



Annual Report 2022

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

A message from executive director Cassie Schwerner

The Storms & Bright Lights of 2022

Much of Morningside Center's focus over the past year has been on using all of the tools and strategies we've developed over the decades to build trust, belonging, and community during these times. It fills my heart to see our dedicated team support both young people and adults as they navigate their way through the storm. Our trainers, coaches, and staff are so skilled, talented, and frankly magical. I wish you could see them in action!

2022 was another challenging year for the school communities we work with. We have been working to support students, staff, and families struggling with unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety, and hardship stemming from the pandemic. It was a hard year for us at Morningside Center as well, as we grieved the loss of our much-loved trainer Javier Diaz (see page 7).

Despite the hard times, 2022 also brought us many moments of joy and inspiration.

When I think of joy in 2022, I think of my visits to PS 24 in Sunset Park, where children in our PAZ after-school program are alight with warmth, energy, and creativity. I'm always inspired to take pictures when I'm in a school (I think I'm now Morningside's unofficial photographer in chief!) – and we share them throughout this annual report.

A huge bright spot in our work in 2022 was our new program to share some of that PAZ magic with after-school programs across New York City, with the generous support of the Pinkerton Foundation, New York Community Trust, and the Hayden Foundation. Please see the story on page 5 about our SEL & Equity in After-School Program.



One of the year's most exciting developments was launching a new partnership with NYC's Community School District 5, the Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline (HREP), and other nonprofits to bring about a new day for children, educators, and families in all of the district's 23 schools. Please see page 8 to learn more about this exciting collaborative project, **No Dreams Deferred**.

I want to send my deepest thanks to all the individual donors and foundations who have supported us this past year and have ensured that we all do this important work together. We were honored by the record level of support we received in 2022, and are forever grateful. I also want to thank our NYC Department of Education partners who make this work possible.

And, finally, I am beyond grateful to the Morningside team that guides this work each and every day. You can see some of them pictured on page 9.

Photo above: Cassie with PAZ After-School Students

Morningside's 2022 Accomplishments

2022 presented plenty of surprises for educators, students, families – and us. We were honored to be able to support so many schools in need. Here are some highlights of our year.

DEMAND: Hundreds of NYC schools sought training and coaching from us in fostering culturally affirming social and emotional learning (SEL), building community, integrating restorative practices, and advancing racial justice. We also continued to expand our work outside NYC, including in upstate New York, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia.

GROWTH: We are so excited to welcome new staff members Dionne Grayman, Lilith Hedrington, Victoria Iglesias Nieves, Edgardo Rivera; and new staff developers Rusa Fischer, Beata Moon, and Ava Schlesinger!

REACH: In the 2021-2022 school year, we provided our 5-day SEL/restorative/racial equity training for nearly 3,000 educators, coached educators at 210 schools, and reached some 21,000 students. In summer 2022, we trained an additional 800 school staff across 36 cohorts. We also began an exciting partnership with **Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline** and Community School District 5 to support school leaders, educators, parents/caregivers, and students in schools across Harlem.

IMPACT: Researchers reported promising preliminary findings from our Investing in Innovation (i3) study – even though Covid dramatically cut the study's length. In just one year, the project led to reduced discipline incidents and a 60% reduction in the likelihood that a student receiving one out-of-school suspension would get another. Staff in project schools showed more empathetic perspective-taking and cultural awareness and knowledge than those in comparison schools.

AFTER-SCHOOL EXPANSION: With support from the Pinkerton Foundation, we launched a new program to bring our comprehensive SEL/restorative/racial equity model to after-school programs. And through our ongoing partnership with NYC's Department of Youth and Community Development, we provided training for nearly 500 after-school staff from 75 CBOs.

DONORS: In FY22 we raised \$75k from YOU—our individual donor community.

MEDIA: We shared our knowledge widely with pieces in [Education Week](#) (Mental Health Crises Are Bombarding Our Schools. Here's What We Can Do), [Principal Leadership](#) (The Holistic Nature of Restorative Discipline), and [Edutopia](#) (Steps for Collective Well-Being in the New School Year). Our website received over 700k pageviews in the year.

RESOURCES: We shared a rich set of free resources for teachers, including [Teaching as an Act of Solidarity: a Beginner's Guide to Equity in Schools](#). We also shared hundreds of free lessons through our TeachableMoment resource collection, posting an additional 48 new activities over the year and building our library to over 1000 lessons.

GRATITUDE: Thank you for making all these accomplishments possible and for being part of our community.

Teaching as an Act of Solidarity

Our new 'Beginners Guide to Equity in Schools' emanates from a major study of our work

In 2016, Morningside Center was awarded a multi-million dollar “Investing in Innovation” (i3) grant to support us in cracking the nut of racial disproportionality in school discipline through a combination of social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and a focus on racial equity – an approach we call Whole School Racial Equity.

We are excited that we can now share some of our practical learnings from that project with you through a new resource, [Teaching as an Act of Solidarity: A Beginner's Guide to Equity in Schools.](#) The guide provides a scoped and sequenced series of activities to build connection, trust, and community through social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and racial equity.

We believe that being part of such a community is the antidote we educators need now – and it is also the foundation of the education our students deserve.

Our Whole School Racial Equity model draws on our years of experience in schools, and data from external researchers, which told us that you can't really get at the question of racial disproportionality in school discipline if you're not talking about pedagogy, mindset, systems, and structures – and about the skills of school staff and of everyone in the school community. And you can't tackle these disparities if you're not talking about race and racism. Because we can't claim to be doing high-quality teaching and learning if children are experiencing racial harm at school.

The Morningside Center team that worked on the i3 project has hundreds of collective

years of experience working with schools. This project taught us so much about how to go about supporting schools in ways that prioritize connection over control; authenticity over convenience, and perhaps most importantly, how to build and hold space around conversations that can be difficult and painful.

We are all born into a culture that teaches us to run from discomfort of almost any kind.



And yet those conversations, and the greater understanding and consciousness that they can produce, can often be the pathways to our greatest learning, our deepest connections, and our most refined understanding of what our special work on this earth is.

We are in the midst of a culture war that tells us that having these conversations is divisive. But for whom? Certainly not for the heroic educators who show up to routinely underfunded schools and have continued to do so through a vicious global pandemic. Certainly

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Morningside's Reach in 2022



Provided on-site coaching in **210** schools for nearly 1000 educators

Provided our 5-day training for **2,820** NYC educators



Reached some **21,000** students with our sustained approaches.

Trained **473** after-school staff from **75** after-school programs

Bringing Joy & Belonging to After-School

We are so excited about our new initiative to bring our social and emotional learning, restorative, and equity-promoting practices to after-school programs across New York City!

We launched the SEL & Equity in After-School Program in 2021, just in time to bring much needed care and support to after-school programs at a time of unprecedented stress, anxiety, and disconnection for young people and adults alike.

With the generous support of the Pinkerton Foundation, New York Community Trust, and Hayden Foundation - and the powerful leadership of project director Bryanna Kolja (pictured here) - this program is providing training and coaching for after-school staff in ensuring that young people of all backgrounds get the support

they need to heal, to thrive, and to learn.

The program offers extensive training in SEL and equity, on-site coaching, workshops for family members, and professional development for staff.

"My team came away with new insights on SEL and equity not only as educators but also personally," said Ron Britt, managing director of programs for the Boys' Club of York, who participated in the program. "Morningside Center's site visits were incredibly beneficial, accelerating our use of learned techniques into practical application. Members of our team participated and really embraced the restorative process."

Congratulations and many thanks to Bryanna, Sully Diaz, Angela Polite, and our wonderful allies at the Pinkerton Foundation, New York Community Trust, and the Charles Hayden Foundation. For more information about the program, contact Bryanna at: bkolja@morningsidecenter.org. ♦



Teaching as an Act of Solidarity: An Introduction *(continued from page 4)*

not for children, who we know start to notice and think about race long before they arrive at elementary school. The only way out of pernicious systems that hurt us all, is through. But, how? Our i3 grant enabled us to learn more about the answer to that question.

In our Teaching as an Act of Solidarity guide, we offer guidelines and PD plans that we believe can be successfully implemented without the kind of scaffolding schools in our i3 project received. We designed the guide to give school leaders a practical roadmap for addressing issues that are coming up in the world and in schools, while accommodating the average school's limited time and capacity.

Doing this work is not easy or simple. We wish

that we could train and coach every educator who is using this guide. But we want to share the fruits of this project with schools that don't have the resources to pay for that level of support.

"This guide is our invitation to all educators to participate in this work, at any level they can," says Tala Manassah, Morningside's deputy executive director and leader of the i3 project. "It is our invitation to you to create your own journey toward a strong and supportive school community that honors every child and every adult." ♦

You can view the guide at: morningsidecenter.org/teaching-act-solidarity-beginners-guide-equity-schools

Operating Budget FY 2022

Budget:

NYC Department of Education	1,829,688
After-School Programs	739,733
Federal Contracts	335,966
Other Contracts	560,593
Foundations & Corporations	1,238,129
Individual Donations	75,199
Learning Kits & Other Revenue	245,346
Employee Retention Tax Credit	986,228
Total Revenue:	6,010,822

Expenses:

Personnel Services	3,874,573
Direct Program Expenses	784,678
General & Administrative OTPS	297,528
Total Expenses:	4,956,779
Surplus*	1,054,103

**Includes ERTC funds that are a Board-designated restricted net asset.*

Honoring Javier Francisco Diaz

On February 26, 2022, we lost our beloved colleague Javier Francisco Diaz, a talented and inspiring educator who had been with Morningside for over two decades.

In our gathering to remember Javier, people lamented that “We have lost a giant.” “We have lost a library.” “We have lost a leader in the field.”

Javier is remembered by his coworkers, by colleagues at the NYC Department of Education, by educators, by school leaders, by many of the parents that he worked with, and by his loving family for his warmth, his sense of humor, and his passion for social justice. We remember him as a fierce ally of the LGBTQ community and as a tireless fighter against anti-Black racism. Javier’s guiding sense of empathy and solidarity informed all that he did and was felt by all those he served.

All of us who were touched by Javier are gutted by his untimely death. Yet we hold such a collective gratitude that he was part of our lives and our work for decades, and we celebrate him.

Over the years, Javier was an often-requested member of our team of staff developers and trainers. He developed relationships with schools that went on for years and years. It was because he brought so much empathy, love, humor, compassion, and wisdom into classrooms and schools. He established easy rapport with children of all ages. He was a valued advisor and mentor to educators and school leaders. Javier was an expert and highly trained mediator and resolver of conflicts – and taught others to be as well.

As Javier’s family wrote, “Javier used his voice to share his thoughts, which stemmed from his feelings, which always came from his heart.” Javier, they observed, “used the word love as a verb, a word of action, a word of doing, and a word of showing.” His sisters said, “Javier was our hero.”

Javier’s love, words, wisdom, and warrior spirit will never be forgotten. They live on tangibly in local and national curricula and in the hearts, minds, and life paths of the tens of thousands of young people and adults he has touched over the decades.

We send our love and solidarity to Javier’s family, including his mother, daughters, his son, his siblings, his partner – and to the countless others whose lives were changed and enriched by this remarkable man.



No Dreams Deferred: A New Collaboration in Harlem

In 2022, Morningside Center launched an exciting new collaborative project to support young people and adults in schools and communities across Harlem's Community School District 5: No Dreams Deferred.

This project arises from a deep and broad collaboration that includes District 5 and all of its 23 schools, the Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline, Morningside Center, and other nonprofit organizations committed to the well-being of children and families in Harlem. We are all joined in a collective effort to build community, provide care, and create a sense of belonging in schools across the district, with the shared goal of ensuring that the young people of Harlem can learn, grow, and thrive. We are so excited to be part of this diverse and generative ecosystem of care and support!

In 1951, Langston Hughes, a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, asked the question "What happens to a dream deferred?" Morningside Center's Dionne Grayman, who directs the No Dreams Deferred Project, writes that "for over 70 years, District 5 has been forced to bear living witness to dreams not just being deferred, but dismissed, devalued, and denied." Harlem's communities and schools have been underfunded, the community's median household income is three times lower than the rest of Manhattan, and gentrification has led to mass displacement.

Morningside's work in District 5 will provide direct and sustained support for educators,



Morningside's Dionne Grayman, who directs the No Dreams Deferred Project, with HREP co-director Ocynthia Williams and Daniel Coles, Morningside's senior program manager.

school leaders, other school staff, and students, as well as family members from all 23 District schools. Through our partnership, says Dionne, "we will restore relationships in part by reviving and reimagining the values and language of the Harlem Renaissance. To create the ideal conditions for schools to foster belonging, inquiry, and joy today, we will recognize the wisdom and expertise of those who are closest to the challenges and can articulate the harmful experiences of deferred dreams."

Using the tools and strategies of restorative practices and culturally affirming social and emotional learning, we have begun to work

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No Dreams Deferred: A New Collaboration in Harlem (continued from previous page)

with stakeholders to develop a sense of shared purpose, shared understanding, and shared responsibility for challenging inequities. We know we need to be intentional about fostering healing from what Dr. Shawn Ginwright, author and activist, calls “persistent traumatic stress environments.”

We launched the project over the summer. In the fall, Morningside’s District 5 team, including Dionne Grayman, Daniel Coles, Sully Diaz, Tala Manassah, Ife Lenard, and Cassie Schwerner, facilitated gatherings with teams of staff and administrators from schools across the district to assess needs and begin formulating strategies. These included gatherings with: principals/assistant principals, crisis management teams, social workers, and parent coordinators from all 23 schools.

In the winter, our staff developers began meeting with teams of teachers and other

school staff, administration, and parents/ caregivers in each school to devise a tailored plan of action. This includes offering workshops with educators (with follow-up coaching), in each area of work we support – social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and racial equity.

We are excited that our work will also include direct engagement with family members, including workshops on topics such as SEL 101 and how to understand the adolescent brain. We’ll also be partnering directly with students to develop their leadership, agency, and voice through SEL skill-building and an exploration of social justice movements and tenets.

We are thrilled to have this chance to support, learn from, and be inspired by the young people, educators, and families of this amazing community. ♦



A number of Morningside staff gathered for a summer retreat. See our full staff list on page 10.

Our staff

Sara Carrero, Communications Specialist
Daniel Coles, Senior Program Manager
Katrena Dennard, Director of Finance
Sully Diaz, Director of Program Operations
Dionne Grayman, Director of Strategic Partnerships
Lilith Hedrington, Payroll Specialist
Yaritza Hernandez, Contracts Manager
Kriston Huggins-Daniel, Data Processing Coordinator
Victoria Iglesias Nieves, Executive Assistant
Bryanna Kolja, Afterschool Supervisor/Program Coordinator
Ife Lenard, Manager of Special Projects
Jillian Luft, Curriculum Writer & Editor
Tala Manassah, Deputy Executive Director
Ann Mathews, Human Resources Director
Marisol Mendez, PAZ Program Director
Laura McClure, Director of Fundraising and Communications
Edgardo Rivera, Senior Director of Operations and Finance
Demetria Robinson, Program and Operations Associate
Cassie Schwerner, Executive Director
Joseph Yabyabin, Human Resources Assistant
Cecilia Xu, Staff Accountant

Our staff developers

Eugenia Acuña	Iris Laurencio
Mamzelle Adolphine	Mariel Lemair
Lili Arkin	Taryn Matusik
Jonah Braverman	Beata Moon
Victoria Cheng-Gorini	Lauren Neidhardt
Ava Daniel	Angela Polite
Tresa Elguera	DaRon Ross
Nelly Espina	Ava Schlesinger
Amy Fabrikant	Jenny Seaquist
Emily Feinstein	Nicole Lavonne Smith-Johnson
Ellen Ferrin	Laurine Towler
Rusa Ann Fischer	Marieke van Woerkom
Makeda Gershenson	Nabil Vinas
Adriana Guzmán	Elizabeth Miu-Lan Young
Janice Marie Johnson	Marisa Zalabak

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Miyoko Brunner
Joyce Dudley
Luther Flurry, Vice Chair
Mariana Gaston
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