

Behind the Book stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and people of color everywhere. As a non-profit involved in Title I NYC public schools, we are all too familiar with the inequities and struggles our students face every day.

We believe that all children must receive an education that will provide them with the tools to succeed.

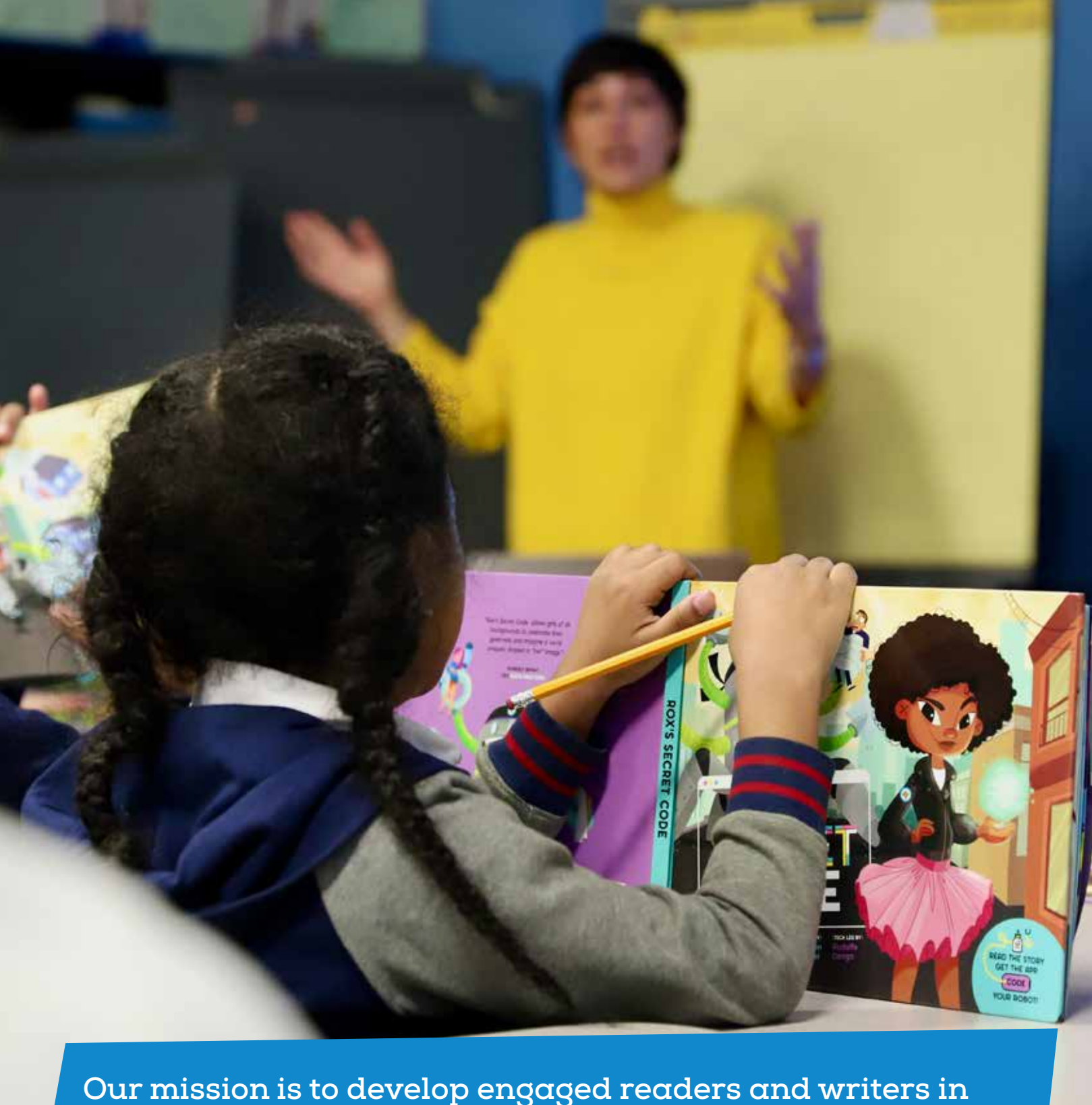
Reading and writing skills are proven indicators of future success. We are committed to elevating the voices of young people who are often not heard, to work tirelessly toward breaking down the barriers of race and poverty.

We will work to develop reading and writing skills so our students can learn to express themselves and put voice to their thoughts and ideas.

Knowledge is power and we are committed to providing the tools our students need to realize their unlimited potentials and to be the best they can be.



Behind the Book
Annual Report
2019-2020



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.

BtB empowers the next generation of readers and writers by nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and self-confidence in our students, giving them the tools they need to reach their full potential.

Dear Friends,

We are writing this letter on the eve of the 2020 winter solstice, the darkest day of the year, to be followed inevitably, and thankfully, by more sun light each day. It is a good time to reflect on this past year and to thank our community for coming together to help our students.

It has been a difficult time for all of us but especially for our students and their families so many of whom struggle with the health, financial, and educational impacts of this pandemic. We are thankful that we have been able to stay engaged with many of our students by adapting to the virtual school world in exciting and innovative ways.

When the Department of Education announced in March that school buildings would be closed, our program coordinators, led by Denise Cotton, immediately began to reimagine our programs to meet this new challenge. We now have authors located all over the country, students receiving digital books, and all meeting together on interactive platforms that allow students' voices to be heard in real time. Our amazing staff created virtual field trips, art projects using household items and unique drama activities.

This period of dislocation had given us an opportunity to experiment with some new ideas for program and organizational growth. By working with authors remotely we have been able to expand our pool to reach more talented writers who reflect our student population. We have also streamlined our program offerings, allowing for more efficient planning without sacrificing quality.

In 2020 we completed a total of 73 programs (including 23 remote programs from March through June) with 14 school partners serving 1,666 students in PreK – 12th grade. 23 programs were with special ed and six were with English language learner classes. We added two new schools, P.S. 43 and M.S. 296 in the Bronx, and two new program coordinators. We also completed 19 student books, making over 700 young people published authors and illustrators.

We continue to address social justice issues through the lens of representation – finding authors and stories that reflect the diverse backgrounds of our students and the challenges they face in their everyday lives, such as immigration status, criminal justice issues and gentrification. We also emphasize programs that enhance the DOE's STEM curriculum. This year 19 programs focused on engineering, the anatomy and habitat of reptiles, the life cycle of butterflies, computer coding, and the effect that the lack of fresh water has on communities.

We were honored to receive a three-year grant from the William T. Grant Foundation Youth Service Capacity Building program to commission a comprehensive review of best practices for achieving reading and writing engagement. We also received a grant from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs CreateNYC Language Access Fund to support our work with English language learners, who benefit from the many methods we use to engage with books.

We have expanded our board to 19, with the addition of five members. Directors and staff are working together to implement a three-year strategic plan for organizational future growth.

Our community at Behind the Book continues to be resilient and committed to helping students discover a passion for books. One constant we hold onto in this turbulent world is the knowledge that young people who are engaged readers and writers have a better chance of future success.

Happy reading,

Susan Elman

Jo Umans





Remote Learning

Behind the Book was thrilled when all our partner schools chose to continue our programs during this challenging time. We were able to help them keep their students engaged in reading and writing through our unique programs.

We realized immediately that to be successful we had to significantly reshape our programs. We quickly learned that virtual workshops required different rhythms from in-person classroom teaching and were limited to 30 - 45 minutes instead of a typical 90-minute session. Planning for each workshop was more complex and required adapting the different activities in a way that students could be actively involved from their homes.

The first hurdle we had to overcome was how to get the books to the students. We found a digital platform that gave everyone access to the book, and also allowed students to communicate with their teachers and peers, to share questions, opinions, and emoji responses. Teachers could see how far each student had read, annotated, checked word meanings, and interacted with the text and their peers.

Our program coordinators found other learning platforms, including one we used to create a virtual catalogue of books and program ideas for the teachers to choose from. Another platform allowed students to respond, react, and vote while seeing how their classmates felt about an issue, and even included an option to answer questions by drawing. We also created vocabulary videos that are especially effective with younger students, English language learners, and special ed students.

Virtual programs allowed us to work with authors outside the NYC area, expanding our world significantly. Our teaching artists posted surveys to find out what household supplies students could use to create art and developed projects that allowed everyone to participate. One program coordinator designed a virtual museum to show her students what we can learn from ancient artifacts. We were even able to do drama workshops with our students.

It has been a challenging time but also a time for us to reimagine, explore and grow. We anticipate that we will use many of these new techniques and platforms in the years ahead and will continue to expand our relationships with authors throughout the country.

Book Giveaway Initiative

The key components to being an engaged reader are access to books, book ownership, and book choice.

Seeing parents and siblings read for pleasure helps to normalize reading for young people. The students with whom we work, for a variety of reasons, often don't see books as part of their lives. We work to change that by giving away thousands of new and gently used books every year so they can read at home and not just at school.

All our students are given their own copy of the anchor text for the program, as well as books related to the topic. We give books to the classroom libraries so there are new books for them to choose from that are just plain fun to read. And all the students get books before winter break and the summer to help combat summer slide.

We encourage our students to choose the books that interest them from a large, diverse selection of authors and topics. When young people can choose a book they identify with in some way, they will more often struggle through the hard parts to find out what happens at the end. This helps to make them better readers.

Last year was the first time we accepted gently used books which we distributed to the community near our office in Harlem as well as to the police station on the block, Harlem Hospital, church events, and holiday parties thrown by community groups.

In school year 2020, we gave out 10,336 books, a number smaller than we would like, but the pandemic put a crimp in our plans. Our goal is to get as many books into the hands of as many young people as we can. Reading is hard but without access to books it's impossible.

Behind the Book annually provides book donations for our individual classroom libraries and for students themselves, providing an extra aspect of our partnership that serves to help our students develop themselves as readers within their own lives, not just in the classrooms.

**Greg Leitao,
Assistant Principal,
The Urban Assembly Bronx
Academy of Letters**





[Behind the Book] [has] done more to support building a reading culture at PS 43 than any other partnership we have had in the past. They have donated books, their time, and brought volunteers to our school to work individually with our students. These experiences are irreplaceable.

Giovanna Delucchi, Principal, P.S. 43 in the Bronx

Our Partner Schools

Elementary

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

P.S. 43 Jonas Bronck
Mott Haven, the Bronx

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

Middle Schools

The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology: MSHS 223
South Bronx

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

M.S. 296 South Bronx Academy of Applied Media
Mott Haven, the Bronx

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning & Social Change
Harlem, Manhattan

Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters
Mott Haven, the Bronx

High Schools

Explorations Academy High School
Morrisania, the Bronx

Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School
Borough Park, Brooklyn

Frederick Douglass Academy III
Morrisania, the Bronx

International Community High School
Mott Haven, Bronx

The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology: MSHS 223
South Bronx

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning & Social Justice
Harlem, Manhattan

Our Year in Review

By the Numbers

In the 2019-20 school year, we:

- Partnered with 14 schools in 73 classrooms
- Conducted 450 workshops with 1,666 students
- Published work from 28 classrooms, making 703 students published authors and illustrators
- Donated 10,336 books

Since 2003, we have:

- Worked in 741 classrooms serving over 18,685 students in Title 1 public schools
- Donated more than 63,750 books to students, classroom & school libraries, and community organizations

Cultural Responsiveness

86% of our programs' books had main characters of color.

62% of our programs featured authors of color.

Volunteers

In the 2019-20 school year:

315 volunteers dedicated 1,884 hours of their time to our students.

Covid-19 Adaptations

Remote Learning: Spring Impact

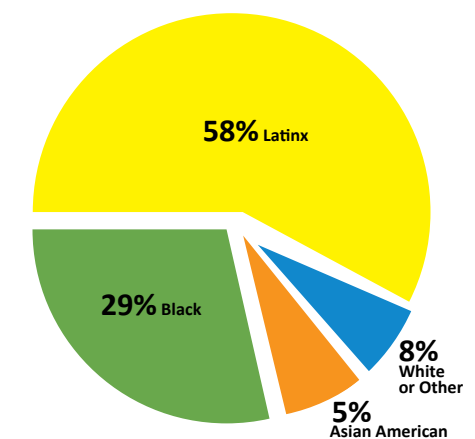
- Partnered with 9 schools to provide 23 programs consisting of 125 workshops serving 560 students
- Worked with 8 digital platforms to ensure student engagement.
 - Created virtual museum for study of artifacts
 - Delivered butterfly larvae to a PreK class
 - Special Guests like 'The Bug Man'
 - Virtual drama workshops

Our Average Student

85% qualified for free lunch.

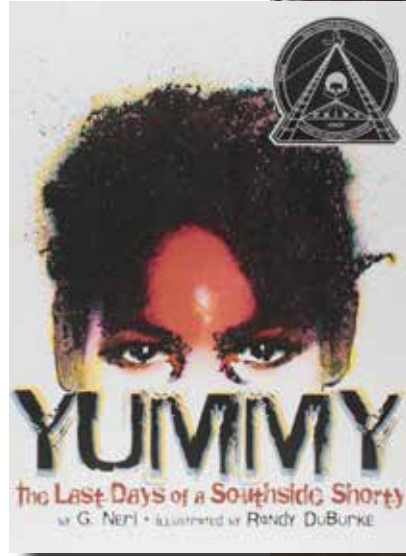
32% of our programs were customized for Special Education classes.

7 programs for were designed for English language learners



All demographic information was taken from NYC DOE's 2019-2020 Demographic Snapshot.





Program Spotlight *Yummy: The Last Days of A Southside Shorty*

As part of our Social Justice Initiative, author Greg Neri visited a class at M.S. 296 South Bronx Academy of Applied Media and spoke about the real-life inspiration for his graphic novel *Yummy: The Last Days of Southside Shorty*.

The book is about the 1994 shooting in the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago's South Side, where a 14-year-old girl named Shavon Dean was killed by a stray bullet during a gang shooting. Her killer, Robert "Yummy" Sandifer, was 11 years old. Greg recounts Yummy's three days on the run from police (and, eventually, his own gang) through the eyes of Roger, a fictional classmate of Yummy's. Roger grapples with the unanswerable questions behind Yummy's situation, with the whys and hows of a failed system, a crime-riddled neighborhood, and a neglected community. How could a smiling 11 year old boy, who carried a teddy bear and got his nickname from his love of sweets, also be an arsonist, an extortionist, a murderer?

Students explored the impact of age, race, and poverty on the outcome of a life. The class researched landmark cases involving youthful offenders with the help of lawyers from the accounting firm of KPMG. Through their analysis of case notes from various trials, they discussed the impact of different court decisions. BtB's drama consultant used theater techniques and games to help students understand the multiple perceptions of Yummy's actions and develop their arguments by facilitating activities that explored Yummy's character.

Students were invited to the midtown offices of KPMG where they continued to refine their arguments about consequences for Yummy with the support of their volunteer writing coaches. They also learned about different types of lawyers and were treated to lunch in the KPMG cafeteria. They completed the program by writing narratives and creating abstract portraits of the books' characters that were included in a BtB publication they call *Crime and Consequences*.

I would love to be an intern at KPMG because the experience showed me that I have potential to be a lawyer. From this experience I'm going for a spot on the debate team to have some more knowledge about a possibility of being a lawyer.

Zhaebreon, student at M.S. 296 in the Bronx

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT *Butterfly Life Cycles*

During the height of the pandemic when we were suddenly forced to quarantine, one of our program coordinators brought the outdoors indoors with a transformation-themed program about the lifecycle of a butterfly. This was our first completely remote program.

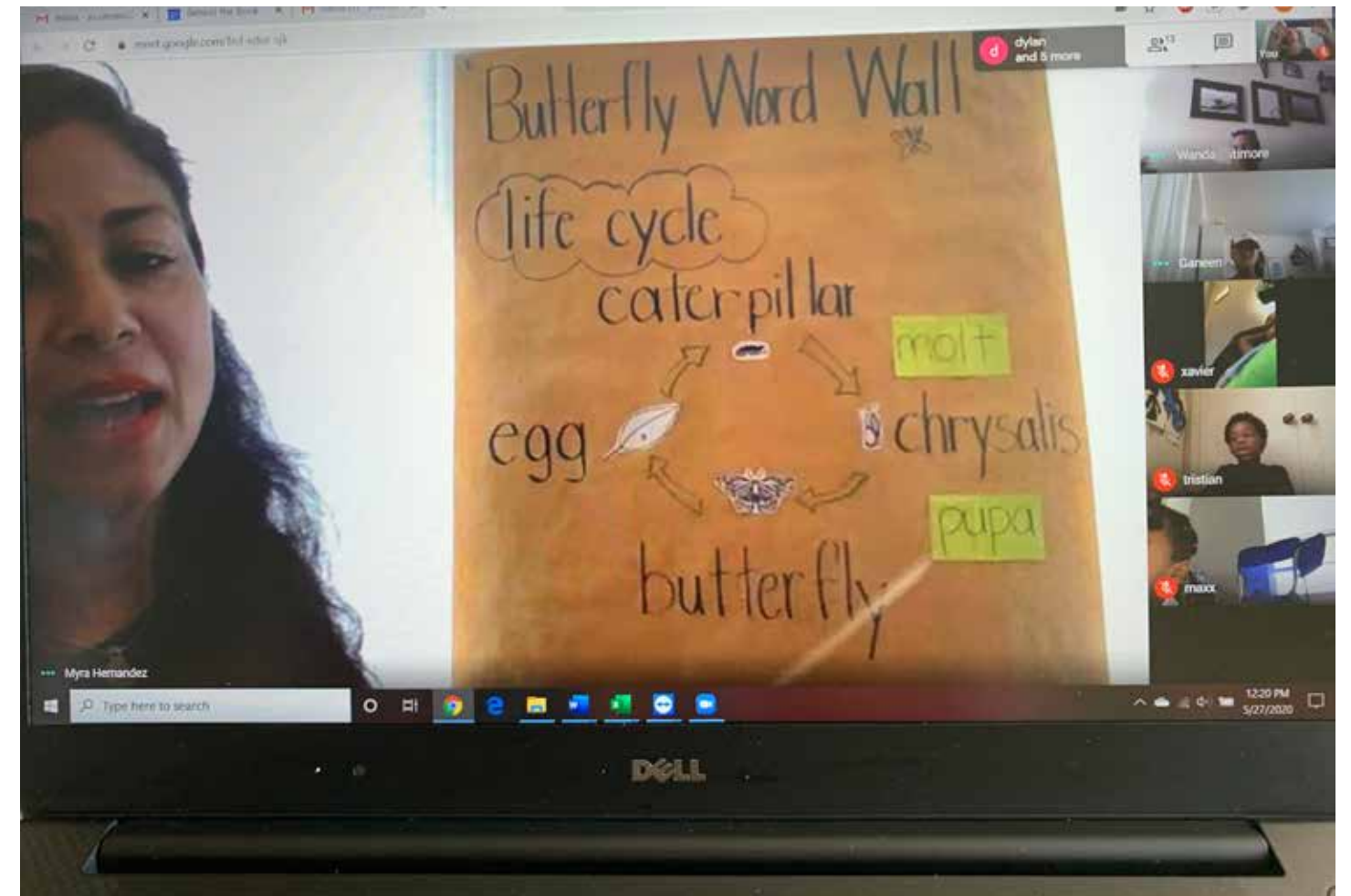
Donning facemasks, the students from Ms. Deen's Pre-K class at P.S. 154 in Harlem, met us outside their school to pick up goodie bags filled with art supplies, their own Painted Lady Butterfly larva and materials to build a cage.

Each child also received the e-book, *Butterfly Life Cycles*, and learned facts about the butterfly's metamorphosis from an egg, to a larva, to a caterpillar and finally, to a beautiful butterfly.

The budding scientists made observations of their larva and used their science journals to illustrate its daily transformation. They got to meet virtually with Ryan the Bug Man, an expert on butterflies and created butterfly puppets from the materials in the goodie bags. Each child dictated or wrote a fact they learned and a description of their puppet.

The final workshop was a celebration where they simultaneously released their butterflies into the world.

It was an awe-inspiring experience for all involved!





[click here to see the gallery](#)

Student Books

Our programs don't just create readers, we also empower students as writers. Students write stories, essays, biographies, poems; they draw graphic short stories; they write about things they have learned, each writing project calibrated to bring them closer to the anchor text while showing them how they, too, are writers.

Thanks to our amazing team of book designers, 28 classes were represented in student books last year, making 703 students published authors.

Student Book Designers

Tree Abraham
Sydney Barnes
Sarah Jane Boecher
Annabel Brandon
Wilna Combrinck

Nina Dunhill
Rosie Gaynor
Liliana Guia
Kristyn Kalnes
Sara Loos

Elizabeth Nichols
Krystal Pratt
Rachel Reiss
Katherine Ross
Iris Shin

Our scholars and teachers alike love working with Behind the Book to create published books. My team and I are thoroughly impressed with the results. The reactions from the children when they receive their work printed and bound in an actual book is priceless. Last year, our scholars were so proud of their accomplishments that we hosted a parent assembly where they showcased their work.

Adam Stevens Principal P.S. 4 Washington Heights



Meeting the author was so important and beneficial because it opened my mind about how to be a writer. I also want to thank Behind the Book for giving us the opportunity to expand our ideas. This is a great way to starting writing a novel.

Student at M.S. 296 in the Bronx



Supporters

We'd like to thank everyone who supports Behind the Book:

Government

CreateNYC Language Access Fund
New York City Council Discretionary Funds
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Foundations

AmazonSmile Foundation
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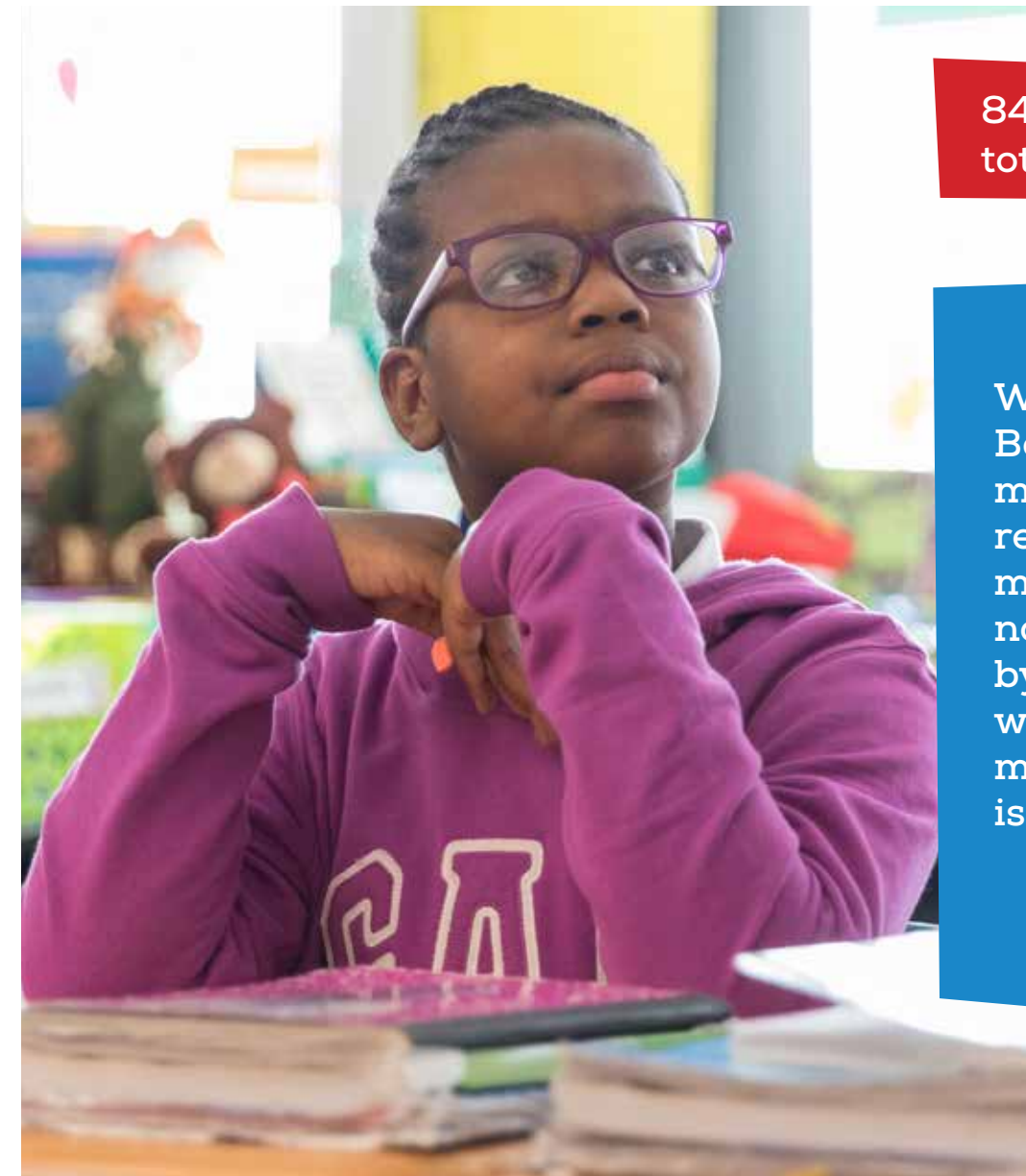
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845 Gifts Under \$500
totaling \$69,345

Working with
Behind the Book
made me want to
read more because
many books might
not seem exciting
by the cover but
when you read
more you realize it
is really exciting.

*Student, P.S.
125 in Harlem*

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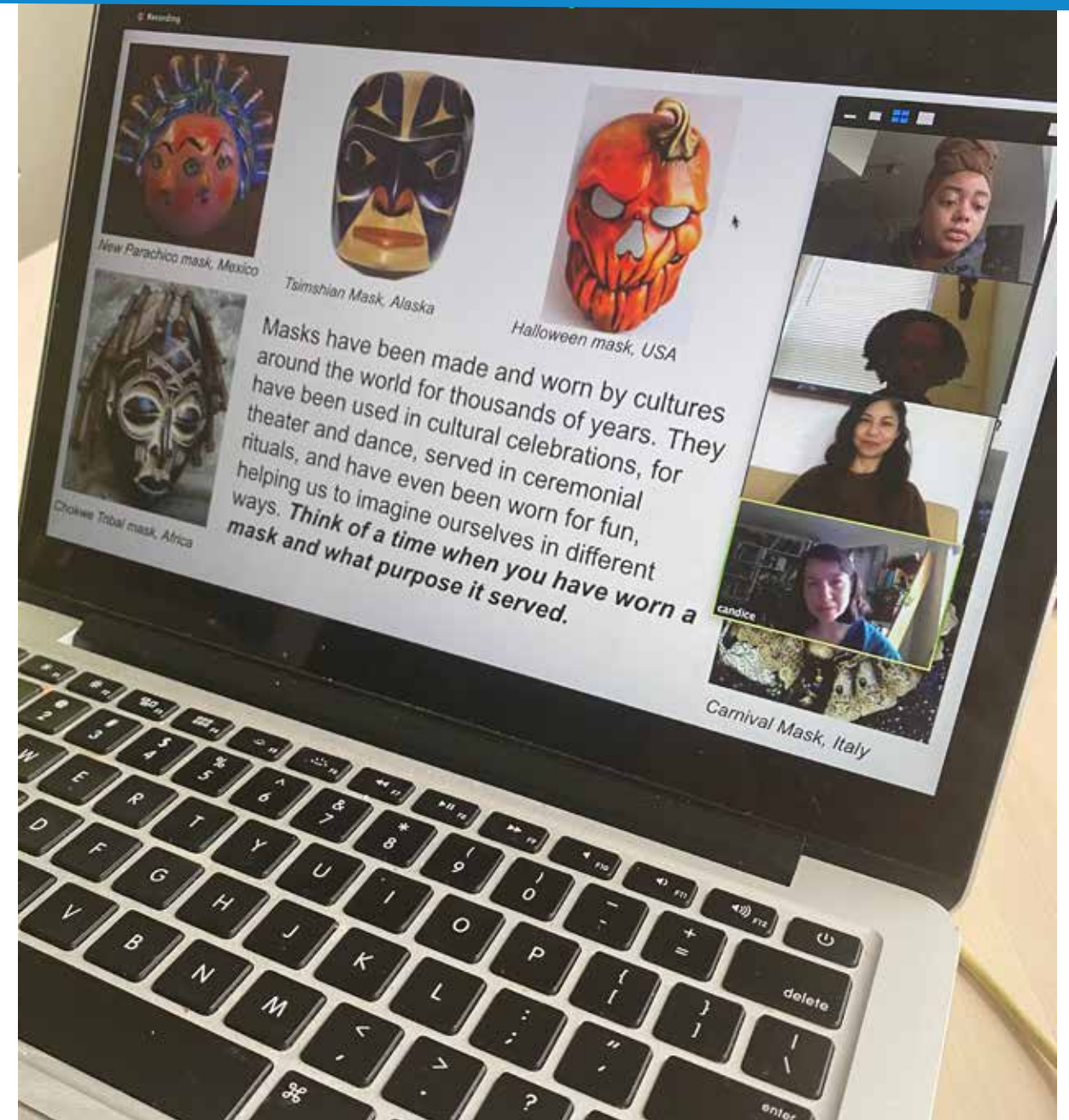


I want to express my appreciation to you for your support during the recent COVID-19 crisis in which students and faculty have transitioned to an asynchronous learning model. Everyone I talk to has praised the way in which your organization has offered support to our community. It is very pleasing to see Behind the Book take such an active and public-spirited role at a time of crisis. Your support during this difficult time will be long remembered.

Emanuel Batista, Dean of Development, P.S. 125 in Harlem

The act of them signing on and just being present provided so much light in a time of uncertainty. The kids BtB gets the privilege to work with are amazing! Their "showing up" ignited a desire to give them only the best, and together we worked through technical difficulties to share, discover, and build a virtual community.

Myra Hernandez, BtB Program Coordinator on connecting with students through Remote Learning



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Barbara Coccioletti
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Nina Dunhill

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Candice Humphries
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Tracy-Ann Samuels
Susan Verde
Reneé Watson
Ibi Zoboi



When a Behind the Book visiting artist or author comes into our school, the energy of the classroom changes. The excitement of our scholars is palpable.

Adam Stevens, Principal, P.S. 4 Washington Heights

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Alexandra Berndt
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A heartfelt thank you to Karen Butler for contributing drama to our programs.

Special thanks to Patti Pagnotta who donated her time weekly to head the Book Giveaway Initiative.

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KPMG

Haben Abraha
Katherine Alvarado
Aaron Balken
Drew Broyles
Renesh Cook
James Damon
Stephania DiMuro
Justin Donatello
Nicole Edgar
Zach Edwards
Nathaniel Gaisie
Shane Giunta
Oscar Gomez
Spurgeon Green
Subin Hwang
Eleanor Jacobsen
Omo-ose Joseph-Erameh

BOA

Althea Aikens
Jacqueline Bemby
Benjamin Collier
Dan Mason
Gary Pierre
Haslani Riyaz
Deidre Smith
Azja Stanton

Quantilope

Johanna Azis
Ezra Brezina
Beatrice Capestany
Mike DeGagne

Financials

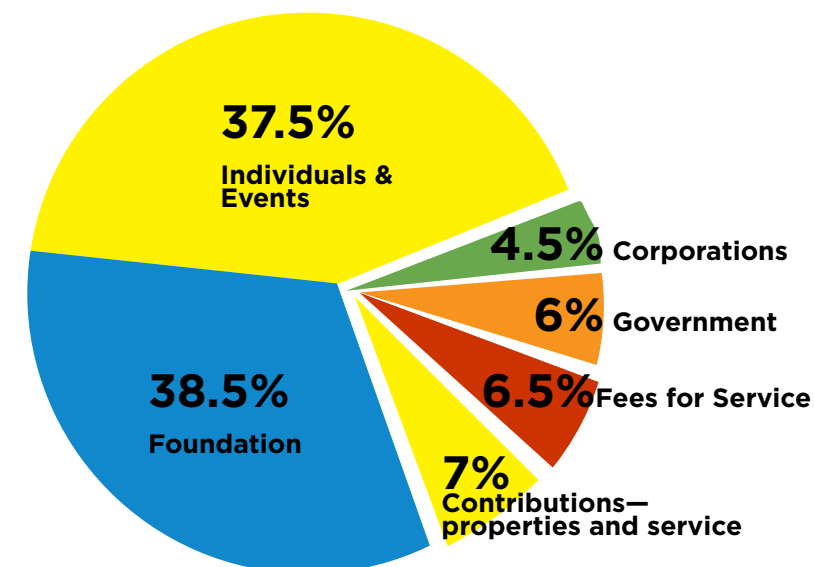
Assets, Liabilities, Net Assets

	2020	2019	2018
Assets	\$572,434	\$320,254	\$249,784
Liabilities	\$98,986	\$10,538	\$10,188
Net Assets	\$473,448	\$309,716	\$239,596

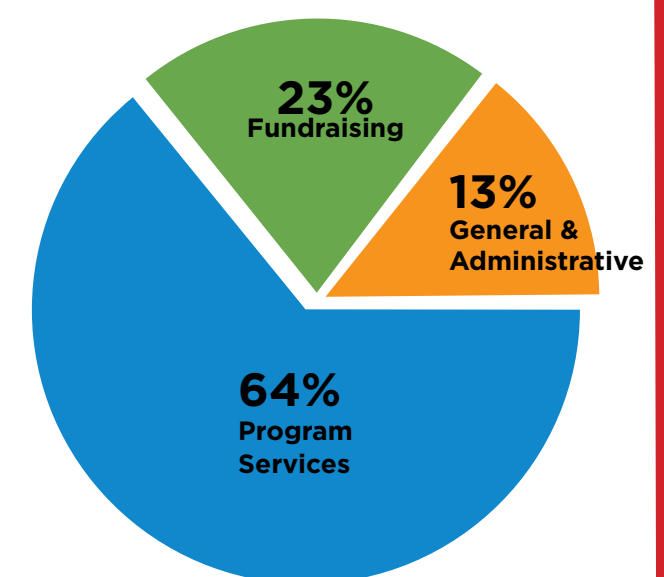
Summary of Revenue & Expenses

	2020	2019	2018
Contributions	\$895,794	\$752,001	\$629,498
Contributions - properties & services	\$73,508	\$111,883	\$78,123
Investment Income	\$292	\$197	\$154
Program Service Income	\$69,082	\$80,645	\$80,258
Direct Cost of Special Events	(\$39,153)	(\$40,474)	(\$20,162)
Total Revenue & Support	\$999,523	\$904,252	\$767,871

Revenue



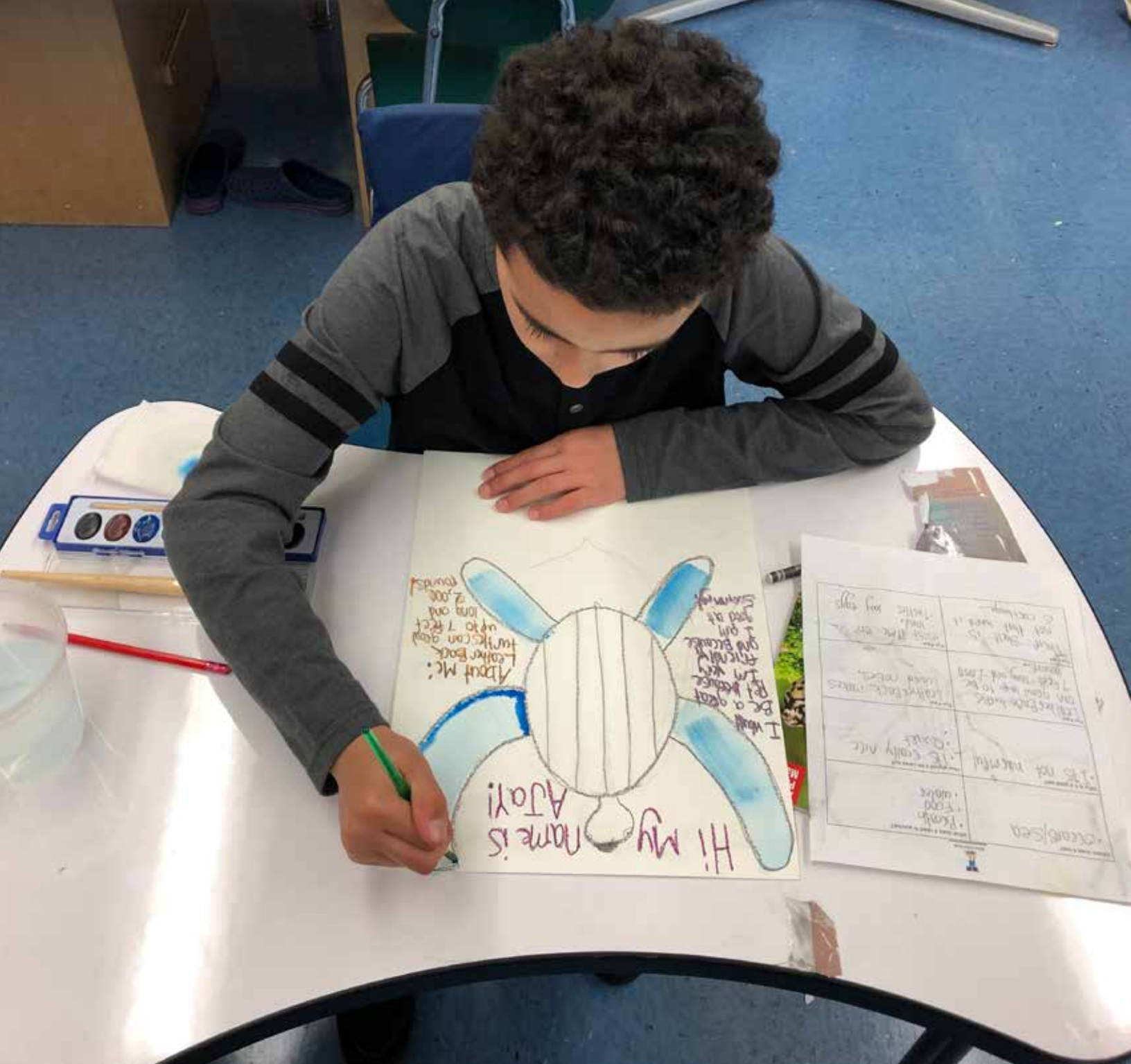
Expenses



Thank you for the opportunity to participate today. The young adults are more mature than I and many of my peers were at their age. I do not believe this event was just for the young adults, but also for each Attorney in attendance who thoroughly enjoyed their company and insight.

Volunteer Writing Coach





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