



Annual Report 2017

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility





A message from the Executive Director

Work for Justice

Morningside Center's founding goal, back in 1982, was to educate for peace. Our idea of "peace" has always been active and ambitious. At the bottom of every issue of "Action News," the typewritten legal-sized newsletter we put out in our early years, was the quote: "If you want peace, work for justice."

From the beginning, our work with teachers and young people included celebrating our cultures, standing up to oppression, and working together to make a better world. As a leader in the field of "social and emotional learning," we have maintained that core SEL competencies should include "taking responsibility for our communities, from the classroom to the world."

Never has the need for this social justice perspective been more urgent than in our current political environment. Never has the need for kindness, community, and courageous action been greater.

This past year, we've taken our work to promote justice – specifically racial justice – to a new level, both in the schools and in ourselves. We're on a challenging path into new territory, and we're on it for the long haul.

We started out on this path about eight years ago, when we sensed a new openness in schools to reversing the then widespread use of "zero tolerance" discipline policies. Zero tolerance and SEL don't mix. You can't encourage students to develop qualities like empathy, kindness, and social



Part of a "center piece" used in one of our circles.

awareness if in your actual practice and treatment of students, you demonstrate the opposite of these qualities. Soon, we were partnering with the NYC Department of Education's Office of Safety & Youth Development, and with schools across New York City, to help foster restorative practices as a powerful strategy for community-building, social and emotional skill-building, and as an alternative to punitive discipline.

Much of the impetus for the move to restorative practices came from the growing understanding – and alarm – about how punitive discipline was affecting students of color, who are harshly disciplined out of all proportion to their

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Our Programs

The 4Rs: Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution engages the imagination and creativity of children in grades PreK-5. The 4Rs helps young people develop critical skills including empathy, community building, and conflict resolution through a curriculum that builds on captivating children's books.

C Squad: Together for the Journey is our new circle-based SEL program for middle school students (grades 6-8). C Squad provides a safe space where middle school youth can build relationships, address crucial issues in their lives, and develop social and emotional strengths.

Building Belonging creates a sense of community among young people in grades 6-12, helps develop their social and emotional skills, and supports restorative practices, using an engaging circle format.

Restore360 is a comprehensive model for whole-school transformation that includes regular classroom instruction to develop community and social and emotional skills; professional learning for teachers, leadership training, support for parents and students, restorative discipline policies, and ongoing planning to foster racial equity.

PAZ! Our three stellar after-school programs at PS 24 in Brooklyn and PS/MS 214 in the Bronx serve about 500 young people with a rich program of SEL, STEM, the arts, and other enrichments throughout the year.

TeachableMoment is our popular website of teacher resources. We post new free lessons almost every week to help educators use teachable moments to foster social responsibility and awareness. ▲

Our Reach in 2017



23,920
students getting
classroom instruction



213
schools with
sustained programs



4,672
newsletter
subscribers



2,364
educators trained
and/or coached



346
young mediators and
circle keepers trained



452k+
website
pageviews

‘It’s an Awakening’

Two principals talk about transformation

George Patterson, Principal of IS 285, on introducing whole-school restorative practices into his school in East Flatbush, Brooklyn.

This project has been like an awakening.

Usually, our students come into class, they have to sit and take in all this information, and at times they don’t get a chance to really talk. But now, the kids who have gone through some kind of hardship within the community get to come in and talk about that. And then get support from their peers and their teachers.

We’ve seen our young men telling stories that really expose and express their vulnerabilities. We’ve seen lots of tears, lots of laughs, and we’ve seen others hold these young men up when they’ve been feeling low. And typically that didn’t happen before.

We’ve also seen a different approach to handling discipline problems. Now, we understand that when hurt has been done, retribution isn’t the only approach. Now we uncover with the student: Why



would you cause that harm? What conditions are you coming from that made you want to do this? At times the perpetrator needs as much support as the victim.

The project has forced us to bring some of our core values to the forefront as a school – like empathy, trust-building, and caring about each other. We’re walking the walk. ▲

Patrick Burns, Principal of MS 217 in Queens, reflects on the impact of *Building Belonging* at his school.

I think when we look back at our careers, we’ll say that one of the best things we ever did was to open our eyes to the importance of social and emotional learning. For us, restorative practices is just part of our overall philosophy about the importance of deepening relationships with students.

I graduated from an all-boy’s Catholic school – so



what I knew was zero tolerance. But that makes no sense, and it doesn’t work. What the research shows is the importance of good relationships.

There’s a knee-jerk reaction when test scores are low that students should do nothing but ELA and math. But what helps kids most is when they *love* the school they’re in. The impact of this work is apparent in our data, including our academic performance and surveys of teachers, students, and parents, which show how much trust there is between students and staff. Suspensions are now a rarity in our school. We don’t need suspensions to sustain student engagement and respect.

Most of us became teachers because of an idealistic belief that we could have a strong positive impact on society. The way we’re relating to students now – it brings you back to why we went into education in the first place. ▲

Our News!

i3: A path to racial equity at school

In November 2016, we received a 4-year federal “Investing in Innovation” grant, with matching funds from Einhorn Family Charitable Trust. Through i3, we will develop, evaluate, and disseminate a model for school transformation that combines social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and brave conversations about race and racism that create a foundation for continuous progress toward truly equitable schools. In 2017 we launched Phase 1 of the project, piloting new approaches in three Brooklyn schools. Soon we’ll begin Phase 2, a randomized controlled trial of the impact of the approach on nine schools compared to nine control schools.



New for middle school: C Squad

We’re excited to announce C Squad, our new circles-based social and emotional learning program for middle school students. The program, which began life as CREW, addresses issues of crucial importance to young adolescents, from stress to

social media. Social and emotional skill-building is integrated into each unit in ways that help a young person deal well with the issue the unit addresses.

Powerful teacher coaching + SEL

Researchers from Fordham and the University of Virginia are now analyzing data from a major study of The 4Rs + MTP, a program that combines our top-ranked SEL curriculum (The 4Rs) with a powerful teacher coaching model developed by UVA (My Teaching Partner). We’re looking forward to results from this randomized controlled trial.

Workshops on equity & SEL

Over the past year, Morningside Center has developed and piloted many exciting new approaches for helping educators increase their awareness of race and their ability to foster racial equity in their schools. And we’ve been sharing these strategies through engaging educator workshops. To get the latest on workshops and other offerings, visit our website and sign up for our informative biweekly newsletter.

A new website!

Our new Morningside Center website combines improved functionality with a whole new look and feel. The new site makes it even easier to connect with us and use our large library of TeachableMoment classroom activities. [Visit us at morningsidecenter.org!](http://morningsidecenter.org) ▲



Work for Justice

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numbers and their behavior. Restorative practices have proven to be an effective strategy for reducing suspensions (as well as helping students feel more connected to school and developing their social



and emotional skills). We've seen huge drops in suspensions in the schools we've supported.

But research shows that although restorative practices have been effective in reducing suspensions, the disproportional use of punitive discipline with students of color persists. It points to a stubborn evil that educators of all races must wrestle with: the implicit bias that we absorb as members of a society that has racism at its very roots.

In November 2016 we learned that we had received a prestigious federal "Investing in Innovation" grant that aims to crack that hard nut of discipline disparity by developing and evaluating an approach for fostering racial equity in our

schools through a combination of SEL, restorative practices, and brave conversations about race.

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work in the participating schools. Meanwhile, we took ourselves and our staff on a deep dive into racial equity. We

used our own racially diverse community to test effective approaches for advancing equity in the schools, creating a kind of R&D shop for activities, approaches, readings, and videos that would help to increase the cultural fluency of school staff. In the process, we are learning a lot about each other and ourselves. The

project has opened up a new world of understanding for many of us – especially those of us who are white.

What we are learning on this path to racial equity is transformative and enriching both for us personally and for our organization. We're incorporating our learnings into all of our work, including longstanding programs from The 4Rs to our PAZ after-school programs (see pages 3 and 5 for more on these and other initiatives).

We are excited about this new leg of our long journey, and we're looking forward to working for peace and justice in 2018 and the years to come!

– Tom Roderick

Thank you, foundation friends!

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Operating Budget FY 2017

Revenue & Support

Contract services	4,787,342
Grants & contributions	812,656
Other revenues	609
Total revenue & support:	5,600,607

Expenses

Program services	4,305,671
Supporting service expenses	808,931
Total expenses:	5,114,602





Some of Morningside Center's staff.

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