

## \$2.5 Million Capacity-Building Grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies Will Set the Stage for Breakthrough's Growth



**B**REAKTHROUGH COLLABORATIVE has been awarded a \$2.5 million two-year capacity-building grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies. The grant will support Breakthrough's planning, fundraising and evaluation efforts, and most importantly, will help the organization build the infrastructure to enable it to serve 5,000 more middle school students each year and inspire many more young teachers to pursue careers in education.

With mounting research that shows a great deal of the academic "achievement gap" between low-income and high-income students is attributable to the vast difference in how students spend their summers<sup>i</sup>, the grant comes at a critical time. Less than ten percent of low-income elementary and middle-school students attend summer school. Given the paucity of positive options for low-income youth during the summer, it is not surprising that by eighth grade, low-income students are more than twice as likely to perform below grade level as their more affluent peers.<sup>ii</sup>

Through intensive summer sessions, after-school tutoring, weekend enrichment opportunities, and individual counseling, Breakthrough ensures that high-potential

students successfully begin the road to college in middle school. Founded in San Francisco in 1978, Breakthrough serves more than 2,200 middle school students and employs 700 college and high school students as middle school teachers in 29 locations.

"This grant will help Breakthrough further our mission to help close the academic achievement gap and ensure that our students make a successful transition into college-track high schools," says Laura Pochop, CEO, Breakthrough Collaborative. "Breakthrough will initiate a comprehensive strategic planning process focused on significantly increasing the number of students served and fortifying the organization at the national and local levels."

The grant will enable Breakthrough to launch a strategic growth planning process with the Bridgespan Group; build a site support team to coordinate regional fundraising for its 29 local sites; support local sites in restructuring for optimal long-term fundraising and develop and deploy a national database to uniformly track data including site-level performance, student achievement, and staff development.

### About The Atlantic Philanthropies:

The Atlantic Philanthropies are dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people through grant-making. Atlantic focuses on critical social problems related to disadvantaged children and youth, aging,

## Two Breakthrough Teachers Named Rhodes Scholars

**S**TELLAR BREAKTHROUGH teachers Brian Johnsrud (Norfolk) and Joshua Billings (Cambridge) have been named Rhodes Scholars for 2007. This, among the most prestigious of academic honors, will allow them to pursue their scholarly interests at Oxford University for the next two years. Only 32 scholars were selected this year from among nearly 900 applicants from 340 colleges and universities.



Brian, a recent graduate of Montana State University, will be pursuing his interest in the history (and presence) of holy wars in the western world, with the hope of finding common ground in the Middle East.



Joshua, who is studying German and classics at Harvard, plans to further his studies of European literature. Both cite teaching with Breakthrough as formative events for them. "I was involved in Breakthrough before my senior year in high school. I've spent two summers teaching there, and that's probably my most meaningful experience outside of the classroom," said Joshua.

Both Brian and Joshua have committed their lives to education, and have been recognized for their brilliance and determination. Major kudos to Brian and Joshua!

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## Alumni Profile: Candice Horton

*Former Breakthrough student, Louisville and  
former Breakthrough teacher, Long Island*

*Education Outreach Coordinator, NY ACORN*

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**G**ROWING UP with a father in the military and a mother working for the government, I never knew what it meant to feel settled. My parents got divorced when I was seven years old, crushing my ideals about the all-American family. My mom suddenly found herself a statistic: a single mother, struggling from bi-polar disorder or manic depression. I recall seeing my mother in phases, in and out of manic episodes where she was alive, influential and nurturing followed at any point by her depressive state of keeping to herself. During one of her manic phases, she decided that for my summer vacation I was not going to stay home and watch her lying in bed, but rather she would put me in an educational program she heard about through my school's guidance office. I didn't want to spend my summer with my nose in a book. But my mom showed me through her struggle with herself, that education was the most important thing (she herself went back to school and graduated in 1995, the year before I started Breakthrough at Louisville). The students teaching students model allowed me to stay out of trouble, have others to look up to, and maintain an oblivious eye to how her illness really affected her behind closed doors.

Breakthrough was like a breath of fresh air, as cliché as it may sound. I was able to be a kid, I was able to look up to my teachers, and most importantly, I was able to learn and

grow. I had no idea the impact six short weeks would have on me that summer. I entered the program a stubborn, awkward, fatherless, and slightly angry 13 year old and left feeling like I had been through a whirlwind of transformation. Six weeks is all it took to make me love math (a subject I despised), create life lasting bonds, want to give what I received, appreciate the power of academia, want to pursue a life in education, and to show me as a woman, I can do anything.

Teaching two consecutive summers at Breakthrough Long Island was yet another empowering opportunity for me. To take what I learned as a student and give those same gifts to my students was an experience that I will always remember and draw upon. It was a connection that I had with the students. As they struggled with their academics, I could tell them stories about how I overcame certain challenges. As they got excited about the end of the summer Celebration event, I could share the story about how I was extremely nervous and excited about singing my song in seventh grade and could still remember the words to this very day. That first summer was the summer that I knew I had come full circle within the program.

After graduating from Indiana University in December 2005 with a B.S. in English Education, here I am today in Brooklyn, New York teaching and working for NY ACORN (Association of Community Organization for Reform Now) in the schools department as an Education Outreach Coordinator. I have played a major role in starting a program called ACORN's High School Workshop Series in collaboration with the NY Department of Education to provide underrepresented middle school students in Brooklyn and Upper Manhattan with the tools they need through informational/interactive workshops to prepare them to get into the best high school for them in New York. I'm back in the classroom and loving every minute of it! I will never forget my path leading up to this very moment. I will never forget Jabali Sawicki, former

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Alumni Profile: Steve Mahoney

Founder, Breakthrough/Making Waves site in Ross, California

Ed.D., Principal, Springfield Expeditionary Learning School



*What impact did Breakthrough have on your life and career?*

**B**REAKTHROUGH WAS THE MODEL and inspiration for the Breakthrough/Making Waves site I founded at the Branson School in Ross, California in 1989. The program shared the same basic organizational structures and beliefs as Breakthrough, but our student selection process differed markedly. I worked closely with the Breakthrough staff to build the program

— following this, I left to pursue an M.A. at Stanford University and, subsequently, a Ed.D. at Boston College.

Breakthrough absolutely changed my professional life. The program fired up my passion for small learning communities connected within a national network of likeminded programs dedicated to social justice through school leadership and educational excellence. Breakthrough awakened in me the understanding that great schools really could change the world, and that great schools need great leaders and great teachers. Before Breakthrough, I did not consider my work as a teacher my vocation - it had no higher purpose other than the satisfaction and joy that came from working with kids in classrooms and on playing fields. But my experience with Breakthrough connected my work to a higher purpose, to a community and a national need that absolutely called me. I've never looked back.

*What are you doing now?*

We opened the doors to a new magnet school in Springfield, Massachusetts this past Sep-

tember. Based upon Outward Bound's principles and experiences, and funded in part by the Gates Foundation, the Springfield Expeditionary Learning School has been called the cornerstone in the city's attempt to spark a renaissance: [www.sps.springfield.ma.us/el](http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/el). We are building a school committed to educational excellence, social justice, and community. We'll be growing by two grades for the next two years, and welcome any and all applicants.

*Why is Breakthrough important to you?*

It's important to have programs like Breakthrough to inspire young people to become teachers, and younger people to become excellent students. Like all urban schools, we are constantly seeking to enrich our ability to understand and respond to our students' and families' experiences, and Breakthrough veterans are uniquely positioned to do just that. On the days when I just want to quit - and those days do happen - my Breakthrough memories and lessons are among the first I draw from to find solace, inspiration and hope.

## Breakthrough Builds Momentum



*With the addition of a site in Pittsburgh, which will serve 150 students this summer, Breakthrough progresses toward our goal of laying the infrastructure to serve 5,000 middle school students per year within five years.*

**F**OUNDED IN 1994, the Pittsburgh, PA site hosted at Sewickley Academy has joined the Collaborative and will be launching as a Breakthrough site in summer 2007.

“One of the most exciting aspects of affiliating with the collaborative is that we suddenly have access to the institutional knowledge of 29 other sites,” says Kevin Brezler, Executive Director, Pittsburgh site. We're also very excited about sharing our knowledge regarding the unique aspects of our site with the Collaborative.”

*(Continued from Page 1)*

population health, and reconciliation and human rights. Programs funded by Atlantic operate in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Viet Nam.

For more information, please visit [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org).

<sup>i</sup> (Beth M. Miller, PhD, (2003) Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success. Quincy MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation); (Alexander, K. L., & Entwisle, D.R. (1996). Early schooling and educational inequality: Socioeconomic disparities in children's learning. In J. Clark (Ed.), James S. Coleman. London: Falmer Press)

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2005 Mathematics Assessment

# Join the Movement to Support Educational Equity

*Movement: a series of actions and events taking place over a period of time and working to foster a principle or policy.*



Your contribution is tax-deductible. Breakthrough is a 501(c)(3) organization.

**P**LEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO Breakthrough and become part of the movement to change the lives of young people. Your gift will provide general support to Breakthrough, helping us to expand our services and grow so that we can reach more deserving kids.

You can also support the recruitment, training and retention of our outstanding student-teachers through the Teacher Excellence Fund. Half of the money from the Teacher Excellence Fund goes directly to returning teachers as salary enhancements, to help attract these experienced teachers, many of whom are on financial aid.

For more information on investment opportunities, please contact Lydia Johnson, [ljohnson@breakthroughcollaborative.org](mailto:ljohnson@breakthroughcollaborative.org) or go to [www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/contribute](http://www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/contribute)

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Wednesday, October 17, 2007 – Reception and Dinner

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# DATE!

Dinner featuring a keynote address from Erin Gruwell, whose life is depicted in the current Hilary Swank/Patrick Dempsey movie “Freedom Writers”. Erin promotes acceptance and innovative teaching methods in classrooms across the country.

*Additional speakers include Breakthrough students and teachers who will share their experiences.*

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*their story. their words.*

# Breakthrough's Five Year Goals



**Laura Pochop**

*Chief Executive Officer*

Breakthrough Collaborative

In 2002, Breakthrough's national staff, national Board of trustees and local site staff completed a year-long strategic planning process which resulted in a five-year strategic plan. By 2006, the organization had fulfilled key components of this plan, including strengthening the infrastructure, increasing long-term financial stability, and developing a growth plan. In fall 2006, we once again drew on our collective resources to develop a new long-term strategic planning process for the future of the organization – what we called the Five Year Goal Setting (FYGS) process.

In support of the organization's mission, we identified organizational priorities for the next five years to allocate resources proac-

tively and to communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders. Through an intensive process that involved nearly every Breakthrough Trustee, site Director, and national staff member, we developed a road-map for the entire Collaborative for the next five years:

We are excited to share Breakthrough's five year goals:

- **Goal #1:** All Breakthrough middle school students enter into carefully-screened and rigorous college preparatory high schools.
- **Goal #2:** All Breakthrough students succeed in high school - staying on track academically and learning the process and requirements for college admissions. Within four years, Breakthrough will be able to demonstrate that at least 85% of our students enroll in college.
- **Goal #3:** Breakthrough will offer high-quality training and support for all its teachers, summer and school-year, to ensure every Breakthrough teacher understands issues of educational inequity and a significant number enter the field of education.

- **Goal #4:** All local Breakthrough sites achieve financial sustainability, as evidenced by a strong fundraising board, a diversified revenue base, at least six months cash on hand, and an effective multi-year strategy and development plan.
- **Goal #5:** Breakthrough will grow significantly, building the infrastructure to reach 5,000 middle school students per year within five years.

The final phase of FYGS will be completed over the next two months as we work to define a plan of action that specifies how those goals will be achieved and make the plan measurable by defining the baseline and establishing tracking mechanisms.

We are thrilled about the support from the \$2.5 million two-year capacity-building grant recently awarded from The Atlantic Philanthropies, which will help Breakthrough immeasurably in successfully reaching our five year goals and, most importantly, in furthering our mission to help close the academic achievement gap.

*(Continued from Page 2)*

Breakthrough teacher, who saw my infinite potential (he now lives and works down the street from me as the founding Principal of Excellence Charter School)! And I will never forget that Breakthrough cultivated and continues to cultivate and empower so many leaders in our communities. I am forever grateful.



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# Celebration



## THE NEWSLETTER OF BREAKTHROUGH COLLABORATIVE

### PROBLEM

*"As the country faces an acute teacher shortage, our 1,200 college- and university-based teacher education programs can make a crucial contribution. But...too many of these programs graduate inadequately prepared teachers."<sup>1</sup>*

### SOLUTION

*Every summer, Breakthrough serves close to 700 high school and college-aged teachers,*

*more than half of whom are minority, providing them with hands-on experience with developing curricula, creating daily lesson plans, and teaching and assessing students. Seventy-two percent of Breakthrough teachers plan to go into the field of education.*

<sup>1</sup> Levine, Arthur E., The School – College Divide and Teacher Preparation. *Education Week*, Volume 26, Number 17.

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Save the Date: Breaking Bread for Breakthrough 10/17/07