



Breakthrough Awarded AmeriCorps Education Grant Grant Supports Teacher Diversity Across Country



Raise your hands if you're a Breakthrough teacher who could benefit from \$1,000 towards your college education!

After a rigorous application process, on April 4th The Breakthrough Collaborative received an AmeriCorps Education Award grant totaling \$1,296,000 over three years. As part of this grant, 400 Breakthrough teachers who complete the 2005 summer session, working a minimum of 300 hours, will be eligible to receive a \$1,000 voucher that they can use to pay tuition or student loans.

Breakthrough's college and high school students who teach the program's middle school students are more than teachers; they are role models and mentors. Often drawn from the same communities as the students, and frequently of color themselves (65%), Breakthrough teachers are living examples that the skills they teach their students will lead to success.

"Breakthrough is grateful for this generous AmeriCorps grant as an incentive to attract diverse teachers, especially those on financial aid at college, who would otherwise be unable to afford to teach at Breakthrough," says Laura Pochop, Executive Director, Breakthrough Collaborative.

AmeriCorps members have earned more than \$1 billion in AmeriCorps Education Awards since the program was launched in 1994.

For more information on AmeriCorps Education Awards, go to:
www.americorps.gov/members/resource/education/index.html.

— Amber Rosenberg

Following are the top 20 on-campus recruiters who personally recruited and screened outstanding college students to teach at Breakthrough this summer:

Thomas Boatwright,
Occidental College

Betsy Brewer, *Davidson College*

Bobby Cupp,
University of California, Berkeley

Marlena Elmore, *Williams College*

Cristina Fong, *Brown University*

Ryan Grable, *Depauw University*

Dominique Harbour, *Spelman College*

Daniel Kang, *Johns Hopkins University*

Rosie Ko, *Cornell University*

Felix Lam,
University of California, Berkeley

Albert Lee,
Brooklyn Technical High School

Brian Linde, *University of Pennsylvania*

Sarah Maxwell, *Harvard University*

Agnes Pak, *Wesleyan University*

Claire Pasternack, *Harvard University*

David Shepard,
Washington University in St. Louis

Sonal Singhal,
Washington University in St. Louis

Ashley Tittlemore, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

Jannie Tsuei, *Harvard University*

Dossier White, *Vanderbilt University*



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To submit story ideas or for questions
about *Celebration*, contact us at:
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Breakthrough Spotlight: Head of School Committed to Hosting a Breakthrough Program Location

Billy Peebles

*Head of School at The Lovett School,
Host School of Breakthrough Atlanta*

What is your professional background?

Except for three years in graduate school and one year in the business world, I have devoted my entire professional life to teaching. This is my 24th year in this wonderful work!

How does Breakthrough Atlanta fit in with the mission of The Lovett School?

The summer of 2005 will mark the tenth summer that Lovett has hosted Breakthrough Atlanta. An important part of the ethos of our school is a strong commitment to outreach, service, and diversity and for these reasons and many others, Breakthrough Atlanta is so appropriate and important to our mission here at Lovett. Lovett takes very seriously its commitment to serving the Atlanta community and to making our resources here at the school available to as many students as possible.

In what ways does The Lovett School support Breakthrough Atlanta?

Lovett gives enormous support to Breakthrough Atlanta. The school provides great space as well as other physical support such as buses, etc. We also provide significant administrative support to Breakthrough through the work of the business office and other important school functions including the dining hall and physical plant. Several Lovett constituents — including faculty, parents, alumni, and trustees — are involved in hosting Breakthrough teachers, providing financial support and supporting the Board of Advisors. A number of Lovett students are involved in the Breakthrough program as mentors and teachers. This mentoring opportunity is a wonderfully enriching experience for our students and it helps to nurture the interest, talent and passion of the Atlanta public school students who participate in Breakthrough.



The Honorable Andrew Young gathers with 8th graders Kayla and JoDeannah at Breakthrough Atlanta's 10-year anniversary event

What value do you see in making the financial commitment to hire an alumni coordinator for Breakthrough Atlanta?

Hiring Tim Welbeck, former Breakthrough faculty member, as our alumni coordinator has been a huge boost to this important program! Tim has extraordinary passion for the program because he has been intimately involved with Breakthrough the last four summers. He knows so many of our current and former students and faculty. Already — and he has just been on the job several months — he has helped Breakthrough and his team reconnect with many Breakthrough alumni and former teachers. He has generated enormous good will through his outreach efforts and has also identified other prospective students and families.

How do the students at The Lovett School feel about Breakthrough Atlanta?

The students at Lovett who participate directly in Breakthrough absolutely love this program and cherish the opportunity to serve Breakthrough students. We need to do an even better job of communicating with all of our students and with the members of the Lovett constituency the essence and excitement of Breakthrough. Our tenth anniversary celebration — which featured the Honorable Andrew Young as our keynote speaker, held back in February — helped us do a better job of raising the visibility of Breakthrough Atlanta. It was a great event and the staff of Breakthrough Atlanta deserves enormous credit for how smoothly and positively this gathering unfolded.

Alumni Profile: Erika Blanch

*Mentor Teacher,
Summerbridge Cambridge, a Breakthrough Program*

*Co-Director,
Providence Summerbridge, a Breakthrough Program*

What is your history with Breakthrough?

I was introduced to Summerbridge Cambridge, a Breakthrough program through a friend who had worked with Hilary Mead, Summerbridge Cambridge's Executive Director, at the Roxbury Latin School. After a lengthy and fun interview, I was hired to mentor teach in literature for summer 2003. After that summer, I worked with a group of talented Breakthrough staff to introduce new curriculum (Junior Great Books) into the literature program, so my second summer actually began in January 2004. I was very involved through all of 2004, first with curriculum planning, next through mentor teaching in the summer and finally through collaborating to incorporate a new poetry unit into the after-school program for fall 2004.

What impact did Breakthrough have on your life and career?

Amazing! I can't even think of where to begin. First of all, being a Breakthrough

mentor teacher has helped me become a better teacher, as I am constantly examining good practice and applying in my own classroom what I've learned from my observations and conversations with Breakthrough teachers. I've clearly defined my mission as a teacher as helping young people recognize their potential and providing a fulfilling and meaningful academic experience for students as individuals. I know that community spirit can make for an uplifting school experience for everyone involved. Also, my boyfriend, Jack Rusley, and I met at Summerbridge Cambridge as mentor teachers (he taught at SB Denver as well).

What are you doing now?

In what seemed like serendipitous timing, Providence Summerbridge was in need of a co-director at the same time I was looking for a job in the Providence, Rhode Island area. After many conversations, interviews, and loads of encouragement, I was offered and accepted the job. I'll begin right at the beginning of the summer and am thrilled



to take on this new responsibility with the help of Rameka Blakey, Elkinsette Clinton, and the supportive community at the Wheeler School. I think of this as the ultimate way to give back to Breakthrough.

Why is Breakthrough important to you?

Breakthrough proves that a group of idealistic, energetic, dedicated, and caring people really can make a difference in the lives of others and for themselves, that educational reform can actually happen, and that everyone deserves a chance to be great.

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Students from Summerbridge at the Town School, a Breakthrough program visit Brown University



Danny Glover, Jessica Bass and Breakthrough Fort Lauderdale Executive Director, Aaron Bass (left to right) at the 11th Annual Central Pennsylvania Consortium Africana Studies Conference.

Breakthrough's summer sessions are right around the corner! You're welcome and encouraged to visit one of our 25 program locations to meet the teachers and students who create the magic that is Breakthrough. Most program locations start in June and run through July or August. Please contact David Jay, djay@breakthroughcollaborative.org and he will arrange your visit.

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.

Please 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 students. 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 returning teachers who bring their



Breakthrough students have lots of questions for their teacher

proven experience and leadership to Breakthrough locations throughout the country.

For more information on investment opportunities, including the Teacher Excellence Fund, please contact Scott MacLeod, smacleod@breakthroughcollaborative.org

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

Students who are first in their families to go to college end poverty in their family lines, forever. They will each earn an additional \$1 million over the course of their careers. (U.S Census, U.S. Bureau of Labor)

Save the Date!

September 28th – “Breaking Bread with Breakthrough” Luncheon with speaker John Merrow, who reports on education for PBS’ NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.

Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco

A Message from the Executive Director: The Beauty of Breakthrough



Laura Pochop

Executive Director

*The Breakthrough
Collaborative*

In place of this issue's "Message from the Executive Director", I'd like to share one of the many Breakthrough stories that inspires me.

– *Written by Jessica D'Arcy and Natalie Gray, Breakthrough Austin*

The Beauty of Breakthrough

Jennifer applied to Breakthrough Austin in sixth grade, a bright girl dressed in pink—always—and quick to smile. She was an A/B student at Dobie Middle School, the lowest performing school in Austin. From her application, we knew she lived in public housing with her mother and would be the first in her family to graduate from high school, much less college. She was excited about becoming a Breakthrough student and told our staff that her dream is "to go to college and become a doctor or hair designer."

That summer, Jennifer and forty of her peers poured off the busses in front of the fountain on the UT campus, and for the first couple of days, everything seemed to be going fine. Jennifer was participating in Breakthrough's zany morning cheers, turning in her homework, and making new friends. But by the beginning of the second week, it was clear that something had changed. She talked back to teachers, she wasn't completing her homework, and she told everyone who would listen that she was going to quit the program. But she never missed a day.

Natalie, Breakthrough Austin's director, talked with Jennifer about her language, held her in homework study hall, left

messages at home, and gave her pep talks during lunch. But Jennifer's attitude did not change. This red flag, along with our difficulty in reaching her mother, led us to ask Cindy, Breakthrough Austin's counselor, to facilitate her mid-summer parent conference. On that Saturday, Jennifer showed up at the Breakthrough office to meet with Cindy and Aaron, her Breakthrough English teacher. She brought her mother with her, as well as another woman who Cindy didn't recognize. In the hour and a half that followed, we learned that Jennifer's mother, who suffered from mental illness, had been incarcerated just days before Breakthrough began and that her father was in prison as well. The woman who chaperoned the family to the conference was Jennifer's mom's state-assigned case worker from the office of mental health. We learned that since the summer session began, Jennifer had been all alone, getting herself up and out to Breakthrough every day despite overwhelming feelings of sadness, anger, and fear. We learned that in their house, it was Jennifer who made sure the rent was paid and that her mom took her meds. Her poor behavior had nothing to do with her academic ability, or her motivation to succeed, and everything to do with the fact that, at twelve years old, she was the "parent" in her household and her mother was in crisis.

That conference marked a turning point in Breakthrough's ability to support Jennifer and the beginning of a long-term relationship between Cindy and Jennifer. Over the past two years, Cindy has worked closely with Jennifer and her family to ensure the obstacles of her family life do not impede her educational ambitions. The road hasn't been easy. We succeeded in convincing Jennifer and her mom to transfer Jennifer to a better school...and Jennifer got into a fight in the second week and was

suspended. But on the whole, we saw signs of progress: pride in her math grade; new friends at school; and continued attendance at Breakthrough.

In 8th grade, when Jennifer's Breakthrough computer broke down, Cindy joined the technician at her home. Jennifer's mother was not there, and Jennifer shyly answered the door and led them inside to her room, where the computer sat on a folding chair next to her bed. The apartment was musty and cold. The front door wouldn't lock, and people from the neighborhood repeatedly came in and out of the apartment without knocking throughout the visit. The refrigerator was broken, and there was nothing but a couple of boxes of cereal and a jar of peanut butter in the kitchen.

The week after that visit, Cindy started working on getting Jennifer into a safer home situation. We learned that she had a grandmother nearby and persuaded her grandmother—despite her reservations that she was too old and Jennifer was too difficult—to give Jennifer a chance to live with her. Initially, Jennifer wasn't sure she wanted a watchful adult in her life—despite feeling scared and lonely at times, she also liked not having someone telling her what to do at home. But today, Jennifer lives with her grandmother and is excelling in ninth grade. Last summer, when she participated in Breakthrough's summer program for the third summer, Jennifer volunteered to speak with students who were thinking about leaving the program. She told James that only he can make the choices that will make his dreams come true. She reassured Kimberly that, no matter how much she loves her dad, she cannot control his actions — she can only control her own actions. Jennifer is working hard and making a difference, not only for herself, but also for her peers.



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Celebration

The Newsletter of The Breakthrough Collaborative

Recent studies regarding the achievement gap show that:

More than 90 percent of students from the top two income quartiles graduate from high school, compared to 65 percent of those from the bottom quartile. **This gap has barely changed for 35 years.** A child from a family in the top income quartile is five times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24 than is a child from the bottom income quartile.

(Postsecondary Education Opportunity)

Parental education is strongly related to a child's likelihood of enrolling in college immediately after high school.

Sixty-five percent of students graduating high school in 1992 whose parents had bachelor's degrees enrolled in four-year colleges, compared with only 21 percent of students whose parents had a high school diploma or less.

(National education longitudinal study of 1988 eighth-graders, third follow up)

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Breakthrough Teachers!

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Head of School Billy Peebles

Alumni Profile: Erika Blauch

The Beauty of Breakthrough