



SchoolTalk

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Cultivating for a Better Tomorrow



In Memory of Floyd Bronson

This year's annual report is dedicated to our beloved colleague, Floyd, who passed away in February 2024. Floyd illuminated our path as a beacon of empathy, compassion, and support. His steadfast commitment to fostering an inclusive environment so that every student, no matter their challenges, felt embraced for who they are was evident in every facet of his work. Floyd was a devoted husband and father of four, epitomizing the values of family and community, radiating warmth and understanding to all who crossed his path.

Prior to joining SchoolTalk, Floyd served as an educator for over 25 years. His laughter was infectious, his presence comforting, and his commitment unwavering. Floyd's passion for helping others thrive was evident in everything he did. His legacy of compassion and resilience, will continue to inspire us as we carry forward the work he held so dear. Floyd's memory will live on in the lives he touched and the transformative work he championed.

We will draw strength from our memories and are committed to his mission of creating positive change in the lives of others.





LEILA PETERSON
Executive Director

Leila Peterson has served as SchoolTalk's executive director since 2008. She is deeply committed to advocating for youth with disabilities and helping schools institute policies and practices that promote inclusion and community-building. Leila also teaches as an adjunct professor for the Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University.



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for SchoolTalk's team and the people and schools we serve. Our theme for this annual report is "Cultivating for a Better Tomorrow," recognizing that we have embraced challenges, nurtured change, and sown the seeds of transformation as we work toward communities where every student can flourish.

SchoolTalk expanded its impact through innovative programs that bridge the gap between education and real-world opportunities. Our InclusiveDC initiative equipped students with essential soft and technical skills through work-based learning opportunities in Creative Careers and Careers that Create Change. The opening of the Express Yourself Studio in the Brookland Arts Walk was a huge milestone for us. The studio provides a safe space for students to access professional grade equipment and mentorship from award-winning local artists. **(See page 7)**

Our RestorativeDC initiative challenged and supported school communities in addressing youth violence, chronic absenteeism, and teacher wellness. In response to emerging needs, we incorporated more conflict resolution skills, increased our collaboration with mental health providers, and expanded our programming to serve additional schools and students. Since 2015, we have provided restorative justice technical assistance to approximately 100 schools, improving school cultures and climates and decreasing out-of-school suspension rates. These efforts, along with our partnerships with multiple agencies tasked with addressing youth violence and improving mental health support, reflect our holistic approach to creating equitable learning environments. **(See pages 11-14)**

In February, we suffered the tragic loss of our beloved team member, Floyd Bronson. Floyd brought humor and connection to all those who came in contact with him. Please read our dedication to him and take a moment to honor his impact in the DC community and beyond. Thank you for your support and let's continue to cultivate a hopeful future rooted in the principles of caring, inclusion, and community.

With deepest gratitude,

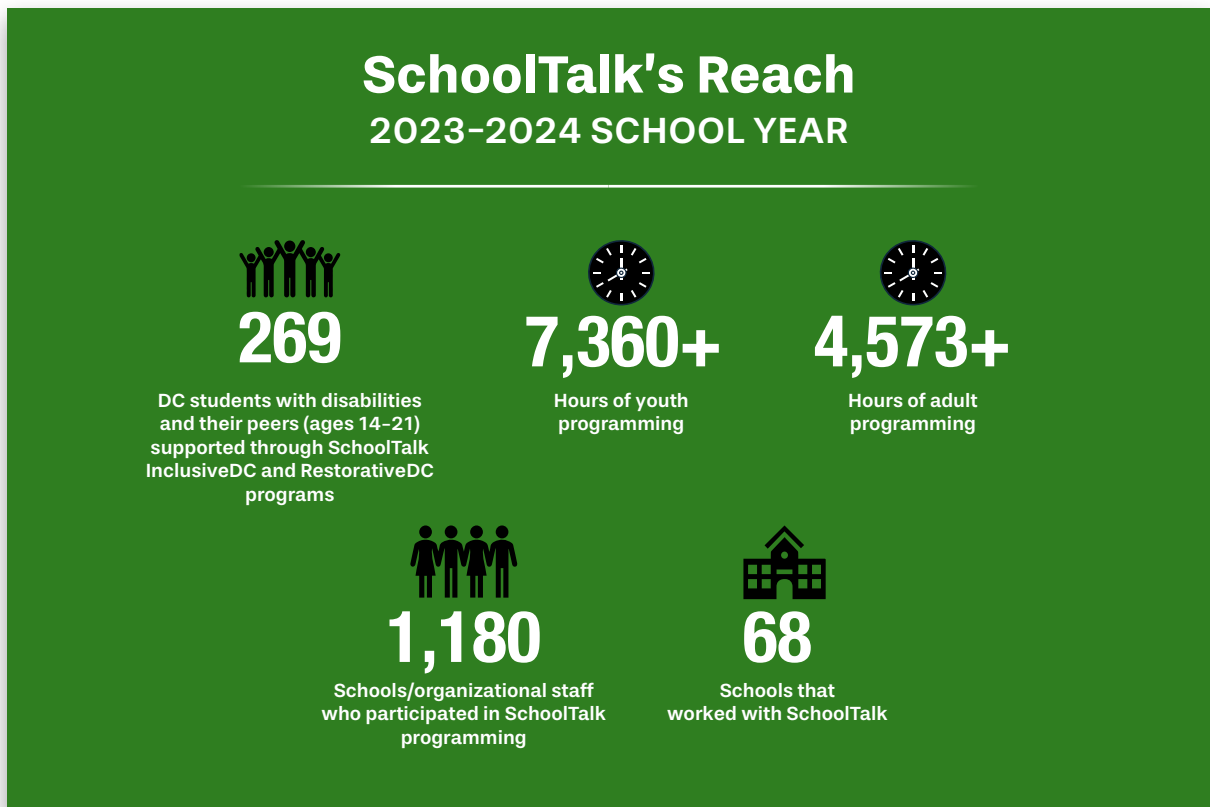
Leila Peterson
Executive Director, SchoolTalk



SECTION ONE: SchoolTalk Overview

What We Do

Founded in 2008, SchoolTalk is a District of Columbia-based nonprofit that supports the education community in collaboratively tackling critical and complex challenges and creating practical solutions for assisting youth with and without disabilities to achieve success. SchoolTalk works to create positive school-based learning environments and impact students' lives through our two programmatic initiatives: **InclusiveDC** and **RestorativeDC**. Our theory of change (see page 3) illustrates how these programs are used to impact **students, schools, and systems**. This approach enables immediate support of students through direct service, improved school communities that build trust and belonging, and revamped ecosystem strategies to create long-lasting shifts that improve outcomes for all students.

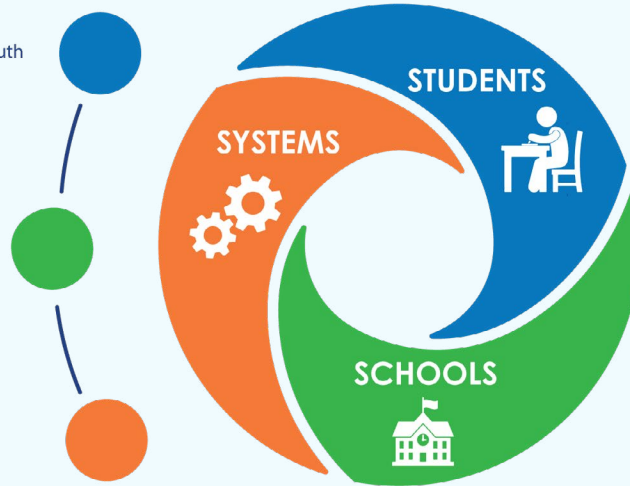


SchoolTalk's Theory of Change

PROVIDE youth-centered **PROGRAMMING** to equip every youth with the knowledge and skills to be successful after high school

Help adults **IMPROVE SCHOOL CULTURE** through restorative & inclusive policies and practices

CONNECT & ALIGN schools, agencies and other organizations through dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.



Operationalizing Our Theory of Change

RestorativeDC: Supports Whole School implementation of restorative justice & culture change through capacity-building professional development to lower incidents of conflict, reduce suspensions and expulsions, increase school performance, and center schools on relationships, inclusivity and accountability.

InclusiveDC: Works with DC youth with disabilities and their peers in schools, community organizations, and youth-serving systems. Identifies and bridges opportunity gaps for youth through three main programs: Creative Careers, Careers that Create Change, and Jumpstart.



STUDENTS

We provide workshops, community-based learning, youth conference and councils so that students in DC feel that they belong, are self-determined, and hopeful about the future.



SCHOOLS

We provide technical assistance for organizational change, training, modeling and coaching, and resources to improve school cultures through inclusive and restorative practices.



SYSTEMS

We act as a thought leader and convener to drive change in DC and beyond as nationally recognized experts in improving education for marginalized students.

Our Team

SchoolTalk's staff has expertise in a variety of key areas, including restorative justice, Universal Design for Learning, workforce development, assistive technology, conflict resolution, nonviolent communication, positive discipline, trauma-informed practices, special education, and more. SchoolTalk serves a diverse community and employs a diverse team, including board members and supporters, who reflect that community. Over two-thirds of SchoolTalk's staff identify as a Person of Color. We view disability as a critical component of our Race, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity initiatives, and half of our staff

self identify as having a disability. SchoolTalk employs three full-time youth leadership program assistants who graduated from DC schools and connected to SchoolTalk through its youth programming. Their input helps us to ensure authentic youth voice is integrated across all SchoolTalk programs. The SchoolTalk Board of Directors enrich our organization's strategic efforts with their diverse experiences, backgrounds, and abilities. More than half of our Board members represent Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color communities.





"The experience of just **FEELING WELCOMED** and **PEOPLE LISTENING** while you're pouring out your heart to those you never thought you'll vent to is an experience that everybody needs and I'm glad that **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE** has provided that for me.

-- Ana Lucia, Student





SECTION TWO: Students

GOAL: *Improve youth outcomes through programming that supports students to feel like they belong, are self-determined, and hopeful about their futures.*

From Seed to Blossom: Ana Lucia's Journey of Growth through Restorative Justice

At SchoolTalk, we are committed to providing tomorrow's leaders with the tools to lead fulfilling lives. We envision school communities where every youth is honored and self-determined. Our "Our School, Our Voice" program fosters positive school cultures through restorative practices and student engagement.

One testament to the power of this work is Ana Lucia Mendoza, a graduating senior who has embodied the spirit of growth and resilience throughout her time at Columbia Heights Educational Campus.

Ana Lucia was first introduced to restorative justice in the 6th grade. She states, "I was a very troubled middle schooler and used to always end up in in-school suspension. I was the kid who was not engaged in my academics, and I was afraid of speaking for myself and others. I was especially afraid of failure." While working with SchoolTalk's RestorativeDC Senior Specialist, Rashid Hughes, Ana Lucia learned to identify her feelings, understand what she needed to succeed, and navigate speaking to her peers in a circle setting.

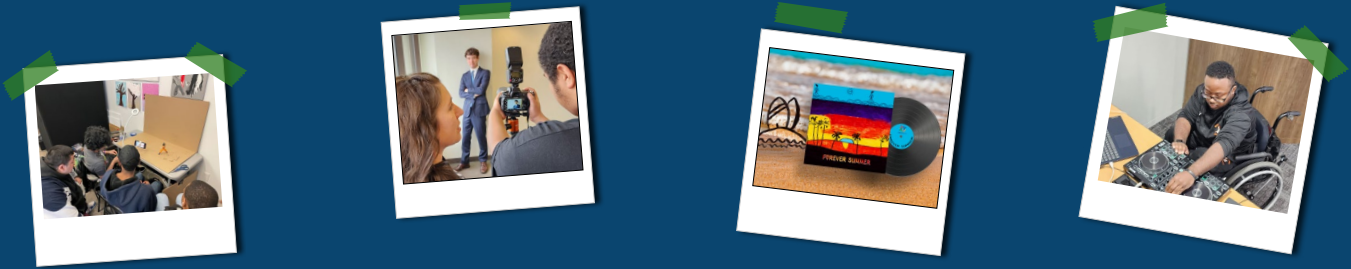
Equipped with the tools to advocate for herself and others, Ana Lucia became actively involved in restorative justice circles at her school and citywide restorative justice trainings. She provided testimony during city hearings and served on panels, including a panel where she was the only youth with six adults. She worked with her school to grow their restorative program from just two students to a program that is now a part of the fabric of CHEC. She shares, "These

experiences helped me consider other people's perspectives and make positive decisions. They've helped me be truer to myself and discuss the issues in DC that affect me."

Her involvement in restorative justice has not only helped her personally but also contributed to the broader school community. It has significantly improved her mental and emotional well-being so that she can advocate for herself and encourage others to do the same.

Ana Lucia is determined to carry restorative justice practices with her as she goes on to Catholic University, where she plans to study sociology, and beyond. She shared, "Sociology studies people, the environment, and conflict. I could implement conflict resolution at Catholic University. Funny enough, I wanted to do criminal justice at first, but restorative justice has had such a huge impact on me that I now want to major in sociology and eventually become a lawyer."

Ana Lucia's belief in the importance of a positive school culture and student engagement is not just a personal conviction, but a call to action for all schools. She emphasizes, "Creating an environment that invites students to share their knowledge and gifts and helps us be enthusiastic about coming to school is crucial for our success." Her pride in the school's expanded circle practices and the active engagement of her peers is a testament to the success of youth-led restorative justice programs like Our School, Our Voice.



"Collaborating with SchoolTalk and the Express Yourself Studio has been the best partnership I have ever had the pleasure of being involved in. The team is always very kind and understanding; they listen to my ideas and trust my creative process to a finite point. They give me full creative freedom on projects, giving me a freeing sense of engagement. With their support and access to the studio, I was able to create a [full stop-motion video](#) and lead a workshop teaching others to do the same."

-- Xavier, Student

Sprouting Success: The Impact of the Express Yourself Studio

In the fall of 2023 SchoolTalk proudly launched the Express Yourself Studio in partnership with Guerilla Arts Ink, enhancing DC's creative landscape for students with disabilities and their peers. Since its launch, over 100 DC youth have collaborated with award-winning artists, learned marketable technical skills, and gained work-based learning experiences in videography, photography, graphic design, visual art, and music production.

Snapshots:

Students were integral in the launch of the studio, including creating a stop-motion commercial, painting a mural, and supporting the grand opening in August.

These paid work-based learning experiences allowed students to apply their skills in a real-world setting.



The studio has been a hotbed of activity, hosting programs where students gain practical experience with professional-grade equipment. During the Collaborate to Create project, 30 students with disabilities and their peers produced a music album, called Forever Summer, from start to finish. They received creative coaching from talented teaching artists in photography, videography, music production, marketing, merchandising, visual art, and digital art. The project simulated for youth participants what it is like to work collaboratively across art mediums to produce an album, [Forever Summer](#). The team celebrated with a virtual album drop on YouTube Live and album release party held at the Express Yourself Studio, where youth proudly shared their talent and hard work with families and community members.



Youth from three DC schools took professional headshots for DC government agency staff. SchoolTalk coached them through the process of shooting, editing, and presenting final products to their clients, and the agency intends to pay them for their work.



SchoolTalk secured adaptive equipment and provided coaching for a student with disabilities who was interested in becoming a DJ. He is now successfully securing his own paid DJ gigs.



The Express Yourself Studio is a welcoming space of opportunity, creativity, and success.

Come visit and help us celebrate the achievements and potential of our students!



SECTION THREE: Schools

GOAL: Equip schools with the mindsets, tools, and processes to better support every marginalized student, including students with disabilities.

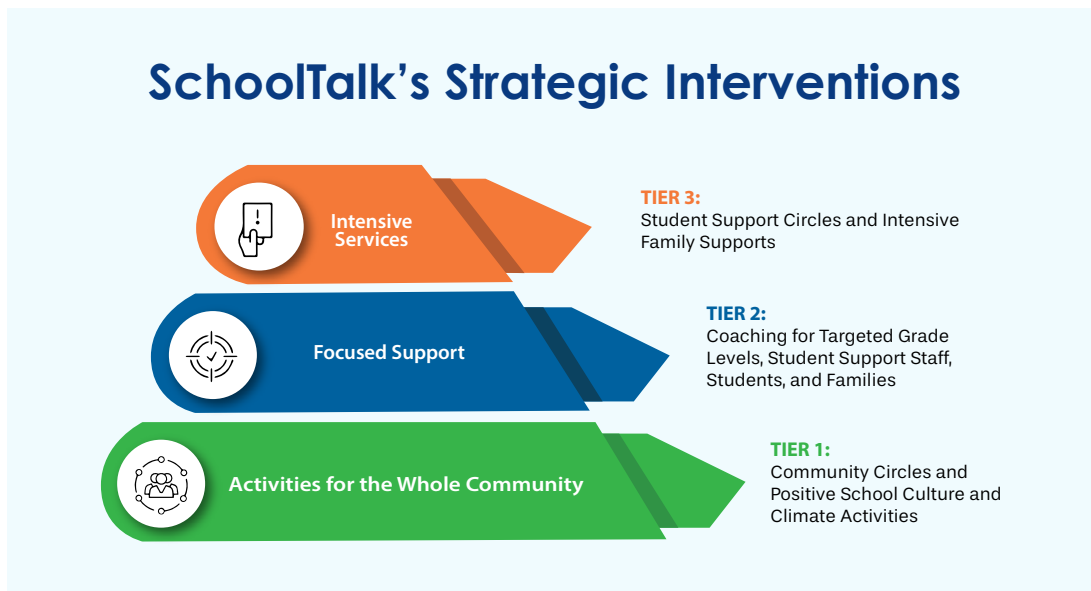
From Cultivating Inclusion: A Partnership Between Sojourner Truth Public Charter School and SchoolTalk

The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (Truth PCS) is dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive environment and to addressing the unique needs of its diverse student body, including a 30 percent special education population. Students with disabilities often face greater challenges in achieving positive postsecondary outcomes and can be disproportionately represented in discipline actions than their non-disabled peers. Truth PCS recognized the need to address these disparities within the school and took action with the support of SchoolTalk.

In 2023, SchoolTalk was awarded the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) grant from OSSE to address Truth PCS's learning concerns for students with IEPs and improve the broader school culture through several strategic initiatives. Faced with a 27 percent staff turnover rate and a disproportionate number of behavioral incidents involving students with disabilities and African-American students, Principal Denise Edwards was determined to take the steps needed for transformational change. SchoolTalk and Truth PCS launched a partnership with the shared goal of providing school staff with a deep understanding of restorative practices and effective special education processes, intensive coaching, and opportunities to amplify student voice.

Strategic Interventions

Over the past year, SchoolTalk has implemented a multi-tiered approach to strengthen the implementation of restorative practices and special education processes at Truth PCS.



Tier 1: Activities for the whole community

Build Common Understanding

SchoolTalk has facilitated professional development sessions focused on community building, implementing community circles, and creating inclusive environments. This has resulted in a more connected and supportive staff that is better equipped to meet the diverse needs of Truth PCS students. Understanding that supportive leadership is essential to an inclusive school, SchoolTalk has supported Truth's dean of culture and principal through regular strategy meetings on school culture and special education concerns, providing targeted coaching to other key leaders within the school, including the wellness and special education coordinators. This ongoing support has been crucial in building leadership capacity around restorative and inclusive practices.



Tier 2: Focused support

Provide Coaching for Targeted Grade Levels, Student Support Staff, Students, and Families

Based upon an analysis of the school's data, SchoolTalk collaborated with Truth PCS leadership to provide targeted coaching to the high school team around restorative and inclusive practices, as well as monthly professional development with special education staff to increase the quality of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and secondary transition practices. A standout achievement has been the successful implementation of family engagement circles which created a powerful platform for open dialogue and mutual support between families and students. This was a new practice at Truth PCS and one that received positive feedback from families who participated. Through Our School, Our Voice program, SchoolTalk facilitated weekly sessions focused on building positive connections. As Principal Edwards has observed, "Through our work with SchoolTalk, our students have been given opportunities to learn the power of their voice, the confidence to recognize their creative talents, and the tools to help them succeed as adults."



Tier 3: Intensive interventions

Student Support Circles and Intensive Family Supports

The SchoolTalk team supported Truth PCS staff with implementing student support circles, providing self-determination resources, and holding family circles for students with the highest number of behavioral referrals.

The collaborative efforts have led to a notable positive shift in school culture at Truth PCS. There has been a significant decrease in behavioral referrals involving students with disabilities, dropping from 67percent to 18p ercent. Staff surveys also show significant improvement in the consistency and clarity of student behavior expectations and consequences. By the end of the first quarter of SOAR's implementation, staff agreement that clear systems are in place to respond to behaviors had increased from 39 percent to 65 percent.

The partnership between Truth PCS and SchoolTalk exemplifies the power of collaboration in driving educational progress and underscores the importance of targeted interventions for diverse student groups. By focusing on professional development, community engagement, and targeted support, Truth PCS has continued to demonstrate its commitment to transforming into a community where every student will thrive and is empowered to transform the world, in alignment with their school's mission.





SECTION FOUR: Systems

GOAL: *Engage as an active thought-leader to share learning and insights, codify models and recommendations, and convene disparate actors to build relationships, problem solve and find ways to collaborate for systems change.*

SOWING SEEDS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE IN DC

SchoolTalk works intentionally with the organizations responsible for addressing systemic inequities, including student disengagement and school attendance, juvenile justice involvement, family engagement, and behavioral health services in DC. SchoolTalk serves as a convener and thought leader to build relationships, encourage collaborative problem-solving across organizations and agencies, support alignment across the system, and model effective strategies for meaningful student and family involvement. The following are some examples of how we are continuing this critical work.








- RestorativeDC trained approximately 200 DCPS social workers in restorative practices and provided a space of reflection and healing for members of the school community who are leading the work with students experiencing trauma and conflict. (2022-2024)
- SchoolTalk collaborated with George Washington University's DC School Behavioral Health Community of Practice to co-lead the Positive School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning Practice Group. This effort provided around 300 participants, including school social workers and psychologists, with restorative justice skills and practices to improve behavioral health in DC Schools. (2021-2024)
- SchoolTalk trained approximately 100 school-based social workers and psychologists in how to better support the mental health needs of students with disabilities. (2024)
- Yazid Jackson, RestorativeDC Program Director, reached a national audience as a panelist on Restorative Justice: Supporting Our Girls, a discussion of the impact of restorative justice on the mental health of girls of color. This event was hosted by Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, NJ-13. (2024)



- SchoolTalk partnered with the DC Department of Human Services, Eastern High School, and the DC Metropolitan Police Department in a violence prevention pilot designed to utilize restorative practices and improve agency coordination to prevent youth violence and escalation. (2023-2024)
- SchoolTalk trained approximately 120 DC Department of Human Services staff members in the fundamentals of violence prevention, restorative justice, and its applications to their work as youth service providers. (2023-2024)
- During an Advocacy Day organized by DC's American Academy of Pediatrics, Yazid Jackson, RestorativeDC Program Director, led a session on community health, wellness, and education to equip pediatricians with essential resources on the impacts of community violence. (2024)
- RestorativeDC convened the CircleUp Summit which brought together approximately 75 educators and community partners to help school leaders build resilient school cultures, address issues of violence, and promote social-emotional learning. The event demonstrated the power of restorative circles, created a peer-learning space, and connected participants with resources to support restorative justice implementation. (2023)



-  SchoolTalk's InclusiveDC Initiative founded and annually convenes the DC Secondary Transition Community of Practice which supports the professionals serving DC youth with disabilities as they transition into a self-directed life. A cross-section of school, government, and community stakeholders come together to create the DC State Plan and strengthen their individual and collective ability for action. (2010-2024)
-  SchoolTalk proudly co-sponsored the DC Special Education Cooperative 2nd annual "All In" conference, centered around the theme "Elevating Student Voices in Schools." Utilizing the World Cafe model, SchoolTalk staff facilitated table discussions with students and adult stakeholders on integrating student voices into decision-making processes. Attendees left with actionable insights, including strategies for engaging students of all ages and a commitment to centering the voices of students with disabilities in classroom, campus, and LEA decisions. (2024)
-  SchoolTalk's InclusiveDC, the DC Special Education Cooperative, the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the District's Secondary Transition Community of Practice hosted a Districtwide Secondary Transition Capacity Building Institute for local education agencies and community organizations. Approximately 120 participants increased their knowledge about secondary transition for students with disabilities, gathered resources, and networked with others working to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. (2023)

What's Next: Youth-Driven Council

This year marks the exciting launch of SchoolTalk's Youth-Driven Council—an initiative designed to provide DC youth, those with and without disabilities, a direct voice in SchoolTalk's programming and influence within the broader DC community. Our two-year launch plan is to ensure that the Council is not only for DC youth but also created by DC youth.

To kick us off, we recruited a dynamic Youth Steering Committee tasked with building the Council's structure, vision, and goals from the ground up. Over the spring and summer of 2024, SchoolTalk's AmeriCorps members, with coaching from our development and partnership manager, led a powerful recruitment and onboarding process, bringing eight passionate young leaders on board. These young movers and shakers will co-create and lead the Council over the next year.

Beyond shaping the Council, committee members will receive professional development in advocacy and conflict resolution, engage in community-building activities, and collaborate with other youth organizations across the city. They have already made an impact—this summer, the Steering Committee began meeting twice a month and facilitated impactful sessions on mental health and conflict resolution in front of 400 students at the citywide APA Moore Equity in Mental Health Youth Summit.



This fall, they plan to hit the ground running to establish the full Council by year's end. Follow us on social media to watch these young leaders in action!









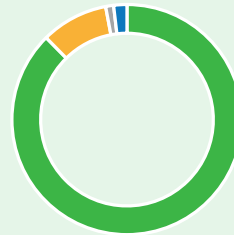
SECTION FIVE: Financials

SchoolTalk 2023 FINANCIALS

Revenue

	DC Government Contracts	\$2,109,988
	Fee for Service	\$226,912
	Individual Contributions	\$26,798
	Foundation/Nonprofit Grants	\$44,833
Total		\$2,408,531

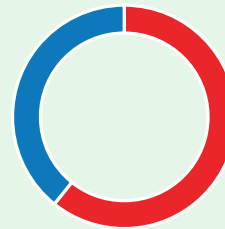
REVENUE



Expenses

	Program	\$1,615,263
	Admin, Ops, Development	\$1,043,358
Total		\$2,150,463

EXPENSES



SchoolTalk is committed to partnering with local, community-based organizations. In 2023 \$353,548.75 of our program expenses went to local DC Certified Business Enterprises (<https://dslbd.dc.gov/getcertified>)



SECTION SIX: Board, Funders and Supporters

We have been fortunate and appreciate the support we have received from our dedicated Board and incredible network of supporters and partners. They have stood by our side, offering their invaluable assistance. We are truly grateful and extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

Funders



SchoolTalk Board of Directors



CHARLES MOORE (Chair)

Thrive Street Advisors

Charles is the principal at Thrive Street Advisors. He is an executive coach and consultant who helps leaders improve impact and organizations better execute strategy. Charles focuses on the intersection of strategy, implementation, and leadership, specifically, helping executives improve their ability to achieve results with a clear lens for the leadership, management, and personal practices that are most relevant for a leader's purpose, their strategy, and their organization's culture. He has coached leaders across the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, including Capital One, Hilton Hotels, and Advancing Real Change. Charles attended Harvard College for his undergraduate degree. He earned an MBA and an MA in Education from Stanford. His certificate in Leadership Coaching is from Georgetown University.



MARY GATELY (Secretary)

DLA Piper

Mary is a Managing Partner at DLA Piper's DC Office and Co-Head of Washington DC Litigation Practice Group. Mary focuses on reputation management, class actions, cross-border litigation, and other complex litigation in the fields of the First Amendment, product liability, and commercial litigation. She serves on the Hiring Committee and Pro Bono Committee in the Washington, DC office.



JAI RAO (Treasurer)

Netflix

Jai is an experienced technology leader with a focus on supporting finance organizations. Jai also serves on the Technology Pro Bono council at Capital One. Jai is a resident of Washington, DC along with his wife, and son who attends a DC public school. Jai earned his B.S. in Accounting from American University. He has a passion for addressing social inequity and particularly the Digital Divide.



LIONEL ANDRE

SECIL Law, PLLC

Lionel, a partner at SECIL Law, PLLC, specializes in defending clients facing parallel enforcement actions brought by the US Securities & Exchange Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice. With extensive experience, Lionel also conducts internal investigations and provides defense for companies and their executives during government inquiries. Having commenced his career at the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) Division of Enforcement, Lionel boasts 14 years of invaluable experience, handling securities cases in federal courts and administrative proceedings nationwide. Following his tenure at the SEC, Lionel served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Fraud and Public Corruption Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. In addition to his legal practice, Lionel is deeply committed to various causes, including youth empowerment, mentorship, criminal justice reform, and human rights advocacy.



THOMAS GREEN

L3Harris

Thomas is the Manager of Financial Planning & Analysis at L3Harris Technologies within the Tactical Communication Sectors. He focuses on enhancing efficiency and streamlining processes to drive continuous improvement in the financial forecasting cycle. Thomas earned his BS in Accounting and MBA from St. Bonaventure University and holds the Certified Managerial Accountant (CMA) designation from the Institute of Management Accountants.



XIAO LIU

Ed-Ops

Xiao is a Finance Manager at Ed-Ops. She is an experienced finance lead with a demonstrated history of working in the education management industry. She is a strong finance professional skilled in New Market Implementation, Financial Planning and Analysis, Regulatory Compliance, Audit, Budgeting, and Accounting.



KATE MILEY

Moore

Kate is a marketing and fundraising leader with a passion for working in the non-profit space. She currently serves as Director of Product Marketing at Moore, the country's largest media, data, and fundraising company catering to purpose-driven organizations. She previously held marketing roles at Bonterra, Data Axle, and Danone. In her time away from work, Kate enjoys volunteering and first met the SchoolTalk team through a Compass Pro Bono consulting project. Kate obtained her BA at Middlebury College and MBA at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. She lives near Annapolis, Maryland, with her husband Alex and enjoys getting outside and trying local crab shacks as often as she can.



SHALINI SHYBUT

Independent Coach

Shalini is an independent coach and consultant working with non-profit leaders, primarily in the education space, in Washington, DC. She was most recently a founding member and Partner of Schools and Talent Investments at Education Forward DC, a local venture philanthropy organization whose mission is to improve outcomes for DC students who are furthest from opportunity. Prior to this role, Shalini was at E.L. Haynes Public Charter School, where she worked with school leaders to improve the school's ability to meet the needs of underserved students, and co-led several key strategy projects as E.L. Haynes expanded to full size. Earlier in her career, Shalini spent time at the Recovery School District and worked in the private sector at McKinsey & Company. Shalini started her career with Teach For America as a fifth grade teacher in a bilingual inclusion classroom. Shalini lives in Washington, DC with her husband and three children and also serves on the board of DC International Public Charter School.



JENNIFER THOMAS

Community Member

Jennifer is the owner of Still Small Voice, LLC. Jennifer is a former educator with more than 15 years of experience focusing on youth development and leadership. She has worked in the non-profit sector and is currently a policy advisor at the federal level. In her current position, she focuses on employment matters pertaining to people with disabilities.



PAUL TIMM

Connected Aviation Solutions, Collins Aerospace

Paul is director of marketing, leading the global marketing organization for the Connected Aviation Solutions business at Collins Aerospace. He is a strategic, data-driven marketer who grows businesses through positioning, branding, product marketing, digital transformation, and innovation. Paul is a collaborative team leader, demand generator, and problem solver, experienced in technology, financial services, consumer goods, and global markets. Paul is an active advocate for students with disabilities and LGBTQ youth. He also serves on boards for the Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee, the University of Richmond Customer Experience Center, and advises startup businesses. He holds an MBA from Duke University and is fluent in Spanish.



ELLEN WAYNE

Community Member

Ellen has been involved with SchoolTalk since before it had a name or a staff. As a professor teaching conflict management at the University of Baltimore, she was asked to join a group headed by the DC Appleseed Center for Law and Piper Rudnick (now DLA Piper) to explore reforms that could be undertaken to "fix" special education in the District of Columbia. Over a great deal of time and with enormous persistence by many, a part of that effort became SchoolTalk, first as a group of volunteers who worked to create the program, and eventually with the hiring of Leila Peterson as Executive Director of SchoolTalk. Ellen has now retired after serving for twelve years as the head of the Center for Early Dispute Resolution (CEDR), a function of the Department of Defense Education Association (DoDEA), which oversees DoD schools in the US and internationally. Ellen's role included developing interventions to address high-conflict situations in the schools and providing proactive conflict resolution training for DoDEA personnel worldwide. Ellen holds a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an MS degree in conflict management from the University of Baltimore.

