

**BECOMING**

2022 || 2023 Annual Portfolio

**MORE**



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Dear Friends,

As educators, scholars, and families, we are all grappling with the impacts COVID-19 has had and continues to have on our lives, our families and our school. Mary Oliver is one of my favorite poets. She pushes me reflect on what is important and whether I am living my life accordingly when she asks,

**“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”**

Equality takes this question to heart. We are known for graduating scholars with demonstrated college and career readiness - ensuring they are prepared for any path they choose after High School. We take that commitment seriously. We are proud that we have delivered on our promise year over year, graduating more scholars each year than our local district, New York City, and New York State. And, we stay focused on becoming more. This life is too precious to stop at that achievement. **Our community improves, grows and becomes greater each day.**

We are pushing ourselves and our academic program to expand. We added a new position to our faculty– a post-secondary coordinator who has been visiting ECS alumni at their colleges to see how Equality can better support them after they leave our campus. We are learning more from our alumni about how to increase support for our Middle and High School scholars. Equality’s Saturday Academy continues to provide additional opportunities for scholars to access learning.

This Fall, we approved plans for construction of **our new Elementary & High School Campus**. Our new 62,000 square foot complex will reflect how we feel about our academic program. It will be high quality, bright, welcoming, and efficient. Our scholars deserve a facility that represents the quality of education they receive at Equality. Our staff deserve a facility that mirrors their dedication and hard work. Our families deserve a campus that they feel proud of visiting and sending their children to each day.

Equality believes that, to honor the wild and precious lives of our scholars, our families, and our community, we must push each other past our limits. We are becoming greater than we have been. **Thank you for being on this journey with us.**



Caitlin Franco – Executive Director & Founder

# infinite possibilities

**Equality is breaking new ground in 2024-2025!**

We are thrilled to announce that Equality is building a **NEW Educational Complex** to house our new Elementary School and our High School. This new building will be a **unified space** for scholars, **grades K-5 and 9-12**, and their families to experience and participate in a **true community complex**.

When complete, this new Elementary and High School building will have over **62,000 square feet of interior space plus over 7,000 square feet of outdoor space**.

Both the Elementary School and High School will have their own, **distinct facilities** within the building, **including separate entrances**.

The building will have 2 large indoor spaces: a **3,784 square foot cafeteria** and a **5,002 square foot gym with a full sized basketball court**. The facility will include a **7,000 square foot rooftop recreation area, an art room, a library, a media lab, and a High School science lab**.

We look forward to this journey together, with our newest scholars starting in Elementary School and then graduating from the same building at the end of their High School career with us.



## 2009

- Equality Charter Middle School (ECMS) opened
- Co-op City Campus serving grades 6-8

## 2014

- Equality Charter High School (ECHS) opened
- Castle Hill Campus serving grades 9-12

## 2020

- NYS approved charter expansion for Equality Charter Elementary School (ECES)

## 2022

- New Lease signed at 801 Bartholdi St., Bronx
- Bartholdi Campus will serve grades K-5 and 9-12 at full expansion

## 2024

- ECES opens at Bartholdi Campus
- Grades K-1

In Fall 2024, the Elementary School will open with grades K & 1, adding another grade each year until full expansion.

## 2025

- ECHS moves to Bartholdi Campus
- Grades 9-12
- Bartholdi Campus serving Grades K-2 & 9-12
- Castle Hill Campus to close

## 2028

- ECS Full Expansion
- Bartholdi Campus Grades K-5 & 9-12
- Co-op City Campus Grades 6-8



Equality Charter School's **NEW Educational Complex**, located at **801 Bartholdi Street, Bronx, NY 10467**, will be one of the largest independent charters in NYC.

# a positive outcome

## Our Internship Program has been re-launched!

Our **Junior scholars'** Internship Program has been **re-launched** in person for the 2022-23 school year. **And we've expanded** by offering this same program to our **Senior scholars**, some of whom are already **pursuing their career goals** in Health Care at Jacobi Hospital. Equality Charter School's **Internship Program** allows scholars to **explore** their **career** interests and talents by participating in work-based experiences.



Through these experiences, scholars learn **positive work behaviors, develop resumes, network at events, strengthen college applications**, and learn to become leaders in the community. Industries include *Science and Technology, Health and Medicine, Media Communications, Arts and Education, and Government and Public Administration.*

Generally speaking, internship programs provide the missing ingredient that employers are seeking in job candidates. Relevant work experience can be just as important as academic performance when it comes to finding the right job. This is why Equality's internship program is so important in helping our scholars get more out of life post High School.

Equality believes in meeting our scholars where they are and working with them to develop the tools they will need to excel, wherever their life's journey may take them. We believe that being self-aware, being

able to manage their own independence, and honing their critical thinking skills are tools that will serve our scholars best in their wild and precious journey through life.

Many public charter schools position their vision as “college for all.” Typically this means the sole emphasis from an early age of schooling is that the only acceptable post-graduation outcome is to attend some level of college. This approach does not work for us, and we see our responsibility differently.

For many scholars and their families, college may not be their first choice, and may never



be their choice. In fact, today’s economy and workforce accommodates many skill sets that may never require college. We want those decisions to be up to our scholars and their families - not ECS. Instead, we will use our time with ECS scholars to make certain we have helped them prove readiness while they are with us.

Our internship program is an integral part of giving our scholars the well rounded, experience based foundation they need to build greater and greater successes as adults.

At Equality, **we aim to engage and empower** our scholars and community– if you or someone you know can provide a young person with work experience, please contact **[Julie.Caso@equalitycharterschool.org](mailto:Julie.Caso@equalitycharterschool.org)** to explore our Internship Program.



# narrowing the divide

**Equality's journey to increase Racial Equity continues in 2022-2023 with these four steps:**

**1. Increasing the Racial Equity Committee's capacity to lead Racial Equity Work:**

- a. Educate The Facilitator Program - Offered by our Racial Equity Consultant, Jamilah Pitts
- b. Reading articles, and listening to podcasts to lead the school community in having thoughtful and informed discussions about Racial Equity
- c. Collecting and sharing edifying resources as a Racial Equity Committee
- d. Empowering staff at all levels to become Racial Equity thought leaders

**2. Bringing our Racial Equity work to our scholars through:**

- a. Culturally Responsive - Sustaining Pedagogy - November PD
- b. Developing Socratic Seminars to:
  - i. Encourage introspection
  - ii. Examine how we think about and interact with our scholars and colleagues

**3. Making sure that Racial Equity work is prioritized and differentiated as often as possible: Providing PD to both instructional and non-instructional staff.**



# Equality recognizes that racism exists within all facets of our society. Our work requires active and intentional questioning and interventions of policies, behaviors, & processes to combat racism.

## 4. Hiring staff members that reflect our scholars as well as the world around them.

### Progress Thus Far:

During our organization-wide November Professional Development, each of our departments engaged in differentiated sessions:

- a. The 7 Tenets of Liberatory Teaching (supported by Jamilah Pitts)
- b. Supporting women of color in the workplace (Racial Equity Committee)
- c. Liberatory Practices in non-instructional areas (supported by Teaching Matters)

In an effort to build our capacities as leaders, our Racial Equity Committee has led two Socratic Seminars and plans to lead 3 more later this school year. Each of these discussions aims to bring awareness to issues of race that concern our scholars or the larger school community.

Our HR department is working with Chambers North Star Consulting to increase the representation of staff members in the BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, People of Color) communities. We are happy to report > **15% increase** in the number of staff members whose demographics reflect our scholar population!



# a year in review

2022  
-  
2023



**>95%**

### Next Level Readiness

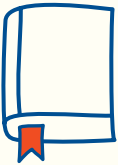
We are #1 in our district at preparing Middle School students for High School.



**>79%**

### Free / Reduced Lunch

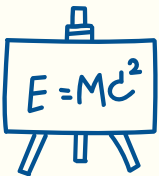
We provide equal opportunities in education to economically disadvantaged communities.



**+40%**

### Better ELA Scores

ECMS scholars' NYS ELA Exams increased significantly between 2019 (the previous testing year) and 2022.



**+19%**

### Better Math Scores

Despite NYC Math test scores falling by as much as -23% during the pandemic, ECMS Scholars gained proficiency in Math.



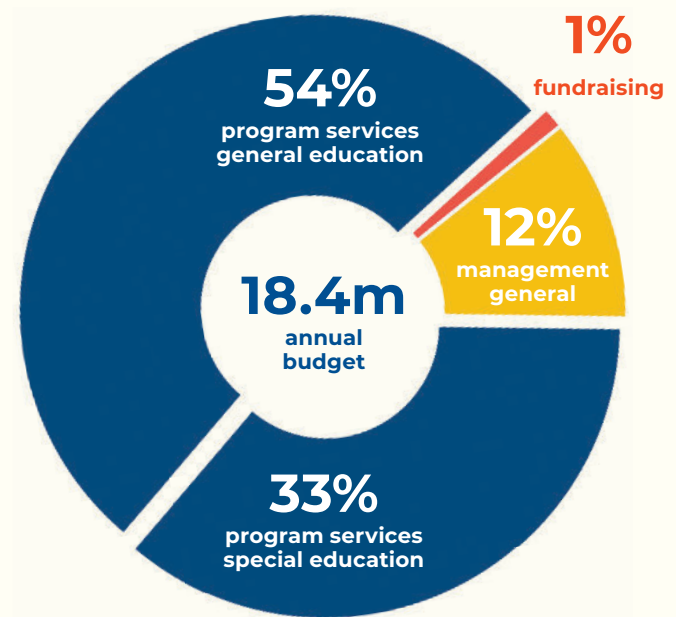
**<1%**

### Expulsion Rate

Equality prides itself on having one of the lowest expulsion and long term suspension rates in the state.

## Spend Wisely

The numbers below show the "functional expense analysis" of our 2022 / 2023 budget.



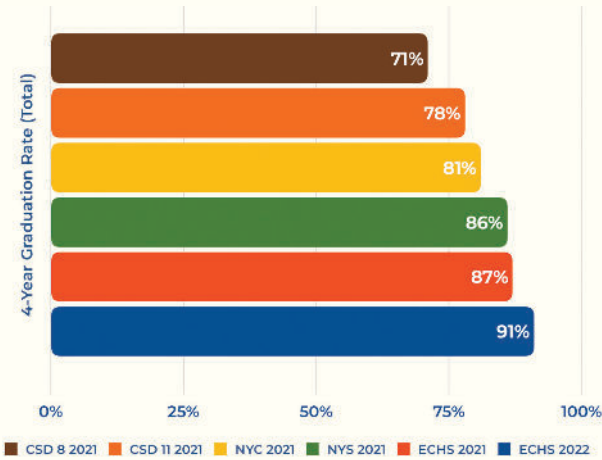
## 10-Year Anniversaries

**Emily Collins**, Director of Scholar Services  
Equality Charter High School

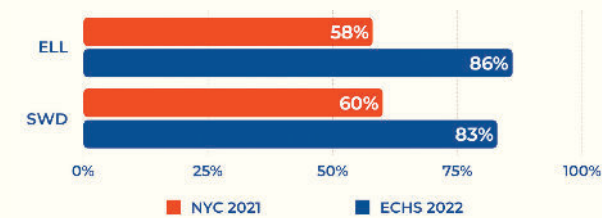
**Alexander Jackson**, PhysEd / Health Teacher  
Equality Charter Middle School

## 2021 & 2022 Graduates

Once again ECHS 2022 graduation rates exceed all comparison groups.



Our special population's graduation rates also exceed all comparison groups.



### Thank you to our stakeholders!

*Left to right:* **Amanda Huza**, ECMS Principal; **Vanessa Gibson**, Bronx Borough President; **Caitlin Franco**, ECS Exec. Director & Founder; **Karines Reyes**, NYS Assemblymember; **Kevin Riley**, NYC Councilmember

*Not pictured:*

**Amanda Farias**, NYC Councilmember; **Michael Benedetto**, NYS Assemblymember

## Health and Wellness for our Staff

We believe that the Health and Wellness of our staff have an impact not only on educators as individuals but also on the overall well-being of the young minds they care for. We believe teacher wellness is related to consistency and steadiness in schools and student achievement.

In 2022-2023, we strived to incorporate the new normal into our health and wellness benefits with CIGNA by expanding options to include apps that can be utilized at home including Peloton, NIKE Training Club, NEOU, Beachbody and iFit.

Through our Partnership with NYC Charter Center, our Financial Wellness benefit yielded amazing results with staff often receiving over 30k-40k in student loan debt forgiveness.

We continue to bolster our efforts of maintaining a racially diverse, equitable and inclusive school community by continuous work with DEI experts who are guiding us through the best practices for our Recruitment program.

We continue to solicit staff feedback on their needs for Wellness improvements they want to see that encompass: personalization and at-home flexibility, mental and behavioral support and financial tools to build financial knowledge and wellness.

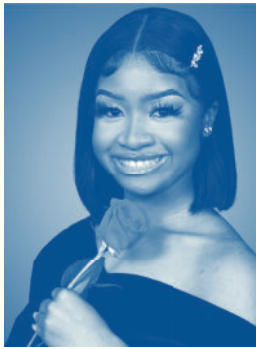
## Friends Of Equality

**Congratulations to our five very lucky graduates that received scholarships to invest in their futures.**

Founded in 2018 by Loretta Piscatella and Sherman Reid,

Friends of Equality offers scholarships to ECS graduates exemplifying our school values. Each year members of our graduating class can submit a personal essay about how they have incorporated

one of our core values (professionalism, integrity, maturity, achievement/progress) into their lives. A winner from each group is selected and awarded a check at graduation.



**THIS YEAR'S WINNERS:** (left to right) **Tonyann Benjamin** - Sophie Davis Medical School (CUNY), **Assetou Kouyate** - Baruch College, **Vanessa Lopez** - Bronx Community College, **Heidi Tlatelpa** - Lehman College, **Chiara Planter** - Morgan State

## Thank You To Our Supporters



Thank you to our Board Members, staff, parents, and alumni for going above and beyond!



**Annual Appeal Raised**  
**>\$29,000** (goal was \$20,000)  
Victory! Thank you to our Superhero donors!

**Sexauer Foundation**  
**\$10,000**  
**Kevin Riley Council Member**  
**\$20,000**

## Scholar Profile: Lacey Smith

**We celebrate that each scholar has unique talents, needs, goals and challenges. Moreover, we stand in awe of the beauty of their growth on different paths.**

Lacey Smith graduated in 2018 from Equality. She went on to attend Lehman College where she received her Bachelor's of Science in Nursing. Lacey, who's favorite class was Anatomy and Physiology, shared that she was excited to go home and do the homework and readings. "The knowledge I gained about every cell and organ of the human body and its purpose seemed like such a gift to be able to learn. Science has been my favorite class since high school so I knew that in college I'd appreciate it even more."

**"One thing I am thankful to Equality for is that they helped me like reading.**

I never had an interest in reading for pleasure, but I remember every single book we were assigned to read in high school. Those books have been some of my favorites to this day. Once my interest in reading peaked, my interest to

learn increased as well and I found that school came easier to me once I was confident in my reading comprehension. My thirst for knowledge helped me feel more prepared for college."



Lacey states, "Many of the staff influenced me greatly in my education and in my life goals. They are so involved in the livelihoods of the students when we are at school and as an alumnus, you really see the ways in which they positively guided you as you get older.

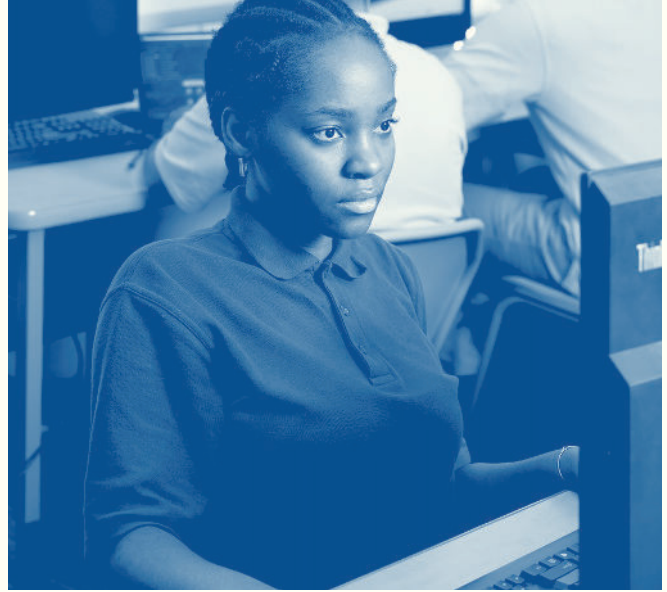
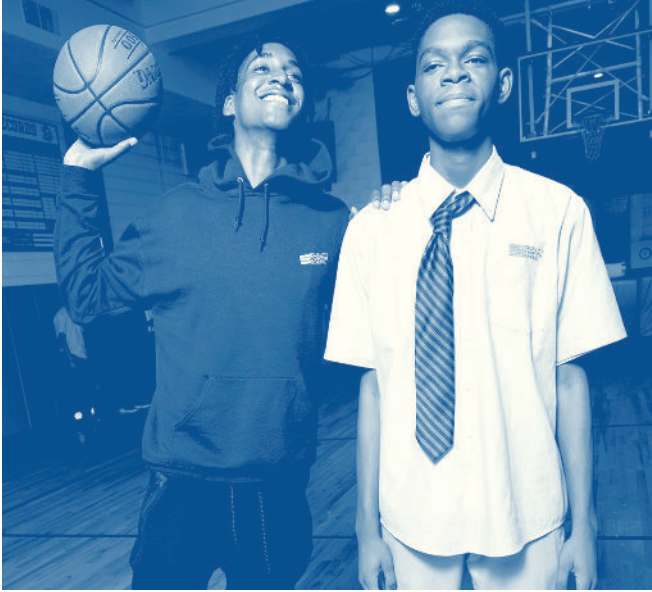
One that stands out is Mrs. Shepard, who was my English teacher at the time. She always pushed her students to achieve the most that we could because she saw potential in everyone. She was someone that I remember going to for advice because she was always willing to listen and help wherever she could. Without the guidance and inspiration from Mrs. Shepard and all the staff from ECS, I wouldn't have felt as prepared for college as I did when I graduated and I appreciate all that I have learned from my time there."

Since graduating, Lacey went on to take and pass her Boards and is now working as a nurse at Harlem Hospital Center.

Lacey says, "My goal is to work on a medical-surgical floor of a hospital and I eventually want to gain experience and go back to school to get my Master's in Nurse Informatics and become an Informaticist."

**ECS School Life:**  
Our scholars always  
remind us what it  
means to become  
greater each day.







I'm hungry for knowledge. The whole thing is to learn every day, to get brighter and brighter. That's what this world is about. You look at someone like Gandhi, and he glowed. Martin Luther King glowed. Muhammad Ali glows. I think that's from being bright all the time, and trying to be brighter.

— Shawn Carter, a/k/a JAY Z



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