Spanish) of support to the detained immigrant children at the U.S. border. Their work was published in a student book titled *La Esperanza de los Inmigrantes or The Hope of Immigrants*, and you can follow this <u>link</u> to read the letters and see the collages our students made.

The letters and artwork included in this book were sent to children in a detention center through the TODEC (Training Occupational Development Educating Communities) Legal Center in Perris, California.

Our students dedicated the book to:

Los inmigrantes en los centro de detención que están separados de sus familias. Todo este tiempo hemos estado escribiendo a los niños en el centro de detención y sus familias. En nuestra investigación aprendimos de las condiciones en que niños y sus familias sobrepasan llegando a los Estados Unidos sin papeles. Queremos expresar que no se den por vencido, y que no olviden que sus familias no le dejan de guerer. Estamos con ustedes.

Immigrants in detention centers who are separated from their families. During this semester we worked on writing to the children in the detention centers and their families. In our research we learned about the conditions in which children and their families are placed when arriving in the United States undocumented. We want to express our hope that they do not give up, and that they do not forget that their families will never stop loving them. We are with you.





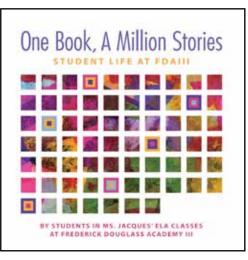
### **Student Books**

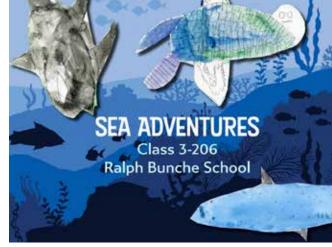
Our programs don't just create readers, we empower writers. Students write stories, essays, biographies, poems. They write about things they have learned, what they've experienced, and things they hope for.

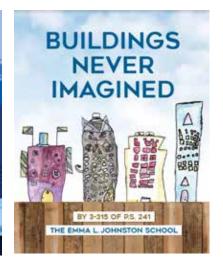
Thanks to these professional book designers, all of whom donated their time, 31 classes were represented in student books last year, making 700 students published authors.

### **Student Book Designers**

Tree Abraham Helena Babington Sydney Barnes Sarah Boecher Annabel Brandon Wilna Combrinck Nina Dunhill Karen Evans Dina Her Julie Heyduk Kristyn Kalnes Jennifer Ledgerwood Blake Logan Sara Loos Sara McLaughlin Sarah Selby Sara Suttle

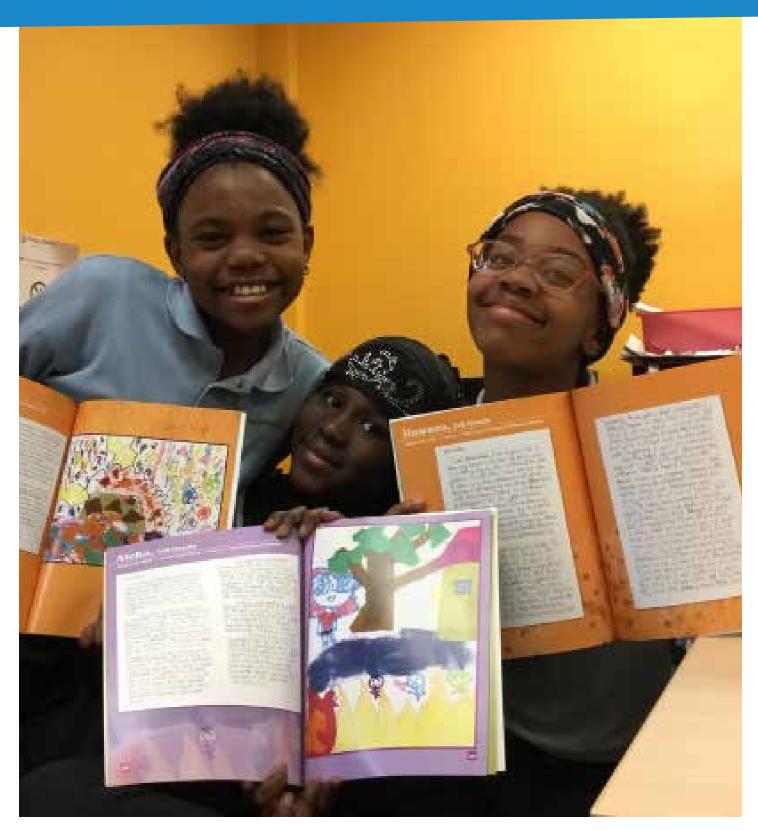






# Behind the book gave me the opportunity to write my own story and become a published author.

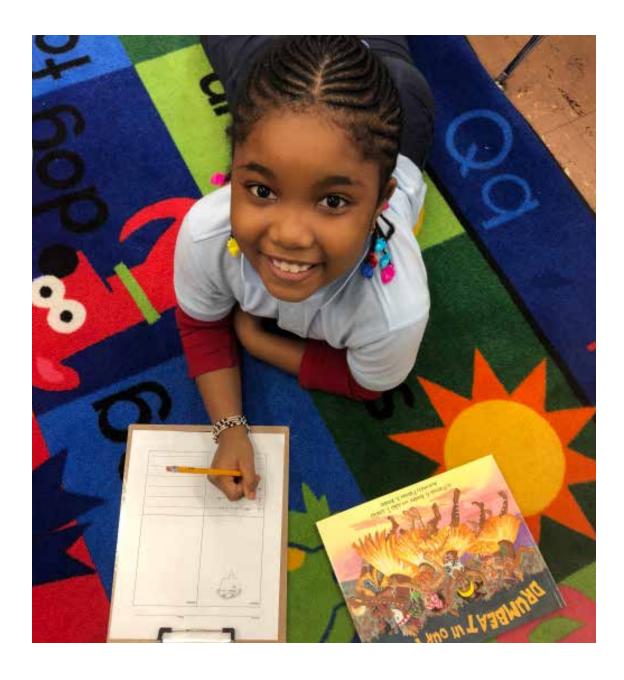
12th grader, International Community High School, the Bronx



# **Evaluation Findings**

Behind the Book is committed to providing enriching literacy experiences for students and to supporting teachers in creating engaging literacy curriculum. We strive to increase students' motivation and self-identification as readers and writers, as well as improve their implementation of the writing process. To ensure that our programs and impact are aligned, we collect survey data from the educators with whom we partner and the students that we serve.

Classroom teachers complete surveys before and after their programs, and students complete surveys at the end of their experience. Last year, our surveys were written in English and Spanish to ensure our English language learners had equal participation. All data is collected immediately upon completion of the program, then compiled and analyzed to measure changes in students' skills and mindset.



### Highlights from Educator Feedback

Teacher survey questions are designed to measure their assessment of changes in students' reading engagement and improvement of writing skills as a result of BtB programs.

85% of students demonstrated increased reading engagement.

80% demonstrated an increased motivation to write.

83% demonstrated increased motivation to read.

81% have improved their belief in their own skills.

**93%** of all teachers reporting that students discussed the book and writing project without being prompted.

The author visit impacted my students tremendously, my students are ESL students and newcomers to New York. The fact they were able to meet Danette Vigilante opened a horizon of love for reading. They were not just engaged in the book, but my students also enjoyed her time with the class

- Ms. Nin, 9th grade teacher at Explorations Academy, Bronx

If this could happen every day, these students would be at an 8th-grade reading level by the time we're finished.

- 2nd grade teacher, P.S. 154, Harlem

### Student Feedback

**74%** of students reported working harder on their writing during their BtB program than other assignments.

**78%** reported that meeting the author made them want to read more. **73%** plan to read another book by the author they met.

"My experience with BtB was the best. My favorite moment was when the artists come with their art supplies. They taught me how to draw some cool stuff and I drew a heckin crazy eye. (beautiful)"

- 9th grader at High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies, Manhattan

"When I knew Behind the Book was coming to my classroom, I felt excited and hopeful I could not wait! I had participated with Behind the Book before and I LOVED it! It's my favorite part of the year!"

- 4th grader at P.S. 125, Harlem

# Supporters

We'd like to thank everyone who supports Behind the Book, especially our major donors and partners:

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New York City Department of Cultural Affairs New York City Council Discretionary Funds

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Edward Zuckerman

**Behind the Book** allows our students permission to make sense of their world. try to figure a way to be a voice in it and to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

JoAnne Di Lauro, School **Counselor, International Community High School, Bronx** 





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excited and hopeful
I could not wait!
I had
participated with
Behind the Book
before and
I LOVED it!
Its my favorite
part of the year!"

4th grader, P.S. 125, Harlem

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"It [BtB] gave students an opportunity to meet the author in person, see that writing is an attainable outlet for expression, and enjoy the writing process and outcome."

Marlene Acevedo, teacher, P.S. 154, Harlem



### **Authors in Schools**

Fred Aceves Joseph Olumide Adegboyega-Edun Selina Alko Tracey Baptiste Paulette Bogan Coe Booth Mahogany Browne Kerrine Bryan Ann E. Burg Lesa Cline-Ransome Ricardo Cortes Jerry Craft Zetta Elliott Beth Ferry Jennifer George Robbin Gourley Melissa Grey Paul Griffin Thyra Heder Deborah Heiligman Isabel Hill Rachel Himes Patricia Keeler Alicia Klepeis Caron Levis Kam Mak Ann E. Malaspina Patricia McCormick Tony Medina Sharee Miller Roxie Munro Lela Nargi **JessicaOlien** Raquel Ortiz Susanna Pitzer Sofia Quintero Lilliam Rivera Julia Sarcone-Roach Jessie Sima Javaka Steptoe Lauren Tarshis Maggie Thrash Susan Verde Danette Vigilante Julian Voloi Laurie Wallmark Cynthia Weill Monica Wellington

Katie Yamasaki

Ibi Zoboi

Working with Behind the Book has been one of the greatest experiences of my career.

Fred Aceves, author The Closest I've Come

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"The opportunity was truly fulfulling.

I am so very humbled and grateful,

I was reminded by my mother of the challenges
she faced in trying to provide me with a quality
education and was truly emotional when
I spoke of your organization and what you do."

Stephanie, Volunteer

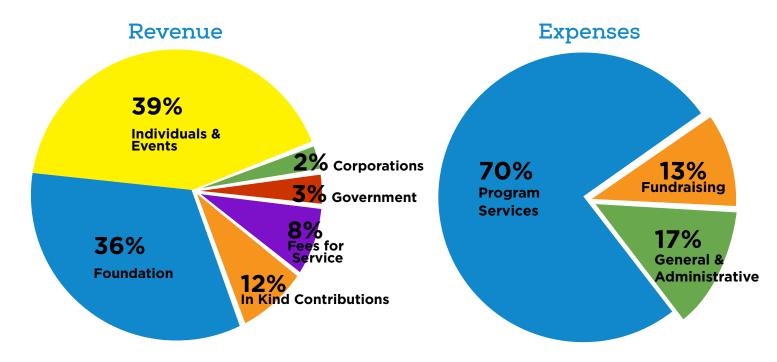
# Financials

### Assets, Liabilites, Net Assets

	2019	2018	2017	
Assets	\$320.254	\$249,784	\$198,591	
Liabilities	\$10,538	\$10,188	\$12,188	
Net Assets	\$309,716	\$239,596	\$186,403	

### Summary of Revenue & Expenses

	2019	2018	2017
Contributions	\$771,527	\$609,336	\$545,141
Contributions - properties & services	\$111,883	\$78,123	\$54,151
Investment Income	\$197	\$154	\$119
Program Service Income	\$80,645	\$80,000	\$56,172
Total Revenue & Support	\$904,252	\$767,613	\$648,939





# Behind the Book

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