



NARRATIVE 4



Annual Report

2021



By Lisa Consiglio, Chief Executive Officer & Co-Founder

I'm often asked how and when Narrative 4 (N4) was founded.

The short answer is that it was founded the moment someone understood the blurry vision behind a fledgling idea and encouraged us to go as big as possible.

It was early February 2010, just days after a catastrophic earthquake struck Haiti. The death toll was rising exponentially. I was in a meeting with Jackie Bezos, a visionary philanthropist deeply committed to education and science. For a few years, Jackie had been watching a story-based project my team was piloting with astounding results in our small Colorado community. She spoke of Haiti and how she hoped to help young people there find healing. She saw our pilot project as a potential salve. Her idea was to use storytelling to connect kids in Port-au-Prince with kids in New Orleans who had lived through Katrina; the obvious common denominator being natural disaster.

At the end of the discussion, Jackie asked one simple question: "How big do you want this program to be?"

A few weeks later, two teams with six members each took off for New Orleans and Haiti for an intense, ten-day program with Sci Academy and Cours Privés Edmé, armed with 80 pages of curriculum, boxes of art supplies, translators, key local partners, a documentary film crew, and a lot of determination.

There were problems, of course. Satellites went down—so, we borrowed CNN's. School rooms were unexpectedly locked—so, we used courtyards. Language barriers cropped up—so, the kids ended up translating for their friends.

The stories flowed across screens, and as the days went by, the students opened up more and more. They created artwork in honor of one another, retold their partners' stories in the first person,

shared recipes, old photos, favorite objects. They developed a profound respect—even love—for these people they had only met virtually.

Jackie and her team at the Bezos Family Foundation joined our presentation on the last day. They were beaming. We were ready to plan the next global exchange.

But we needed a continuum. The schools needed to stay connected. They needed to work on community problems together. They needed to stay engaged with the artists we had introduced them to.

And, suddenly, we realized this was a larger canvas than what we had originally envisaged—it was global.

And so I went back to work.

Two years later, in 2012, a group of artists from all over the world gathered in Colorado to consider the highest aim of stories and how we might harness their energy to transform society.

In five days, we knew we had a global movement that would be artist-driven, educator-shaped, and student-led.

Jackie Bezos was in the room when we decided to "go big." She helped us envision a world where young people would lead with empathy, learn about the world in new ways from one another's stories, and work together to change that world. Narrative 4 was officially created six months later.

The rest, I suppose, is the future.

Lisa Consiglio

"The stories flowed across screens, and as the days went by, the students opened up more and more... They developed a profound respect—even love—for these people they had only met virtually."



By Colum McCann, President & Co-Founder

I write books. I believe in books. I think books have the ability to shape and change the world.

I also tell stories. I believe in stories. And I think stories, especially, have the ability to shape and change the world.

I have long pondered the relationship between stories and books, and the manner in which they are helixed together, becoming, then, the glue of who we are. Of course, a book can't exist without a story, but a story can – and does, and will – exist without a book. It was a rather simple revelation, but like many simple things it revealed the complex beauty underneath.

It all comes back to the mountains, a decade ago. Lisa Consiglio, who was then working for the Aspen Writers Foundation, had developed a theory that would later become a theory of everything in the world of activism and storytelling. She

felt it thrum like a tuning fork inside her. She recognized that writers and artists had a largely untapped personal power. We told our stories in books, we inspired people, and we moved along. But she also knew, at the same time, that all of us have access to a story: it is the world's most democratic entity, and she wondered what might happen if she gathered a group of artists together in the mountains to ponder the original power of how we connect.

And so it was that I ended up in a cabin high in the mountains of Colorado sitting opposite a dozen people most of whom would later form the core of my life. We sat in a circle. We were paired off. Frankly, at first, I thought it was a little bit of hocus pocus. I would have rather been in the bar, shooting the proverbial. But the idea was that we would tell stories to one another:

but not just any story, rather, we were to listen and then tell each other's story back, in the first person, as if it was ours.

They were heart-breaking, and they were difficult, and they were profound. And they were, all of them, ours.

The artists gathered over the next few days to talk about what would eventually become Narrative 4 (N4), but the greatest tuning fork sound which Lisa had encouraged was that stories would lead to empathy, which would lead to action, which would lead to change, which would lead, then, to a different world.

And now N4, ten years on, has harnessed that energy to become a global organization that aims to change education from within; to acknowledge the intricate links between teachers, artists, students and the art of storytelling; to galvanise a group of change-makers who know that empathy must lead to transformation on the ground; and to realise that we will indeed change the world when we learn to listen, and when we learn to tell, but most especially when we learn to act.

Yes, a story can exist without a book, but a book can't exist without a story. Ours is only ten years old, still at the very beginning, and it will not end... because it just so happens that it's your story too.

Colum McCann

"We will indeed change the world when we learn to listen, and when we learn to tell, but most especially when we learn to act."



By Gautam Gangoli, Chief Operating Officer

2021 has been a truly transformative year for Narrative 4 (N4). In addition to launching N4 Mexico, we tripled our staff and expanded our operations to 6 US regional hubs, 5 countries in Africa, and 4 regions in Ireland. We have managed to accelerate our growth faster than anticipated, which means we now have the opportunity to scale much more quickly. We have been working on four strategic priorities that will form the foundation for N4's global expansion and will create deeper, sustainable impact at scale.

1. Expand our value proposition
We combine the power of art and education with the power of stories to show how authentic community engagement emerges from—and is always connected to—the N4 Story Exchange. Our successes have led us to document how the N4 Story Exchange is being used as

a tool to spark change and maintain continuity in classrooms and communities. Our programs—the N4 Story Exchange, the N4 Artists Network, N4 Learning Resources and N4 Community-Engaged Learning, that helps to propel positive action—have been designed to give people the opportunity to deepen the practice of understanding the self and others. Our programs have been designed to develop life-long skills: curiosity, listening, imagination, and positive action.

2. Sustainable school expansion mode
Our regional hub operations and our train-the-trainer model have been very effective in growing our facilitator base. We are committed to reaching as many schools and students as possible, while creating sustainable impact and building long-term relationships with educators and students. In 2022, we'll

be adopting a new approach to partner and school management, revising our team structure and modifying our resource allocation to accelerate our growth, sustainably.

3. N4 Digital Platform development
Our digital infrastructure is a key for reaching an exponential number of students. In 2021, we completed our digital audit and are now ready to move to the implementation phase in 2022. The platform plays three roles— it hosts N4 programs and resources, it provides an opportunity for students and teachers to develop meaningful local and global connections, and it helps us measure impact at the individual, school, and community level.

4. Continuous, actionable impact measure
Building on our impact measure research, in 2021 we worked with the CORE team at the University of Pennsylvania to develop the N4 Logic Model to measure short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes for N4 participants. In 2022, our plan is to design, define, and implement an effective, long-term impact measurement program to track change at the individual and partner level and provide us with data to continuously strengthen our programs. We have a great team of passionate, enthusiastic individuals who are committed to our mission and our vision to make N4 programs part of every school in the world, making it a truly global learning organization.

“We are committed to reaching as many schools and students as possible, while creating sustainable impact and building long-term relationships with educators and students.”



By Lee Keylock, Director of Global Programs

Dear Friends,

Picture a young man named Ezzaddin emigrating from war-torn Yemen to the Boogie-Down Bronx, NYC. Imagine his sister telling him after a few months, “You lack empathy and need to connect more with people and your own feelings.” Now see Ezzy signing up for “this thing called Narrative 4” advertised on a poster hanging on his high school wall.

Fast forward a few weeks and witness Ezzaddin exchanging his own story with Revolt, an adult, hip-hop artist who fights for gun violence prevention and disability rights alongside a group of mostly wheelchair-bound artists called Open Doors Reality Poets. Finally, picture the young Ezzaddin initiating a project with his school Robotics Club to design clothing that houses a system of circuits designed to improve blood circula-

tion for wheelchair users. This, my friends, is civic engagement at its finest.

What is the power of a single story? Just ask the thousands of individuals who have been so moved by one that they enacted some type of positive change in their community.

Since 2012 I have facilitated and heard hundreds of story exchanges, immersed myself in the power of narrative, learned numerous lessons as we innovated along the way, failed miserably, had incredible successes, and seen the type of blossoming that exists when stories are shared. And so I can tell you this:

1. Stories *humanize*.
2. To tell a personal story and listen to it told back by another in the first person is a *radical act*.
3. *Empathy* is far from a soft skill.
4. Stories *transform perceptions*

and drive *change*.

It's no easy task to quantify the impact of our work over nine years. I do know, however, that our work (our story exchanges, our learning resources, our artist network and the activation of civic engagement) invites people into a world of possibility. I've seen anti-gun and pro-gun people exchange one another's stories to the point where their hard-edged biases were chipped away. I have seen Muslims and Christians and immigrants walk towards each other in their stories even though the influx of new immigrants to a community may have caused friction. I have seen police officers and kids of color shatter paralyzing stereotypes of “other,” and I have also seen doctors lean into un-defending their hearts to embody the stories of their patients thus improving the opportunity for complete care.

Stories have clout. Stories foster curiosity. They are collateral for positive change. If we can alter our perceptions of one another even by a millimeter then we can change whatever it is that impedes progress. Don't believe me? Just ask Ezzaddin, a 17-year old boy from Yemen, now residing in the South Bronx, wanting to help make the lives of a group of people (some he'll never meet) a little better. This is why I am full of hope for 2022.

“Stories have clout. Stories foster curiosity. They are collateral for positive change. If we can alter our perceptions of one another even by a millimeter then we can change whatever it is that impedes progress.”



By Ezzaddin, Student University Heights High School, The Bronx, NY

I'm from an Arabic background, and I was taught at a young age that, as a man, I should not be empathic, that I should not cry or be "soft". So, last year, when offered the opportunity to join Narrative 4 (N4), I declined, thinking "storytelling and empathy are not for me."

After the pandemic started, many students experienced anxiety and stress. In a club I participate in called Gentlemen's Club, my mentors tried to solve that problem by having weekly meetings where we shared our thoughts and ideas about what's happening in a safe, judgment-free space. At first, this was very difficult for many of us. Our first meetings were quiet. Then the conversations became more engaging, we started incor-

porating stories into our conversations which allowed us to find connections with each other that we thought were never possible. So, this year, when offered the chance to join N4, I knew better than to skip such a valuable opportunity.

During the Field Exchange with students in Kentucky and the Reality Poets from Open Doors NYC, what I found really interesting was the fact that we all came from different generations and different backgrounds. Usually, when you're in a room with older people, there's that respect between you and the adults and it feels like a barrier. But in our workshops, you're talking to them as if they're your friends. You're understanding each other. You're connected to each other.

This was my third year participating in the Global Innovation Challenge robotics challenge. The theme this year was about movement and sports. Basically, you have to find a problem related to that theme and then come up with a solution, prototype it, and come up with a business plan. It's a long process. Because of my experience with N4, I pushed my team to focus on a project that could help the wheelchair community. During our brainstorm, I shared my story of meeting the Reality Poets, and we discovered everyone on the team, including our mentor, had a connection to someone who was disabled.

At the competition, we got to meet a bunch of people from organizations like Disney Imagineer, Lucas Films, and John Deere. One of the judges told us that there were a lot of teams out there focused on sports movement, but we were the only team focused on creating a product for wheelchair users and the judges were really inspired by that.

I never thought I would say this before joining N4, but writing and storytelling are powerful tools that we can use to help others and make major changes in our world. If we look at human history, we see the thing that survived and helped us understand our history is writing and storytelling.

"I never thought I would say this before joining N4, but writing and storytelling are powerful tools that we can use to help others and make major changes in our world. If we look at human history, we see the thing that survived and helped us understand our history is writing and storytelling."



By Alondra Marmolejos, Programs Supervisor

I first got involved with Narrative 4 (N4) back in 2013. I was 17 when they came to my high school in Newtown, CT to pilot the story exchange in a school setting. I participated in my first story exchange at a time when I felt like my voice didn't matter. I felt hooked after my first exchange, because I finally felt like I was able to share my stories and my truth.

When I was hired as a full-time, N4 employee in 2019, I facilitated a story exchange between a group of high school students with one of my fellow Master Practitioners. During the reflection, I asked the group what they enjoyed about the experience and if there was anything that they would change. One student responded that they did not like the exchange. I asked

if they were willing to share more about why they didn't like it, and their response blew me away. They said, "The story exchange doesn't need to be changed. I need to change." Through the story exchange, this student realized they wanted to change themselves so that they could be more open to empathy.

N4 has grown tremendously since I first got involved. We've brought our story exchange methodology to over 200+ schools worldwide. I am extremely grateful that I was able to experience N4 from the very beginning, grow with the organization in many ways, and educate hundreds of students about the importance of empathy.

What excites me most about the future of N4 is nurturing student leaders. My favorite part about my



job is being able to watch students get excited about how they'd like to incorporate the story exchange into their schools or communities. I see a spark in them like the one that I experienced when I was their age.

"I first got involved with Narrative 4 (N4) back in 2013. I was 17 when they came to my high school in Newtown, CT to pilot the story exchange in a school setting. I participated in my first story exchange at a time when I felt like my voice didn't matter. I felt hooked after my first exchange because I finally felt like I was able to share my stories and my truth."



By Laura Muriello, Vice President, North America

It's been a whirlwind three months since I've had the honor of joining the Narrative 4 (N4) North America team, and our team has learned and grown so much! I am continuously blown away not only by the power of the story exchange methodology, but also by the talent and passion exhibited by our incredible team. Each of our six regions across the United States, as well as our newest official region based in Monterrey, Mexico, is led by a talented and experienced Regional Manager with a unique vision and perspective on what's possible in their region. From expanding the power of the Story Exchange within entire school districts to partnering with school counselors or diversity, equity and inclusion teams within schools, to focusing more deeply on embedding the Story Exchange whole-school at a single site, each Regional Manager is leading our expansion in the way that ensures our work contributes to the needs of the cities and schools we serve.



As the lead of this expansion work, my focus has been on clearly defining what ambitious and effective scale looks like, strengthening our ability to understand our measures of success in ways that drive our future actions, and ensuring each team member is able to contribute

to our mission to the best of their ability. Through this inspiring work, we'll be well set-up to expand into even more schools, districts, and cities who want N4 as part of their communities in the years to come.

"I am continuously blown away not only by the power of the story exchange methodology, but also by the talent and passion exhibited by our incredible team."



By Amira Rachouh, Operations Supervisor

Like the rest of the world and our surrounding communities, much of this past year has been about finding our "new normal", finding our way back to what feels right and comfortable. And so it's been amazing to be a part of a team that has worked with our partners to do exactly that, especially as schools in the US moved back to in-person classes this fall for the first time (for some) since March 2020.

In the last year, I worked on refining our internal infrastructure to help us understand our progress more effectively and efficiently. This has helped us deepen our understanding of our impact on schools, educators, and their students!

"In the last year, I worked on refining our internal infrastructure to help us understand our progress more effectively and efficiently."

NARRATIVE 4 BY THE NUMBERS

18

Number of countries

134

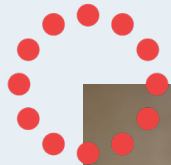
Number of US
school partners

1041

Number of US
facilitators

100k+

Estimated number
of stories told
(by school partners)



By Jen McCool, Northeast Regional Manager CT, PA, DE, MD, DC, and OH

It's impossible to talk about Narrative 4's (N4) work in schools over the last year and not have the COVID pandemic take center stage. Until fall of 2021, most students in the Northeast had been either fully virtual or in a hybrid learning model for almost 18 months. When most of your day is spent staring into a computer screen, it's pretty difficult to feel connected or engaged with your peers, let alone empathetic.

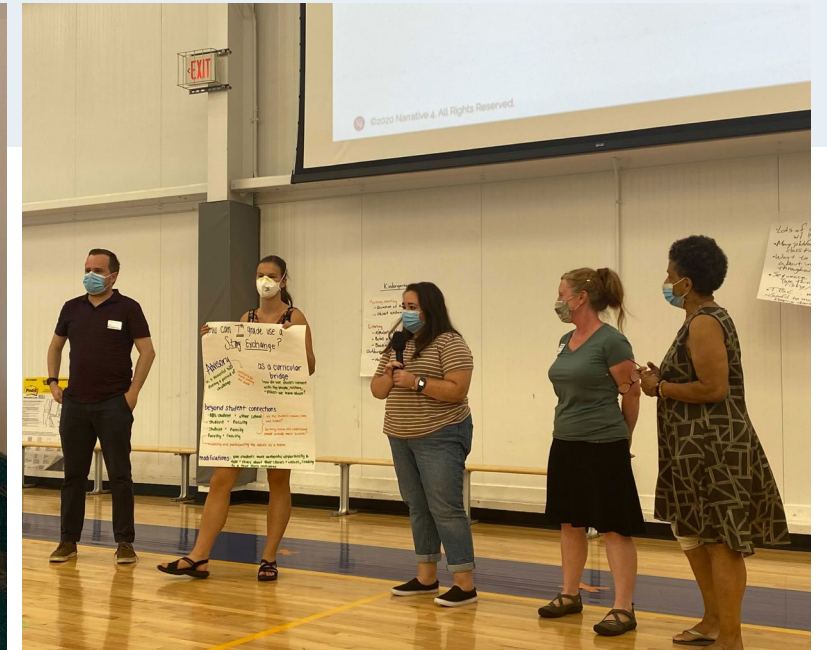
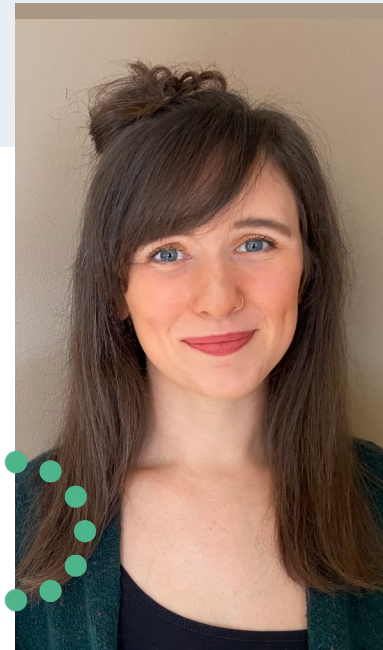
What has given me the most hope during the pandemic though, is how many schools and teachers and facilitators still find the N4 story exchange essential. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, teachers and students signed on to be trained as N4 facilitators. For example, this year, Metropolitan Business Academy in New Haven, CT trained 14 of their faculty and an amazing cohort of student leaders to start im-

plementing N4 in advisory and student clubs. And the University of Maryland is planning a university-wide rollout of N4 during this school year; they've already started training over 60 members of their faculty as facilitators. Seton Hill University in Greensburg, PA has continued their N4 work with community and K-12 school partnerships and has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to incorporate the story exchange into a two-week summer institute on how K-12 educators can teach about genocide.

Perhaps the most significant indicator that N4 is vitally needed in the American educational system, is that some of our partner schools had to take an "N4 hiatus" during 2020 and 2021 and are now returning to N4 to use the story exchange as a way to "re-build those bridges between stu-

dents." While it may have been easier for some of these schools to bring their N4 programs to a full close, they've instead chosen to restart the story exchange in an effort to foster student re-connection and re-engagement. For instance, Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge, CT conducted a story exchange as part of their school-wide Day of Dialogue this fall, while High School in the Community in New Haven, CT completed a 9th grade/12th grade exchange for over 130 students. These schools are telling us that they see great value in the story exchange; it's a way for students to reconnect, re-engage, and it helps smooth the transition back to in-person learning. I can't think of a higher recommendation for the work N4 is doing.

"What has given me the most hope during the pandemic is how many schools and teachers and facilitators still find the N4 story exchange essential."



By Ashley Pinciario, Northeast Regional Manager ME, MA, NJ, NY, NH, VT, and RI

Throughout the winter and spring of 2021, many students in the upper-Northeast region attended school virtually. Even when doors to the buildings opened in the spring, many students remained at home.

As Narrative 4 (N4) engaged with more and more administrators and educators throughout the Northeast, we continued to hear the same thing—"This is a crisis of connection."

Administrators and teachers began asking questions like, *How do we rebuild our school culture after 18 months away from the building? How do we help students feel safe and welcome*

in this space again? How do we build connection and share the stories of the last year and a half among our students and our staff teams?

This "crisis of connection" and these questions have led to an even greater interest in N4's work and the story exchange's impact.

Schools like International Community High School in Bronx, NY, New Design High School in New York City, and Millennium Brooklyn High School in Brooklyn have all trained over 20 N4 facilitators to use the story exchange with their students on a monthly basis. Schools like the Urban Institute of Mathematics in Bronx, NY, and

High School of Commerce in Springfield, MA, developed summer school programming using N4 resources, and schools like Casco Bay High School in Portland, ME, and Rhinebeck High School in Rhinebeck, NY, used the story exchange this September with their upper-classmen.

Each of these schools partnered with N4 to not only build empathy, but to also rebuild the connection and culture in their schools as they headed back to full, in-person learning this fall.

"As Narrative 4 (N4) engaged with more and more administrators and educators throughout the Northeast, we continued to hear the same thing—'This is a crisis of connection'...This led to an even greater interest in N4's work and the story exchange's impact."



By Evan Barker, Southeast Regional Manager TN, KY, WV, VA, NC, and SC

2021 has been a dynamic and exciting year for Narrative 4 (N4) in the upper South. Building upon N4's past work in Nashville and Eastern Kentucky, we've explored new horizons with schools in very diverse urban and rural areas.

N4 partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools and Partners for Education at Berea College for broad implementation of story exchange in Nashville's schools and in dozens of schools and communities across southeastern Kentucky. We've enriched our network and the networks of our partners by joining with US Department of Education-funded grants like Gear Up, Promise Neighborhood, and Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR). We anticipate

strong year-over-year retention and deep connections with these new partners as they customize N4's programs to bolster their communities' strengths.

An equally important and exciting project is the *Apeirogon* pilot program, centered on Kentucky schools from Owensboro to Greenup and everywhere in between. We handpicked a group of expert teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools, provided them with copies of Colum McCann's *Apeirogon* (with sincere thanks to the Moriah Foundation), and hosted several participants for a three-day planning and story exchange workshop at the Hindman Settlement School, a home-away-from-home for Appalachian writers and educators. Throughout

the year, these teachers have experimented with the story exchange, teaching a brand new novel, and putting empathy into action with community-engagement projects led by students.

In the coming year, we expect to build and strengthen our network in the region in order to bridge the urban-rural divide. We also hope to broaden students' cultural awareness by introducing them to their peers across the region, and to center students' needs and interests by supporting their use of story exchange to build empathy in their own unique ways.

"An equally important and exciting project is the *Apeirogon* pilot program, centered on Kentucky schools from Owensboro to Greenup and everywhere in between...Throughout the year, these teachers have experimented with the story exchange, teaching a brand new novel, and putting empathy into action with community-engagement projects led by students."



By Jahi Mackey, Southeast Regional Associate LA, MS, AL, TX, FL, and GA

For International Education Week, I collaborated with the Louisiana State University International Cultural Center (LSUICC) to host a Narrative 4 (N4) exchange between U.S.-born students and international students. I co-facilitated this story exchange with Laura Dean, LSUICC's Director of International Student Engagement.

We hosted 8 students whose identities spanned four continents,

representing both the diversity of southeast Louisiana and the diversity of the United States. Most of the participants did not know one another prior to the story exchange, but their stories touched on overlapping themes such as seeking belonging, facing and confronting discrimination, renegotiating identity, and celebrating their heritage. The students walked away realizing that despite their ethnic differences,

es, they had a shared humanity and need for connection.

Though the group was intimate, the impact felt much greater. LSU is a rather large state school with over 34,000 enrolled students. This was the first N4 story exchange hosted at Louisiana State University. We look forward to deepening our relationship with the LSUICC and expanding our presence in Louisiana.

"The students walked away realizing that despite their ethnic differences, they had a shared humanity and need for connection. Though the group was intimate, the impact felt much larger."





By Taelor Lewis, Midwest Regional Manager ND, SD, MN, MI, WI, IL, IN, and IA

According to a study conducted by Berkeley's Other and Belonging Institute, 5 out of the 10 most segregated cities in the United States are located in my region, the Midwest: Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Saint Louis. Since the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the Midwest has been on high alert in the news, and as Covid-19 started to ravish our school systems in March 2020 and Black Lives Matter protests swept the Midwest that same summer, I knew that there was no better place or time to start Narrative 4's (N4) work.

The United States is diversifying the most in Midwestern cities. The number of young people of color living in the Midwest has surged over the past decade, as the older white population has nearly stalled. This has had a

direct impact on the education system and educators are searching for new ways to connect with students and open dialogue about complicated social issues occurring in their communities. Compounded by the pandemic, educators across my region have asked for tools to have more connections and thoughtful conversations. As one educator in my region put it, "I want my students to walk in one another's shoes and develop better relationships." Over this past year, I have made inroads to do just that—from Chicago Public Schools to Minnesota State University, Moorhead, my team has taken the leap in spreading N4's work in the Midwest. It has been an exciting time, and it is just the beginning.

From the University level to the K-12 level, my team has seen

so much growth with N4 and the ways educators have implemented our methodology into their classrooms. We've been able to bring the story exchange to 21 schools, inspiring 122 facilitators to interact with our Facilitator Training. It is clear to me that by fusing the power of the exchange with the creativity and passion of these educators, students will (and already do!) notice a difference in both their day-to-day interactions and the overall climate within their schools. Our team is looking forward to continuing to collect data on N4's current impact, but most importantly, we hope to study the long-term impact we've had on the schools engaged with our work.

Despite Covid rates still continuing to increase in my region, hope is on the horizon. My goals in the next year are to not only continue to spread our message in new corners of my region, especially in rural areas, but to also create a strong community of facilitators, especially in my hometown, Chicago, IL. We have so much to look forward to in the new year, and I am extremely excited to see where this work takes us, especially as "the new normal" presents itself and we have more opportunities to increase empathy in the Midwest.

"The United States is diversifying the most in Midwestern cities... This has had a direct impact on the education system, and educators are searching for new ways to connect with students and open dialogue about complicated social issues occurring in their communities."



By Tai Schroeder, Pacific Northwest Regional Manager WA, OR, ID, and Northern CA

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) is known for lush landscapes, advancing technology, towering volcanoes, and hippie communes selling essential oil and foraging for mushrooms. While all these attractions make me a proud Washingtonian, there are certain aspects of the PNW that we desperately need to be aware of: the staggering rate of homelessness, the fires destroying thousands of acres of our forests, the profound division of class and race, the lack of acknowledgment that most of the PNW's major metropolitan areas were erected on Indigenous land, to name a few. As my team strategized how to expand Narrative 4's (N4) work into this new region, with Covid-19 ever-present, our big question was, where do we begin?

When I first moved to Seattle, I was told (by Seattleites!) to be aware of the "Seattle Freeze"—a common saying in reference to the challenge people here have in opening up, starting a conversation, or speaking to strangers. After witnessing the "Seattle Freeze" first hand, I knew I was in the right place—the PNW needed N4's work!

I can say with great pride, that in one year, we have made great leaps, laying the groundwork for connection through purposeful and meaningful conversations with schools and community-based organizations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Northern California. In 11 months, our team has not only forged 17 partnerships (and counting!) and on-boarded

over 90 facilitators, but we have also impacted over 750 students, educators, and future leaders.

We have seen students, teachers, and community leaders grasp the N4 story exchange and take flight with it. Lewis and Clark College, for example, just completed their third student-lead Conservation Conversations Symposium, where students and faculty participated in story exchanges that utilized environmental justice- and climate change-themed prompts. We have seen extremely overworked teachers take the story exchange to their schools in ways we could never have imagined. For instance, just the other day in Boise, ID, a teacher left our story exchange saying that she was going to create an "Empathy Circle" at her school, a place where her colleagues could come in regularly to share stories and connect. I am most proud of the fact that we have facilitated story exchanges in both highly urban and extremely rural areas, such as in Tillamook, OR, a town with fewer than 50 students.

With all of our foundation work in full bloom, I can imagine that come spring, the N4 PNW team will start to notice small drips on the floor as the "Seattle Freeze" starts to melt in front of our eyes.

"We have made great leaps, laying the groundwork for connection through purposeful and meaningful conversations with schools and community-based organizations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Northern California... We have seen students, teachers, and community leaders grasp the N4 story exchange and take flight with it."

Narrative 4 Through the Years

August 2007

First story exchange in Colorado

April 2010

First international story exchange

June 2012

Global Arts Leadership Summit in Colorado seeds N4



Dec 2012

N4, Inc. is formed June 2013; Sting publically launches N4 in Chicago



June 2014

First N4 Global Summit at Yale University

May 2014

N4 featured in *The New York Times Magazine*



Dec 2016

Launch of N4 Ireland

Feb 2017

N4's *Guns and Empathy* documentary wins a National Magazine Award

April 2017

University of Chicago conducts research on the impact of the story exchange on students at University Heights High School in The Bronx, NY

May 2017

N4 featured on BBC News



Oct- Dec 2017

N4 helps launch the Obama Foundation

Dec 2018

N4 Ireland featured in *The Guardian*

May 2020

Launch of N4 Nigeria

June 2020

Launch of pilot Empathy into Action campaign in South Africa



Nov 2020

N4 programs expand to 6 US regional hubs

Aug 2021

Launch of N4 Mexico

Sept 2021

Launch of N4 Kenya

Oct 2021

Launch of N4 Tanzania

Dec 2021

Launch of Multi-Year Growth and Initiative Campaign





By Margaret LaRaia, Learning Resources Director

Over the past eleven months, my role at Narrative 4 (N4) has been to develop resources and support teachers in making the N4 story exchange part of every student's learning experience. This spring we launched a pilot with teachers from eighteen schools, grades 6-12. We gave teachers classroom sets of Colum McCann's novel, *Apeirogon*, along with learning resources created by N4 artists and educators. These learning resources guided teachers on how best to use the story exchange as part of their regular teaching, helping them to explore the questions and insights that emerged from students' stories and inviting students to explore their findings through civic engagement.

The pilot has been a resounding success, and we plan to maintain and expand this creative community of educators. But don't take my word for it. Here's one teacher's words about what this

experience has meant to her:

"It was the first thing that got me excited about anything last year. That's the truth. Every day was terrible. It was a hardship. I felt like I couldn't teach anymore. I felt like I was failing myself and kids because of the conditions that we had to work with. But when I saw that email come through with the invitation to use a text like *Apeirogon*, to take a deep dive into it, literally into the unknown, I felt like what better time to do it.

Most professional development is a waste of time, but this was just so great. Because it was run by teachers who gave us some structure, but trusted us enough to do the work.

Trust is the biggest thing. This kind of work is attainable for every teacher to do. If we can all tap into our passion for bringing stories to kids, talking about the ideas that emerge, and learning from each

other—that's all we want to do."

During our next phase, we will document all the incredible work students have created and will continue to create. We all know how divisive this moment is in our culture. In response to that, many students are investigating place and identity in order to respond to the larger culture's lack of understanding. For instance, students from Appalachia are using the story exchange to move beyond the media's story about Appalachia to tell their own stories imbued with pride in their history, a sense of community, and resilience. Further, students from Pennsylvania are spending time in the outdoors, exploring how nature informs/can inform their identity. While students from Lexington, Kentucky are researching their community to write stories that imagine its future, students from Louisville, Kentucky are creating rap performance videos which connect their lives to the novel *Apeirogon*. All these incredible ideas began with the story exchange and the novel *Apeirogon*, but we gave teachers room and support to be creative. N4 creates a special kind of community that honors the value of all its members. The more we document and share this value, the more other teachers and students will be inspired to join us and show us what they can do. All this work has happened due to the willing collaboration of N4's community members—including you!

"N4 creates a special kind of community that honors the value of all its members. The more we document and share this value, the more other teachers and students will be inspired to join us and show us what they can do."



By Ru Freeman Artists Network Director

As an artist I understand the need to constantly imagine new realities. Every day at Narrative 4 (N4) I get to work with my fellow creatives around the world who also know that we never have to reconcile ourselves to the detritus before us, but can instead conjure an inclusive wholeness. To be able to instill that perspective in young people and encourage them to do the same is a beautiful thing. Every day I am reminded by this work that we are, truly, in this marvelous broken-but-mending moment together.

I had danced on the fringes of N4 for a long time before I came on to direct our fabulous network of artists. What N4 did, who was a part of it, both things played a role in keeping me engaged, observing what the organization was up to. Then I saw how N4 unified several aspects of social engagement, how it overlapped so perfectly with my own way of existing and

I knew I wanted this role.

The people who shaped N4 believe in the fierce independence of artists, by which I mean the way artists refuse to be crippled by what exists and, rather, seek to tell a different story. The way they move through the world allowing everything, holding conflicting possibilities in their heads, containing multitudes, and how they turn all of it into something true and inclusive. The way artists, above all others, are tender at their core, and how that tenderness extends into the world. The way that, though they may create art alone, they are deeply interested in the predicament of a common humanity.

N4 centers artists in a way that gives us—for I, too, am an artist—a chance to co-create with our fellow artists as well as young people around the world. We make the creation of art a multi-generational, cross-cultural endeavor that is vibrant, dynamic,

and joyful. At N4, our artists leap with grace between the intimate moments of connection between two people, and the vast sweep of a global landscape. We don't downplay conflict, for that exists too. Rather, we lean into different perspectives, varied histories, and celebrate the grand multiplicity of experiences that allow us to tell the bigger stories about our species. They lead the way in helping us to take that way of being into every aspect of life—inside classrooms, homes, communities, nations, and out into an unbounded world.

"The people who shaped N4 believe in the fierce independence of artists, by which I mean the way artists refuse to be crippled by what exists and, rather, seek to tell a different story."



By Nathalie Handal, Writer and N4 Artist

We're excited to share an example of the work of one of our artists. Writing to Colum McCann's novel, *Apeirogon*, poet and N4 artist Nathalie Handal, wrote the following reflection. In it she centers a poem, "I, Write" to create a "Storytelling is Searching" activity for our collection of learning resources.

I, Write

To travel with pelicans and sea-farers. To be seas and shores and songs. To be an oil lamp lighting an entire ship. To be borderless. To be elsewhere. And give views from elsewhere. To witness wars and wilderness and words translating the waltz of vowels and syllabus and metaphors. To meet and be other voices. To be motion and migrate. To be with all the cities I crave, all the trees that tell tales. To dream in infinite languages. To kiss a bird and disappear a border. To see freedom from the bravest side of love. To take beauty on a walk, sit with doubt and linger with hope. To excavate my imagi-

nation; give order to time; and order and disorder the rooms of my words. To discover what I seek and see. To question my answers.

...Storytelling is searching. It helps me understand there is no fiction or nonfiction, there is flame. Stories have given me a place as I was displaced. Poetry has carried me across magic and through mystery. Poetry is all the languages I speak, all the places I am from. It is the music of my muses. I write because if I don't, I am missing.

I come from a deeply rooted family from Bethlehem, Palestine. I was born in the Caribbean. I grew up in France, Latin America, the Middle East and the United States, and I was educated in the United Kingdom and Asia. I come from a symphony of languages—French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Creole, English. My ancestry is the sea. The Mediterranean a place of crossings, and I see myself in its crossroads. My music is cities.

New York City is my main instrument. My drum. NYC is the world and I see myself in its fusion. Without words, I would not understand the merging of all the cultures and countries that make me who I am. I would not know how to let them live together in harmony inside of me.

Nathalie Handal is a French-American poet and writer born in Haiti to a family from Bethlehem. She has lived in France, the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Arab world. After earning a MFA in Creative Writing from Bennington College, Vermont and a MPhil in English and Drama at the University of London, Handal began writing and translating global literature in the 1990s. She currently resides in New York City, Abu Dhabi, and Rome and teaches at NYU.



Staff Retreat

In July, our US-based staff had the opportunity to connect during a weeklong retreat in New York City. For many of our new employees, it was the first time they'd met in person since joining Narrative 4 (N4)!

We set out to develop a shared

understanding of N4's history, mission and vision. We took a deep dive into N4's key goals and strategic priorities and we identified the structures that need to be in place to achieve those goals. And of course, we also had an all-staff story exchange.

As a team, we were grateful for this time away to reflect on our successes and opportunity areas and to brainstorm strategies for building stronger relationships and the capacity to collaborate more effectively.



By James Lawlor, PhD Regional Director, Narrative 4 Ireland

One of the highlights of working with Narrative 4 (N4) is receiving feedback from the young people who have taken part in the programme. The most common feedback is “I feel heard” or “I feel more connected”. At a time when everyone is talking on social media, the N4 empathy education programme teaches young people to deeply listen, to connect, and to see each other in new ways. These are skills that they bring into adulthood.

We want to bring N4 to more

schools so that more young people can gain the benefits of the programme. At the end of 2020, we had trained staff in 19% of secondary schools in Ireland; school staff learned how to facilitate the N4 story exchange and other empathy education units. At the end of 2021, we increased our presence in Ireland’s secondary schools to 35%, and by the end of next year, we aim to reach 50%.

This year, we launched a new initiative: The Narrative 4 Empathy School Award.

The Empathy School Award recognises post-primary schools that foster an environment of empathy, lead with kindness, and cultivate connection and understanding in their students and staff. There are three types of awards for post-primary schools: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. We look forward to working with schools as we scale and bring our programmes to thousands more young people in 2022.

“I think our class got closer after the story exchange, and I can talk to more people now.” —STUDENT, N4 IRELAND



By Buchi Onyegbule Head of Africa Operations, N4 Africa

“I felt like I was in this dark place with no lights whatsoever, and someone let a rope down into the hole and was gently pulling me out into the light.”
—Student, N4 Africa

This is perhaps the most profound feedback I’d received from a student who had gone through our story exchange session. And even more amazing, I received it from a place I didn’t expect—Mombasa.

It was during our tour of East Africa, where we introduced Narrative 4 (N4) to four cities in Kenya (Nairobi and Mombasa) and Tanzania (Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar). Two days after our facilitator training in Mombasa, I went to Baptist High School in the city to attend the first N4 story exchange in Kenya and East Africa at large. The principal of the school, Ms. Millicent Omondi, had been a part of the training and was excited to

deploy the story exchange among her students, especially as her background was in guidance and counselling.

You see, I had gone to East Africa with some hope, yet with a healthy amount of trepidation as to whether or not the students would receive the concept of the story exchange favourably. Young people in this part of the world aren’t particularly used to being encouraged to share, to air, and to be heard. Outside of my native Nigeria, I had never been involved in a story exchange that was with primarily students.

But I needn’t have worried, because the students took to it like ducks to water. The energy, the willingness, and the openness, was so inspiring. During the reflection, post the exchange in Mombasa, a student shared the profound feedback quoted above. The student’s principal; Rose

Owur, our Mombasa Associate; and I grew silent, allowing the words to sink in.

Such breakthroughs proved to be a running theme throughout our engagements in the region. I attended exchanges with students in Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and listened to stories of loss, fear, hope, pain, and joy. Whatever the story though, you could see plainly the feelings of relief, of bonds being created and more meaningful relationships being nurtured.

This year we set up the Trash to Treasure Center in Port Elizabeth South Africa, a fantastic project that aims to aid with dignity and teach sustainability in an underserved community. We also piloted and kicked off our Hold My Hands mentorship program in Nigeria. Yet, it was in East Africa that I fully came to understand the power and possibilities inherent to N4’s work. And more importantly, I realized just how much Africa is becoming a real home for N4.

“I felt like I was in this dark place with no lights whatsoever, and someone had let a rope down into the hole and was gently pulling me out into the light.” —STUDENT, N4 AFRICA



By Zukiswa Allah, Program Manager, Trash to Treasure, N4 Africa

Narrative 4 Africa's (N4 Africa) Trash to Treasure (TTT) began as a recycling program, where residents of the Joe Slovo Township in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, could exchange refuse and recyclables for vouchers to buy groceries. In the last year, the scope and impact of the TTT program has far exceeded what we originally envisioned.

The TTT project is located in the center of Nkandla, which forms part of Joe Slovo Township. We are currently serving about 360 immediate households per week in Nkandla alone. We collect more than 74 tons of plastic bottles, cardboard, paper, and cans of soft drinks every month, that is about 1000 kgs of waste.

We've repurposed this collected waste for several projects. Using bottle-tops, we created billboards,

placing them in strategic locations so that people can see how we are reusing waste and turning it into something beautiful. We have also collected old tires, turning them into chairs and plant pots. Such TTT projects help to educate our people about environmental consciousness.

In addition to recycling, the TTT centre serves as a site for community meetings, Covid vaccinations, and is home to our community garden. The centre also runs aftercare classes for kids in the community, and we recently established an on-site library.

Prior to TTT's existence, Nkandla and the surrounding communities did not have access to a library. Thanks to a generous donation from ArtWorks for Youth, we received 90% of our

books at no cost to TTT. The library adds a lot of color and ample impact to all who use it, especially the children. We're also able to deliver books to children in the surrounding areas, saving them long walks from their neighborhoods to the TTT centre.

Our community has about an 80% unemployment rate, so we are very pleased to report that the centre has employed 9 people on long-term contracts and about 30 people on short-term contracts. We've fostered several relationships with community leaders, schools, other NGOs, and local companies, including small black businesses in our communities. We hope and pray that these relationships will help support the further development and growth of our community.

“In addition to recycling, the TTT centre serves as a site for community meetings, Covid vaccinations, and is home to our community garden. The centre also runs aftercare classes for kids in the community, and we recently established an on-site library.”



By Maru Castañeda Operations Manager, N4 México

In August of this year, a dream I've had for several years came to life: Narrative 4 México (N4 México). For a dream to come true, you must have all the necessary elements, and for that dream to grow, you must have lots of energy. In the past few months, I've seen the pieces of this dream come together: the translation of N4 one-pagers and videos into Spanish, in-depth research on the socio-emotional skills of the ministry of education in México, the creation of programs adapted to the Mexican culture, in-depth research of potential schools, the development of N4 México's social media channels, and the creation of a dedicated N4 México team. You can see the passion we have for what we do: Bringing people together through their life stories.

Unfortunately, the schools in my country lack programs focused on the socio-emotional aspect of being human. For this

reason, when the teachers hear what N4 is about and experience the story exchange, their eyes show appreciation for the fact that N4 exists. They have told me that they once again believe that this world could be better, thanks to a group of people like us. As N4 México touches the lives of teachers, a change in attitude can be felt and their desire to bring N4 to the classroom grows.

In just a few months, we have managed to sow a seed of humanity that will continue to blossom. My goal is for every school in Mexico, private or public, to have access to N4 programming. I know it is an ambitious dream, but my father always told me, “When you dream, dream big.” With the help of the great team that supports me, I will be able to achieve this dream. However, one thing that I've learned in my life is the importance of taking small steps, before trying to run at full speed. So, while N4 México has



begun its work in Tampico and Monterrey, my hope is that these small steps will soon allow us to grow throughout Mexico.

“In just a few months, we have managed to sow a seed of humanity that will continue to blossom.”



By Ashley Student, Highland Park, Illinois, US

Narrative 4 (N4) Master Practitioner, Faisal Mohyuddin, was my English teacher during my junior year of high school. He introduced the N4 story exchange to my peers and me, and I absolutely fell in love with the process.

I am so grateful for the meaningful relationships I have formed through N4. I have connected with

people from all different backgrounds, and this truly has opened up my world. One of the most important lessons I learned from N4 is the true power of vulnerability, storytelling, and empathy. N4 has truly given me a second family.

I am currently a first grade teacher in Deerfield, Illinois. I have been able to bring bits and

pieces of N4 into my first grade classroom. I actively teach my students about empathy, mindfulness, kindness, and the value of sharing stories. These are all things I learned from N4, and I will continue to teach such lessons to my future students.

“One of the most important lessons I learned from N4 is the true power of vulnerability, storytelling, and empathy. N4 has truly given me a second family.”



By Alex Student, Vienna, Austria

I first got involved with Narrative 4 (N4) when the organization came to my school in 2016 to do a story exchange. I really enjoyed the connection I felt with my classmates after our first story exchange. I had been in school with them for 5 years, but after one afternoon I felt I knew them more than I had before.

My favorite N4 memory is probably my first N4 summit in New Orleans. Having the opportunity to travel abroad and meet new people was incredible. Everything about that week still sticks with me to this day. Learning, listening, and connecting in a space that N4 created was magical.

The most important lesson I

learned was deep listening. Because of this, I have built amazing relationships in my adult life and I have great connections with my friends. My ability to communicate and listen stems from the lessons I learned while at N4.

“Learning, listening, and connecting in a space that N4 created was magical.”



By Mercy Student, Limerick, Ireland

In my fourth year of secondary school, my English teacher brought Narrative 4 (N4) to our classroom. N4 was running a story exchange workshop, bringing students from Birmingham and Limerick together to break down borders, share cultural differences, and explore the importance of our identities.

What I enjoyed most about the experience was getting to understand people's differences. Even though we were an ocean apart, the one thing we had in common was the importance of our identity and how empathy helped us understand each other's reasoning.

While working with N4 I've learned that empathy is a strong emotion that alters people's approach to others, whether it's a

close friend or a stranger. Sometimes all you need is to know that someone understands what you're feeling and is able to listen to you without judgment.

I've recently entered my first year of college, studying Business. N4 has helped me change the way I approach people and the way I live. I feel a deeper need to give my time to people to show my willingness to truly understand what they are going through. I believe that everyone needs to participate in a story exchange at least once in their life. It will change their perspective on life and help them when it comes to interacting with people in the future.



“Sometimes all you need is to know that someone understands what you’re feeling and is able to listen to you without judgment.”

N4 Board and Staff

(in alphabetical order)

- Zukiswa Allah, Program Manager, N4 Africa
- Evan Barker, Southeast Regional Manager, United States
- Felice Belle, Director of Marketing and Communications
- Maru Castañeda, Operations Manager, N4 Mexico
- Lisa Consiglio, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder
- Laura Duff, Program Assistant, N4 Ireland
- Ru Freeman, Artists Network Director
- Gautam Gangoli, Chief Operating Officer
- Rachel Gleeson, Program Officer, N4 Ireland
- Leslie Grover, Southeast Regional Manager, United States
- Lee Keylock, Director of Global Programs
- Margaret LaRaia, Learning Resources Director
- James Lawlor, Regional Director, N4 Ireland
- Taelor Lewis, Midwest Regional Manager, United States
- Caoimhe Lillis, Program Assistant, N4 Ireland
- Gustavo Lopez, Finance Manager
- Jahi Mackey, Southwest Regional Associate
- Alondra Marmolejos, Programs Supervisor
- Mandie Mayer, Operations Assistant
- Jen McCool, Northeast Regional Manager, United States
- Laura Muriello, Vice President North America
- Randell Nairn, Finance Manager
- Joseph Onokpe, Associate, N4 Africa
- Buchi Onyegbule, Head of Africa Operations, N4 Africa
- Ashley Pinciario, Northeast Regional Manager, United States
- Amira Rachouh, Operations Supervisor
- Tai Schroeder, Pacific Northwest Regional Manager, United States

NARRATIVE 4 GLOBAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Gregory Khalil, Board Chair
- Colum McCann, President and Co-founder
- Sharhonda Bossier, Director
- Heather Mitchell, Director
- Gideon Stein, Treasurer

NARRATIVE 4 IRELAND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Susie Lopez, Board Member
- Colm Mac Con Iomaire, Board Member
- Colum McCann, Board Chair
- Vicki Nash, Board Member
- Bill Shipsey, Board Member

Funders

Thank you to all of our supporters* who have generously given their time, talent, funds, and friendship!



Stand Together Foundation.

MacKenzie Scott

Karen Hollins and The Elizabeth Foundation



Anonymous



The ATLANTIC Philanthropies



Suzanne Lopez



Brian Schaefer and Stephen Mack



Kenneth Goldman Donor Fund



JOHN PRITZKER FAMILY FUND

Sandra and Rankin Cooter



The Dillon Fund

The LaFetra Foundation

Heather and Senator George Mitchell

Charlotte Cunningham

Matthew and Yildiz Ferri

Suzanne LeFetra Collier

Christy Cashman

Amy and Kurt Kalm

Kevin and Jane Quinn

James Marion and Allison Rutledge-Parisi

Rory and David Green

Noah Stein

Linda and Joe Chafets

Joan and George Preble

Barbara and Todd Albert

*Gifts of \$500 or more

Narrative 4, Inc. and Subsidiary

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2020

		Year Ended December 31, 2020
ASSETS		
Cash		\$ 1,516,047
Accounts receivable		86,532
Contribution and grants receivable, net		1,718,443
Intangible assets - trademarks		14,628
Other assets		24,904
Property and equipment, net		25,961
Total		\$2,702,965
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses		\$ 85,168
Paycheck Protection Program Loan payable		129,825
Total Liabilities		214,993
Net Assets		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses		\$ 1,187,983
Paycheck Protection Program Loan payable		1,300,000
Total Net Assets		\$2,702,956

Narrative 4 (N4) exists to break down barriers and shatter stereotypes by using the power of stories, art, and education to equip young people to become powerful forces of change. We are a global organization driven by artists, shaped by educators, and led by students. Using our core methodology, the story exchange, we help students understand that their voices, stories, actions, and lives matter.

