Dear Friends,

On a hot, muggy day earlier this year, I lugged a heavy cardboard box to a third grade classroom in Harlem. As soon as I walked through the classroom door, students erupted in ecstatic screams. A few leapt out of their seats and lunged toward the box. If you don’t know what Behind the Book does, you might be perplexed by this. You might wonder if I was bringing free copies of the latest Taylor Swift album, or the hottest toys or latest kid’s movie.

But those who know Behind the Book, know that that box was full of books. And in this case, those books were written and illustrated by the students themselves.

When I think back on the many accomplishments we’ve had this year, from being featured on NY 1 to expanding our offerings to summer programs and teacher professional learning - our biggest accomplishment year after year is succeeding in getting students to love books and reading as much as we do. We all understand that reading is essential for all learning, and as one BTB principal said, “You can pull teeth to get them to do it or you can motivate them to reach for it themselves.”

The experiences students have with Behind the Book don’t just revolutionize their relationship with reading and writing in the present, they are profound learning experiences that stay with students long after our programs end. Those of you who are avid readers of our blog may remember a recent post about one of our alums, Sam, who participated in BtB as a junior at CIMS, a high school in the Bronx. Three years later, now a student at Fordham University, she counts her BtB experience as one of the most important in high school (she even wrote a paper about it for one of her classes).

If you have supported us with a donation or with your time this year, you made moments of pure joy and of profound learning possible for our 1400 students. Thank you.

I’d also like to thank the amazing authors and teachers that worked with us this year to craft transformative moments for our students.

On behalf of all of us at Behind the Book: Happy reading!

Jo Umans
Two students from one of our 3rd grade classes at PS 154 delight in seeing their published work.
Behind the Book’s mission is to inspire New York City public school students to love reading by bringing accomplished authors and their books into classrooms and creating rich, innovative literacy programs. Our programs take place in underserved public schools, are part of the class curricula and meet the Common Core Learning Standards.
Our Strategy

Through a series of workshops, authors explore a genre of writing and guide students in the creation and publication of their own original work. Behind the Book programs foster a life-long love of reading, writing and learning.

For each program we leverage five key design elements that strengthen student engagement in reading.

1. Customizable Programming

Our model’s success derives from the individualized attention we invest in each of our classrooms. If a 5th-grade instructor is teaching a unit on poetry, and the students read at a 3rd-grade level, we design a program that facilitates teaching the core curriculum, resonates with students, and scaffolds material in a way that encourages higher-level thinking while still meeting students at their reading levels.

2. Book Ownership

The books a student reads through our program is theirs to keep and add to a home library. Book ownership helps students identify as readers and it means access to reading material at home for them, siblings, and parents. Books are also donated to the school and/or class library. Easy access to books is essential to sustaining the engagement created by BtB after our program is completed.

3. The Right Book and Author

Real-world connections (such as meeting the author) and texts that are familiar, vivid, and relevant are key to fostering reading engagement. When students meet the author of a book that resonates with them, sometimes from their own neighborhood, they also have the opportunity to learn about this career path and gain a greater understanding of what a role model did to achieve his/her dreams.

4. Multiple Contact Sessions

Each BtB program involves between 3 - 8 workshops to foster reading-based social and academic interaction among students, between author and students, and also between research and writing volunteers and students. Mentorship is a key function of the BtB program to allow community members to support the academic success of students in high-needs schools.

5. Creative Final Projects

Programs culminate in a writing project that reinforces learning. Behind the Book celebrates students’ voices by publishing their work in a class book or by creating a public exhibit of their work. Mastering experiences like this demystify success and increase student confidence and willingness to try more challenging tasks.
Our Year in Review

12 Schools
280 Workshops
1,970 Books Donated
51 Classroom Programs
39 Authors Hosted
22 Student Books Created
1300+ Students served by Behind the Book

Student Demographics

- Hispanic: 53%
- Black: 41%
- White: 2%
- Asian: 3%

- 87% of our students were eligible for free or reduced lunch
- 29% of our students received Special Education services
- 23% of our students were English language learners
“Words cannot describe the gains this program has provided. Student engagement has been positively impacted. Students who were shy and withdrawn have come out of their shells.”

- Brenda Changkit, Kindergarten Teacher, PS 241
Programs

Behind the Book is committed to helping every child in NYC become an engaged reader. We do this by providing customizable, in-school literacy programs, in partnership with the classroom teacher and accomplished writers that transform regular students into published authors.

All of our programs enhance the existing curriculum and use a project-based learning approach where students actively explore real world problems and challenges for an extended time to acquire deeper knowledge. We use multiple instructional strategies across several workshops including author visits, visual art, field trips, research and writing workshops, all with volunteer support. All programs culminate in a celebration to support achievement and completion of high-quality work.

In this report, we highlight just two (out of 51) examples from this past year. We hope you will visit our website to learn about the rest.

Schools We Work With

CS 21 Crispus Attucks School
Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn

PS 46 Magnet School of Communications and Media Arts through Applied Learning
Fort Greene, Brooklyn

PS 98 Shorackappock
Inwood, Manhattan

PS 154 Harriet Tubman Learning Center
Harlem, Manhattan

PS 241 Emma L. Johnston School
Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters
Mott Haven, the Bronx

JHS 13/Central Park East MS
East Harlem, Manhattan

Collegiate Institute for Math & Science (CIMS)
Allerton, the Bronx

DeWitt Clinton High School
Norwood, the Bronx

EBC High School for Public Service
Bushwick, Brooklyn

Harvey Milk High School
Lower Manhattan

International Community High School
Mott Haven, the Bronx
Spotlight on: The City Green Program

Six years ago, aligned with a Behind the Book program, a group of students at DeWitt Clinton HS in the Bronx, started a school garden on an empty plot behind their school. That garden is still functioning today, and we were so excited to bring a group of BtB second graders from Harlem to visit it.

This spring our second grade class at PS 154 was working with author DyAnne DiSalvo's book, City Green, about a girl who finds ways to improve her community by making a garden. What better way to consolidate our City Green program than asking some of our oldest students to show some of our youngest around their garden?

The class saw plots of bare soil awaiting spring plantings and the seedlings being cultivated in the greenhouse. They filed past a crop of barley, and plots containing lemon balm, black eyed susan, chamomile, valerian and kale. Then they got their hands dirty planting some lettuce seedlings with help from our high school guides. Inside, students looked at tomato seedlings under heat lamps and watched worms composting soil for the lettuce they’d just planted.

The DWC Garden field trip was a great way to illustrate to our students the positive change that grows from a simple idea and the motivation to pursue it. As part of their writing project, our students first identified ways that their community could be improved and then wrote persuasive letters to members of the Department of Sanitation, Transportation, Education, Parks and Recreation, City Council member Inez Dickens and the Manhattan Borough President. And they all received responses from a representative of each department.
Spotlight on: When I Was The Greatest Program

When it comes to engaging young readers, there’s nothing like stepping into the shoes of a fictional character to bring a story to life. That is exactly what 11th grade students at Collegiate Institute for Math and Science High School (CIMS) in the Bronx did during their BtB program.

Students read *When I Was The Greatest* by Jason Reynolds, in which the main character Needles, a teenage boy in Brooklyn, uses knitting as a coping mechanism to deal with the stresses of his life.

During a special session, BtB brought volunteers to the classroom to give the students a knitting lesson, showing them first-hand the focus and calming effects of this skill.

Amongst the determined clicking of 26 sets of needles (27 including the teacher’s, 28 when principal Fredrick Nelson dropped in to try his hand), students chatted about the importance of not allowing stitches to tighten; the value in keeping count, and, once they got the hang of it, about how they could see why knitting was such a great idea for Needles.

The 45 minutes our students spent knitting and chatting was a glimpse at our goal of creating “a community of life-long readers”. It’s why all our programs incorporate an art project, author visits, a writing assignment, and editing and writing workshops with volunteer mentors from the wider community. There are many ways to read a book.
Bidding Farewell to an Amazing School Partner

This year Behind the Book bid a reluctant farewell to JHS 13/CPEMS. The middle school closed its doors after its June 2015 graduation ceremony, thus ending our nine-year partnership. Principal Jacob Michelman delivered an emotional address interrupted by cheers from parents and friends. We were touched to not only be mentioned in the program, but in his speech, when he commented,

“There’s no way you don’t love to read after a Behind the Book program.”

It was an honor to work with the teachers on 41 literacy programs over almost a decade, to get to know the students through their writing, and to connect them with 25 accomplished authors, some of whom have returned to work with the students year after year.

Among those authors is Rita Williams-Garcia who worked with us at JHS 13 for four years. Last spring she returned to the school to lead workshops with the eighth grade. The program focused on the civil rights movement of the 1960’s while reflecting on current events in their social justice unit.

Students read Rita’s One Crazy Summer and used it as their inspiration to publish their own book, Close to Our Hearts – What Matters Most To Us. We were impressed with the connections the students made to Rita’s book, their interpretations of current issues, and the thought that went into their accompanying art work.
Young Authors Initiative

Over 40% of our classes took part in our Young Authors Initiative, where as a culminating project, BtB publishes the student-produced writing and art in a professionally designed and printed book. These culminating projects are a unique feature of our work and central to how we help young people gain the self-esteem and self-efficacy that influence so many other parts of their lives. In post program evaluations, teachers repeatedly emphasized the impact the published book had on their students:

“My students gained knowledge about people in our community, experience conducting interviews, exposure to a ‘real’ published author, and a sense of pride due to making OUR OWN BOOK! I am so grateful!”

- Ms. Lloyd, 4th grade teacher at PS 98

“For my students publishing a book was an opportunity to see that hard work can lead to outcomes that showcase our talents, and create a sense of pride and accomplishment.”

- Ms. Beare, 5th grade at PS 241
A principal says:

“Your process of analyzing a text and then choosing books that attracted the deep conversations CIMS students’ had with real live authors is truly special. Thank you for your support and for helping us build a literacy partnership that propelled our students farther, while motivating and inspiring the community from whence they came.”

– Ms. Shadia Alvarez, Former Principal of Collegiate Institute for Math & Science
82% Increase in reading engagement

65% Students read self-selected books more often

65% Improved understanding of the writing process

Teachers say:

“The students were truly inspired – some would actually like to be writers someday.”

- Ms. Laroche, Grade 4, PS 154

“Knowledge about people in our community, experience conducting interviews, exposure to a ‘real’ published author, and a sense of pride due to making OUR OWN BOOK! [that's what my students gained from BtB]”

- Ms. Novello, Grade 4, PS 98
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We are grateful that so many individuals, foundations and corporations believe so strongly in Behind the Book’s mission. Together, we are *Creating Readers for Life.*

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Matt Nebel & Sara Reynolds
Timothy Newman
Shannon Flood Nichols
Alissa Nigro
Rose & Scott Nigro
Larry & Rachel Norton
Jay Norway
Trang Nguyen
Ahmet Odabas
Anna & Olaf Olaffson
Susan Orem
Wendy Ormond
Howard & Marcia Owens
Potter Palmer
Scot Paltrow
Sandra Panem
Julia Parish
Christine Park
Art & Ilene Penn
Richard Petrino
Manishi Prasad
Daniel Quinn
Mahesh Rajagopalan
Tom Regalbuto
Ann-Marie & Edmund Resor
Stephanie Ribakoff
Lesli Rice & Louis Slesin
Mindy Richenstein
Johanna Rigg-Smith

Jean Rosenberg
Karin Ross
Robert Russell
Michael Salzman
Max Samis
Terry Sanders
Margaret Sapovchak
David Saylor
Dona & Keith Schaitkin
Louis Schioppo
Benjamin Schwartz
Kamini Shah
Ann Sherman
Christine & Pete Sherwood
Jennifer Shin
Anne & Joel Silverman
Karla Silverman
Howard & Patty Silverstein
Jonathan & Natalie Silverstein
Ira Smolin
Angela & Dr. Joel Solomon
Nancy Solomon
Marion Springman
Deby & Jess Staley
Brent Staples
Rosemary Stimola
Aaron Stotesbury & Rosa Tang
Maritza Struyvenberg
Campbell Stuart
Charlene & Robert Stuart
Gail Stuart
Sarah Stuart
Mai-Linh & Michael Stuhlbarg
Timothy Stute
James Suh
Linda & Mark Taxel
Monica Togaru
Michael Trapanese
Robert Vahradian & Helena Willner
Martha Valdez
Chris & Natalie Vena
Rachel & Steven Wasserman
Shari & Steven Wayne
Barbara Weiser
Jeffrey & Jill Weiss
Marci & Michael Weiss
Bette Weneck
Tom White
Bill & Mollie Williams
Dovie Wingard
Jacqueline Wolff
Susanna Yi
Marty Zervas
Vadim Zhitomirsky
Robin Zlotowitz
Financial Highlights

Summary of Revenues & Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>356,120</td>
<td>333,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions - properties &amp; services</td>
<td>16,276</td>
<td>12,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Service Income</td>
<td>36,622</td>
<td>46,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue &amp; Support</td>
<td>409,150</td>
<td>391,823</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assets, Liabilities, Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>128,381</td>
<td>210,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td>13,553</td>
<td>14,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
<td>114,828</td>
<td>196,257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenses

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>337,933  (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Administrative</td>
<td>38,673   (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>128,898  (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>505,504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revenue

- Foundation: 9%
- Individual & Events: 4%
- Government: 31%
- Corporations: 7%
- Fees for Service: 8%
- In-Kind Contributions: 41%
About Us

Board of Directors
Denise C. Bell
Stephen Cirami
Casey Cornelius
Douglas Davidson
Jacqueline Farinella
Michael Gray
Emmelene Lee
Muffie Meyer
Jo Umans
Ian Woolley

Young Executive Board
Harini Angara
Jessamyn Block
Patty Carnevale
Jason Chen
Veni Dhir
Khalid El Khatib
Matthew Greenfield
Kaitlyn Kotlowski
Christie Louie
Alissa Nigro
Natasha Sabhani
Nirav Shah

Board of Advisors
Limarys Caraballo
Melanie Fallon-Houska
Christine V. Fleming
Micaela Gutierrez
Lynn Huber
Barbara Korein
Annmarie McLeoud
James Meader
Francine Prose
Doreen Rappaport
Brian O. Selznick
Sharon Teitelbaum
Rita Williams-Garcia

Staff
Jo Umans, Founder & Executive Director
Marcia Bujold
Ayanna Coleman
Christine V. Fleming
Briana Harris
Myra Hernandez
Candice Humphries
Sara Reynolds
Johanna Rigg-Smith
Emily Rosenberg
Spenser Stevens