



# 2019 Report for Key Supporters



## A Note from Leadership

We've put together this report to highlight the imprint your giving has made through Akanksha and to share our plans for growth and increasing our impact.

The Akanksha Education Fund serves as a public charity in the U.S. that allows donors like you to support the Akanksha Foundation's work in India through a U.S. 501(c)3. We take our responsibility to you seriously. In FY19, the Akanksha Education Fund raised close to \$1.8 million from U.S. donors and made \$1.5 million in grants to the Akanksha Foundation in India. All funds that we send to the Akanksha Foundation in India go through a rigorous grant and vetting process. We monitor and collect reporting on all of your funds and the programs they support.

This report presents a summary of the impact your gift has made in the last year. We are grateful to our community of 3,000 donors in the U.S. for your trust in us to help you meet your philanthropic goals. Whether you are passionate about giving back to India because of your roots, or have personally experienced the power of education in transforming a life, or are passionate about education as the most effective way to break the cycle of poverty—we are proud that you have chosen Akanksha as the vehicle through which you make a difference.

As you will read in this report, the Akanksha Foundation in India is gearing up to respond to two unique opportunities: 1) to grow our own network of schools from 21 to 35 in the next few years with a public-private partnership with the city of Nagpur, and 2) to shape policy in two strategic areas for over one million government schools in India by sharing our curriculum, leadership training and community engagement models. These opportunities arise as the Indian government works towards improving the quality of education for over 400 million students in the Indian education system.

The Akanksha Education Fund has been asked to increase our funding to India from \$1.5 to \$3 million over the next two years. We are determined to meet this request, but we will need your help in doing so. Together, we can change lives and help bring a little bit more equality to this world—one student at a time.

Thank you for your support,  
Gouri Sadhwani  
*Executive Director, Akanksha Education Fund*

## A Year in Review

In 2019, Akanksha amplified our impact on both the 10,000 students in our 21 schools and on the overall education system in India. The past year saw us serve more students than ever before, maintain a consistently high rate of performance in state-level exams, form new partnerships with local governments and develop plans to grow in the coming years.

Responding to a critical opportunity to advance quality education in all government schools in India, Akanksha is developing key areas where we can share our academic and parental engagement models across government schools.

Over the next few years in the U.S., we will aim to increase our level of support for Akanksha schools and programs to make this vision of educational reform and systemic change possible.

There are many reasons to be optimistic and energized about the future of Akanksha. Read the full report for more.

### Key Figures from the 2018-19 School Year

- Almost 10,000 children in Akanksha schools
- 98% of Akanksha's students pass their Grade 10 Board exam
- 92% of Akanksha alumni pass their Grade 12 Board exam
- 86 new teachers recruited and trained for new positions in Akanksha schools
- Growth in our Navi Mumbai school, adding nearly 500 kindergarten students
- New partnerships to develop an education reform strategy for 1,200+ schools in Mumbai
- 10 Akanksha school leaders in training through our School Leadership Academy

## Education in India: A New Education Policy

The Central Government of India is shaping its new education policy and setting priorities for the next decade. Several of the objectives proposed are aligned with Akanksha's approach—these include a focus on foundational literacy and digital literacy and transforming curriculum and pedagogy in favor of a holistic approach that highlights critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, ethics and social responsibility. Prioritizing equity and inclusiveness, one of the goals is to create Special Education Zones in disadvantaged regions across the country and aim for a 100% gross enrollment ratio across all school levels by 2030. Schools will also be grouped into School Complexes to create a community of support for teachers and administrators.

The close alignment of Akanksha's model with the proposed policy validates Akanksha's approach and brings new opportunities to continue and amplify our impact. [Read the draft policy here.](#)

## Akanksha's Model Attracts New Partners & Campaigns

- Recognizing the success Akanksha has had in Mumbai, Akanksha was approached by the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation to extend its footprint in that region. Cementing the partnership with a three-year MOU, Akanksha will be reimbursed by the government for 55% of teachers' salaries at the Navi Mumbai school. This year, we also added a kindergarten section of 500 students to the same school. A second school will possibly be added next year.
- After leading a successful roundtable discussion with 70 representatives from the Mumbai City Government, Akanksha was invited to act as an advisor and thought partner to develop a strategy for education reform in Mumbai's 1,200+ schools.
- On a state-level, Akanksha is providing support to set up a state-wide school principal training program, based on our School Leader Academy.
- The Akanksha team has also been approached to develop schools with the Tribal Education Department in Maharashtra. Akanksha was asked to help set up model schools, both English language and residential, and is currently in dialogue to do so.
- Akanksha is leading an innovative stream of work to strengthen parental participation in school management and also transform government schools in the vicinity of an Akanksha school. This is expected to be finalized in 2020.

## Growing the Akanksha Family of Schools

With the support of our donors, we have reached 10,000 children through our 21 schools. Looking ahead, we are optimistic about growing to 35 schools over the next five years.

Beyond Mumbai and Pune, expansion within Maharashtra is a priority, with Nagpur being the first choice. Progress is underway to launch up to six Akanksha schools in Nagpur in 2020-21, and discussions with the government on reimbursements are progressing. Akanksha will vie for a partnership with the Nagpur Municipal Corporation through the impending RFP process to launch six new English-language schools in the city through a public-private partnership. The Nagpur Municipal Corporation will reimburse 50% of costs to run the school once the partnership is operational.

Outside Maharashtra, Surat, Nasik, Baroda and Bhopal are possibilities. Akanksha is working to build a robust relationship with these local governments as a first step.

School expansion in Mumbai through government partnerships remains a high priority, with 12 new schools being considered. However, financial support from the government to cover a portion of per-student costs is a pre-requisite for any additional schools in Mumbai.

## Expanding Akanksha's Influence Beyond Our Schools

Akanksha has launched a new strategic vision to increase our impact. Through the model, our approach will be expanded beyond our schools, starting with the communities where Akanksha schools are located.

Expanding Akanksha's circle of influence, our new outward focus will include:

- Identifying areas which lag behind in learning outcomes, Akanksha will leverage partnerships with local organizations, and the existing network of alumni, schools, educators and parents. The Akanksha school plays a critical role, acting as a connector and hub for best practice sharing.
- Akanksha will build a network of schools which facilitate peer learning and drive systemic impact in these areas. Over time, this engagement will replicate Akanksha's best practices in government schools and improve quality across all schools.
- School Coaches from the School Leadership Academy will also work with local government schools in the area.
- This move also allows Akanksha to expand to new cities and brings Akanksha schools to many more children in India.

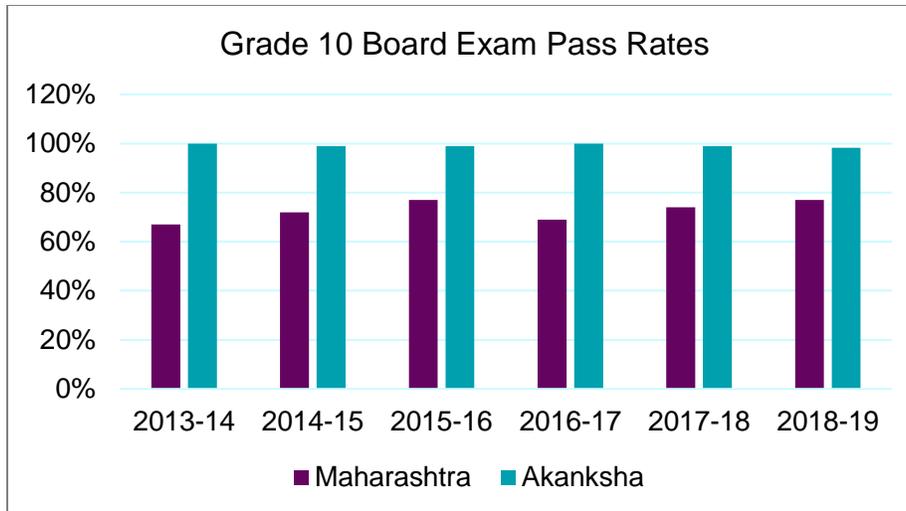
## Akanksha Students Scaling New Heights

Akanksha schools create an academically vigorous and supportive environment for our 10,000 students in Mumbai and Pune, helping the most under-privileged children break down barriers to success. Our holistic model is working, as evidenced by our growing enrollment and performance figures and in the trust parents and communities have afforded us with educating the next generation.

### Grade 10 and 12 Board Exam Results

Our students have continued the years-long trend of high achievement in their **Grade 10 exams**.

98.3% of Akanksha students passed their Grade 10 exams, compared to 77% in Maharashtra.



Akanksha alumni keep up these trends in their **Grade 12 exams**.

- Akanksha students have a 91% pass rate, while their counterparts in Maharashtra had an 86% pass rate.
- 53% of Akanksha alumni achieved distinction or first class, compared to 40% for the state of Maharashtra.

## Impact Assessment of Akanksha Programs by Independent Evaluator

An independent impact assessment carried out by Education Assessment, an Ahmedabad-based organization, further validated Akanksha's impact. The study had several relevant findings:

- A comparative study of 75,000 students in government, affordable private and Akanksha schools across Maharashtra was conducted for students in grades 3-7.
- The study tested 3,683 Akanksha students from 17 Akanksha schools in English and Math.
- Akanksha students performed significantly better than students from affordable private schools and government schools, with the performance gap increasing with each consecutive grade level.

## Akanksha Alumni

Akanksha alumni receive a full range of support from our Alumni Support team with college applications, mentorship programs, financial literacy and career guidance. In addition to colleges and universities in India, 63 Akanksha alumni have applied to United World College for study abroad programs. The U.S. currently has seven Akanksha alumni on full academic scholarships at colleges in Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, Utah and Vermont.

## Akanksha in the U.S.

- **\$1.5 Million in Grants to India**

In FY19, the Akanksha Education Fund granted \$1.5 million to the Akanksha Foundation in India, providing 24% of the Foundation's annual budget. Our grants provided general support as well as funding for Mahalaxmi Mumbai Public School, Shindewadi Mumbai Public School, youth development projects, and school instruction and development (including the development of Akanksha's newest school in Navi Mumbai).

- **UCSD Partnership**

Through the support of one of our donors, Akanksha in India has established a three-year partnership with the **University of California, San Diego**, to facilitate collaborative research opportunities and foster cross-cultural pedagogy sharing. Specifically, the project seeks to: develop and implement a sustainable research-practice model in a school setting; create international service-learning opportunities that deploy undergraduate student mentors and tutors to collaborate with Akanksha students, teachers and community members on classroom and school-wide projects; support UC San Diego education PhD scholars in continuing their work in schools in India; and facilitate learning and research opportunities for a team from Akanksha Foundation during a visit to UC San Diego.

- **Akanksha in the Bay Area**

With a core group of supporters in the Bay Area championing Akanksha (Nathalie Joseph, Srividya Prakash, Ramji Srinivasan and Midi Feng), we are looking to expand our footprint in that area. Over the coming months, we will increase awareness of Akanksha and share more about our work through events and outreach to those based in the region. For more information, please contact [Fareeda](#).

- **New Partnerships to Extend Our Reach**

The Akanksha Education Fund has joined a network of eleven other nonprofit organizations in the U.S. supporting development initiatives in India to increase philanthropy aimed at India through the India Philanthropy Alliance. We are excited for the collaborative opportunities this brings for our work in the U.S. and look forward to working with peer organizations. Read more about the alliance [here](#).

- **Supporting Akanksha Alumni in the US**

The Akanksha Education Fund has developed new strategies to support Akanksha Alumni attending college in the U.S. This body of work includes:

- 1) Developing an Orientation Handbook for students studying or planning to study in the U.S. It will cover items such as: living in the US; resources that are available on campus; online resources; resume and job interview help; and internship resources among others.
- 2) Establishing a "buddy & mentor" program with help from the Akanksha Young Professionals. Buddies will check in with the alumni at regular intervals and provide any support and advise as needed. A senior professional from the finance industry will be mentoring upper class (3rd and 4th year) alumni on career paths and opportunities.
- 3) Setting up a social media venue where alumni can interact with each other and share ideas.

- **The Akanksha Education Fund Welcomes Two New Board Members**

We are pleased to have two new members join our board here in the U.S., Kate Shoemaker and Medha Prakash. Kate Shoemaker is currently the VP of Public Policy and University Partnerships Strategy for Braven, a non-profit that focuses on the college to career transition for first-generation and low-income college students. Medha Prakash is currently Head of Global News partnerships at Google.

- **Akanksha Gala in New York**

Please note that our Annual Gala has been **rescheduled for Saturday, Oct. 24**. The event will take place at Pier Sixty, Chelsea Piers in New York City. The gala promises to be an inspiring evening featuring Akanksha's most ardent supporters, Akanksha leadership, students and alumni, as well as young professionals and others from our network in the US. For more information, visit us [here](#).

- **Get to Know Akanksha**

The Akanksha team is spreading the word about our work through a series of events this winter and spring. We are introducing Akanksha through small supporter-hosted events to build and grow communities of Akanksha friends. These intimate events provide a great avenue to have more detailed conversations and are the foundation to build a cohesive community which can eventually support entire schools in India. Please contact [Fareeda Ehtesham](#) if you would like to host an introduction to Akanksha for your friends or colleagues.

- **Our Team is Growing!**

The team at Akanksha Education Fund New York is growing with the addition of two new part-time staff members. Chandrima Poddar, Development Officer, and Fareeda Ehtesham, Donor Officer, joined the team in late 2019 and will work to expand our reach and programming in the U.S. You can reach them at [chandrima@akankshafund.org](mailto:chandrima@akankshafund.org) and [fareeda@akankshafund.org](mailto:fareeda@akankshafund.org).

## **Akanksha Education Fund Board of Directors**

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## **Akanksha Education Fund Staff**

Gouri Sadhwani, *Executive Director*

Fareeda Ehtesham, *Donor Officer*

Srigowri Kumar, *Development Associate*

Meghan McNamara, *Development Manager*

Chandrima Poddar, *Development Officer*

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