

EDITION #6

BREAKTHROUGH

BULLETIN

Our efforts. **Their success.**



Dear Breakthrough Community,

As we move into the heart of the school year, I'm excited to share an update on all the great things happening across our network. Our school leaders and staff have been working hard to support our scholars, and we're seeing strong progress in classrooms, in school culture, and across our community.

This year, our focus is on helping scholars deepen their learning and thinking. We've seen excellent progress across the network.

Attendance remains strong across most schools, with our average daily attendance at 91%. We are working closely with families to ensure consistent attendance so that every scholar has the chance to succeed.

Enrollment is steady. We have retained 95% of the scholars who began the year with us, and welcomed 76 new scholars in October. We also know that keeping our current scholars engaged is just as important. Our family surveys show that 76% of families are satisfied with their experience, and many families are noticing key improvements this year. For example, we've gotten fantastic feedback on our new yellow bus provider.

Our staff remain the heart of our schools. We've ramped up professional learning and the key resources and tools teachers need to succeed. When staff have the support they need, it helps scholars thrive, and we're seeing that in the classrooms every day.

We're also excited to see our rebranding efforts come to life this year. Scholars are wearing new uniforms, and campuses now feature updated signage and materials that reflect our network's energy and focus on learning.



These updates are helping create a stronger, more unified identity across all our schools, which supports pride and engagement for scholars, staff, and families alike.

Behind the scenes, we're continuing to improve the systems that support our schools. From finances to student data, these updates help us make decisions more quickly and efficiently so that school leaders can focus on teaching and learning.

Finally, we're excited for our Winter Showcases, where families and community members can come see all the amazing work scholars have been doing.

Thank you for being part of our community and for supporting our scholars, teachers, and staff.

Together, we're making this a year of growth, learning, and success for every Breakthrough scholar.

With gratitude,



ANDREW MCRAE

Chief Executive Officer
Breakthrough Public Schools

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

As this calendar year concludes and the New Year approaches, I want to take a moment to wish you the peace of this season and reflect on the inspiring progress we've witnessed over the past few months and 2025 as a whole. Most importantly, I want to extend my deepest thanks for your unwavering support, which is the vital engine that drives our mission forward.

The impact of your generosity is immediately visible in the achievements of our scholars, alumni, and teachers. The last quarter has been filled with stories of dedication and success that underscore why we do what we do.

Your generous contributions are essential for bridging a critical funding gap and providing our scholars with an exceptional education:

Bridging the Funding Gap: Donor support is vital because public charter schools in Ohio receive less per-pupil funding than traditional district schools. Philanthropy helps bridge this gap, which averages about \$1,500 per student.

Expanding Opportunity and Enrichment: Additional private support is essential to expand learning opportunities, enrich curriculum, and ensure every student receives a high-quality, well-rounded education.

Your funds directly power these key initiatives and programs:

Innovative Learning Labs: You are bringing cutting-edge technology—including augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), 3D printing, and robotics—to new labs in four of our five campuses. This project ensures scholars have the tools they need to succeed.

Beyond Breakthrough Alumni Success Network: Your donations support a network that provides personalized advising, career exploration, and financial assistance to over 3,300 alumni as they navigate high school, college, and postsecondary years.

Woodland Hills Campus Expansion: You are helping to provide the only BPS campus without a dedicated gym with a new gymnasium and multi-purpose space. This transformative space will be a vital resource committed to enhancing student athleticism, fostering academic enrichment, and strengthening community engagement for years to come. The new facilities will be dedicated in January of 2026 and would not have been possible without our donor community saying “yes” to this call to action.

Community Partnerships: Your support allows for collaborations with organizations like the Cleveland Browns (to promote attendance), the Rainey Institute (for after-school arts programs), and Open Doors Academy (for after-school enrichment and summer camp), a partnership that has now expanded to all five campuses.

Please mark your calendar and join us at the 15th annual Breakthrough BASH as we **Breakthrough in The Land!** It's more than a fundraiser; it's our biggest celebration of the year where we recognize the incredible impact we make together. You can also help us thank our Honoree and Presenting Sponsor, KeyBank, for their many years of transformational support of the Breakthrough Public Schools Network. And, as our thank you, a **15% discount is available through December 15, 2025 (use code BASH15).** We can't wait to see you there and thank you in person for everything you do.

From everyone at Friends of Breakthrough, we would like to send our wishes to you and your families for a most peaceful and joyous holiday season, along with our deepest gratitude. Happy Holidays!



SUSAN ERTLE

President

Friends of Breakthrough Schools

LET'S STAY CONNECTED



15TH ANNUAL
BASH
BREAKTHROUGH
in The Land
APRIL 24, 2026

Presenting Sponsor & Honoree

KeyBank 
Opens Doors.SM

Don't miss out on this limited time offering!

Sign up before December 15th and get 15% off!

Use promo code 'BASH15'

REGISTER TODAY!

KINDERGARTEN to CAREER every step. every stage.

[Read our Annual Appeal](#)

Our annual Fall Appeal is a special edition celebrating the 15th Anniversary of Breakthrough Public Schools and the incredible, full-circle impact of our mission: Kindergarten to Career. Every Step. Every Stage. This year's appeal is a testament to the hard work of our educators and the resilience of our approximately 3,000 scholars across five thriving K-8 campuses and our 3,300 alumni who have passed through our doors. Inside, you'll find the inspiring journey of alumna Aniya Lavender, learn about our new Innovative Learning Labs and dynamic partnerships with organizations like Motogo, and see how your support helps us bridge the funding gap to secure a foundation for success for every child. Please read the entire document, linked above, and discover how you can help us continue this journey of transformation.

Emerging Leaders

Our group is truly on fire—we've successfully hosted two incredible events since our last update.

RECENT EVENTS

Trivia Night

Many new faces joined us at Masthead Brewing Company for a night of trivia, fun, and networking. Guests enjoyed a fun trivia competition testing their knowledge about Breakthrough Public Schools and then teaming up for trivia night and answering random questions and building relationships! The event provided ample opportunity for everyone to network and learn more about the offerings of the Breakthrough Emerging Leaders group. Thank you to all who attended. We look forward to seeing you at the next event!

Professional Breakthroughs

Thank you to our featured speaker, Megan Mayhugh - Founder and Managing Director, People Architects - and Friends of Breakthrough Board Member, for sharing her time and talent with our Emerging Leaders. Missed the event? [Watch it here.](#)

What Does an Emerging Leader Look Like at Friends of Breakthrough Public Schools?

- Age 18 and up – there's no upper limit!
- In the early to middle stages of your professional journey
- Eager to learn and grow with guidance from experienced community leaders
- Passionate about educational equity and the belief that every child can succeed—no matter their zip code

Whether it's through volunteering your time, making a financial contribution, or advocating for high-quality education for all children—we welcome your support!



REGISTER AS AN EMERGING LEADER TODAY

Choose the membership option that works best for you!

Social (free) or Leadership (\$150/year). Check out all the benefits of [becoming a part of this rising group](#) and help create opportunities that change lives.

For more information visit our [website](#) frequently for the latest updates!

EMERGING LEADER LEADERSHIP

Lauren Andrews | Taylor Bowen
Nick Hylant | Derrick Johnson
Celeste Kamasa Scott
Aurora Kitko (Chair) | Mac Lagor
Cooper Mead | Shintaro Ng*
Anthony Osby* | Aaron Scott*

*Our newest Leadership members. Welcome!

Swing for the Stars

Thank You For Your Support!

Thank you for making the 15th annual Swing for the Stars golf outing at Canterbury Golf Club a tremendous success!

Your participation and support helped us raise essential funds for scholars in the Breakthrough Public Schools network. With your help, we're making quality education a reality for every child in Cleveland.

Congratulations to all our winners, and thank you again to everyone who participated. We hope you enjoyed the day on the course as much as we did!

Early Bird Registration:

Join Us on the Green
Next Summer 7.27.26



Presented by

Re-live the Event
Explore the photo gallery!

THANK YOU, EVENT COMMITTEE!

HONORARY CHAIR MATT BREWER
COMMITTEE TOM DITTOE | MARY HERZAK
BRYAN SCHAUER | CRAIG PANZICA

Semper Virens Legacy Society

Want to ensure the long-term success of Breakthrough Public Schools without impacting your finances today? Join the Semper Virens Legacy Society!

This society recognizes individuals who make a long-term commitment through a planned gift (like an estate gift) to memorialize their dedication to Breakthrough's mission.



Why it Matters

Financial Stability

Your gift ensures the long-term financial stability of Friends of Breakthrough Schools for the benefit of scholars and alumni.

Future Impact

You guarantee that the mission and resources of Breakthrough Public Schools continue for generations to come.

Recognition

You are formally recognized for your vital foresight and commitment.

It's Easy

Simply name the Friends of Breakthrough Schools Legacy Fund as a beneficiary in your will, trust, retirement account (IRA/401k), or life insurance policy. You can also establish a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) - and might be able to fund that annuity with a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) through a special, once in a lifetime election to fund the CGA. It costs you nothing now but secures a lasting, powerful impact.

Learn how you can shape the future with your legacy—contact Tim Mann, Senior Advancement Officer via email: tmann@breakthroughschools.org or phone: 216-373-2604.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, April 24, 2026



Sign up before
12/15/25 and
get 15% off!
Use the promo
code "BASH15"

For information and
sponsorship opportunities,
[visit our website](#)

SCHOOL TOURS

Join us for these free events offering a morning that features an insightful tour of one of our schools, offering a firsthand look at the vibrant learning environments and innovative teaching methods that define Breakthrough Public Schools. Following the tour, we provide a brief update on the latest achievements and developments within our network, highlighting our ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality education to Cleveland's inner-city students.

December 11, 2025 | 8:30A-10A
Breakthrough Glenville Campus

[Click for information and to register!](#)

February 11, 2026 | 8:30A-10A
Breakthrough Midtown Campus

[Click for information and to register!](#)

April 8, 2026 | 8:30A-10A
Breakthrough Woodland Hills Campus

[Click for information and to register!](#)

May 14, 2026 | 8:30A-10A
Breakthrough Midtown Campus

[Click for information and to register!](#)



SEMESTER 1 HIGHLIGHTS

High School Placement

We have completed several key steps in the high school application process, ensuring our scholars are prepared and supported.

High School Placement Test (HSPT)

Catholic schools require admissions testing to complete the application process. This was the first year we offered the HSPT on-site at Breakthrough to remove financial and logistical barriers for families.

70% of registered students showed up for testing. This allowed our students to take advantage of free testing, a convenient location, and receive test results within a few hours.

8th Grade Mock Interviews

Mock Interviews are crucial for preparing scholars for the formal interviews required by many high school partners. We conducted Mock Interviews at all Breakthrough Campuses.

Volunteer Support

Over 40 volunteers came out to support this amazing event. Thank you to the FOB and BPS home office teams, and our high school and community partners, as well as board members for making the interview experience so great for scholars.

Scholar Confidence

When surveyed on a scale of (1-5)

85% of Breakthrough scholars felt either **(4) Somewhat Confident - 49.7%** or **(5) Very Confident - 35.8%**

after Mock Interview week, demonstrating the positive impact of this preparation.

High School Success

Beyond Breakthrough hit a new milestone this October, hosting its largest-ever college visit. Thirty-three high school alumni joined our team for an unforgettable day exploring Kent State University and the Akron Art Museum. From reconnecting with classmates to touring Kent State's campus and finding inspiration in contemporary art, it was a day full of discovery and connection. Best of all, 100% of attendees said they'd join us again for future trips!

The High School Success team has been on the move across Northeast Ohio this fall, visiting twenty-two partner high school campuses (and counting!). These visits create invaluable opportunities to connect directly with our alumni, meet them where they are, and share the many ways Beyond Breakthrough continues to support their growth, learning, and success.

Postsecondary Success

The Beyond Postsecondary Success team met 1:1 with seniors from nineteen high schools, teaching them how to research colleges/programs, assisting with college applications, FAFSA completion, and more! This individualized approach allows Beyond to get to know each alum for the unique person they are.

Beyond's Persistence Fund allowed us to support dozens of requests for personal care items, winter outerwear, textbooks, tuition gaps and other needs so alumni can keep their focus on their studies and persist toward graduation.

BPS alumni are never without support, and we provide guidance through complex university administrative processes and procedures, model how to approach professors about academic issues, coordinate transfers to other colleges, assist with financial aid issues, and much more!

RECENT EVENTS

High School Fair

The 2025 Beyond Breakthrough High School Fair was a tremendous success!

On October 16th, we welcomed 103 eighth-grade scholars and their families for an afternoon filled with opportunity, exploration, and excitement about the future.

Scholars had the chance to connect with representatives from 27 high schools and community partners, discovering pathways that align with their goals and interests. From learning about academic programs to exploring extracurricular opportunities and support services, the fair sparked meaningful conversations that helped our scholars see what's possible beyond middle school.

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to our school leaders, staff, volunteers, and chaperones who ensured every scholar had the opportunity to attend — including those who rode buses and coordinated logistics behind the scenes. Your dedication made it possible for students and families to dream big together.

Events like this remind us of the power of collaboration — when educators, families, and community partners come together, scholars thrive!



Cliffs and Woodland Hills Reunion

This November, two incredible alumni reunions brought together our Breakthrough community in powerful ways.

At Midtown, E Prep Cliffs alumni and staff from the Classes of 2021–2025 gathered to reconnect, enjoy great food, and revisit the halls where their journeys began. The evening was filled with laughter, reflection, and the joy of seeing familiar faces return home.

Later in the month, Woodland Hills hosted its own reunion, welcoming alumni and staff for another memorable evening of connection and celebration. Guests enjoyed meaningful conversations, updates on life after graduation, and the chance to reflect on the impact of their Breakthrough experience.

Combined, these two reunions brought together over 100 members of our Breakthrough family, celebrating community, growth, and shared purpose. We are so proud of our alumni and grateful to the staff and partners who continue to support their journeys beyond graduation.



A Step Beyond

A Step Beyond is off to an incredible start in its first year! Twenty-six determined 10th-grade alumni are striving toward brighter futures with the support of our dedicated High School Success Team.

This year, students have built strong bonds during a dynamic orientation focused on teamwork and community, sharpened essential life and leadership skills through interactive workshops, and explored future career paths using the FOCUS 2 assessment.

Each step they take reflects their drive, discipline, and passion for success and they're just getting started.

If you would like to learn more about how you can support this new and innovative program, please contact Cullin Fish directly at cfish@breakthroughschools.org.

Looking for a meaningful way to get involved with our alumni?

Join us on Wednesday, December 10th at 6:00 PM at Cleveland State University for our A Step Beyond Mid-Year Networking Event.

During this engaging evening, members of our first A Step Beyond cohort alongside the wider Breakthrough community will come together for an interactive discussion about Cleveland's future vision and the ways we can all play a part in moving our city forward.

Interested in attending? Contact Cullin Fish at cfish@breakthroughschools.org for more information or to RSVP.

A STEP Beyond



UPCOMING EVENTS

February

11 - A Step Beyond Career Growth Session

March

10 - A Step Beyond Career Skills Workshop on Zoom

26 - College visit to The Ohio State University and Denison

April

8 - College visit to BGSU and University of Toledo

15 - 7th grade High School Placement Parent Night

16 - Award Letter Review Party

16 - 7th Grade ISEE Night

ALUMNI IN ACTION!



Kent State University Tour



Akron Art Museum Visit



Woodland Hills Reunion

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHTS



Noah W. is a 5th grader in our upper Multi-Intensive Autism Center (MIA) and has been at the Center since the 2023/24 school year. Over the past two years, Noah has made amazing strides academically, socially, and behaviorally. At the time he was introduced to the MIA classroom, Noah required extensive support not only to complete work but also to handle frustration appropriately. Through the use of small groups and daily, highly structured Social and Emotional Learning and emotional regulation curriculum, Noah has become an independent learner who now manages frustrating situations with grace. As a result of his growth within a self-contained environment, Noah has started to reintegrate back into general education. While he still spends part of the day in the MIA Center, the general education instructors speak volumes about Noah's academic skills, learning readiness, and ability to handle frustration. He is a kind, happy young man who does an amazing job demonstrating his capabilities across a variety of contexts and settings. - Ashley Thoren, Intervention Specialist, Woodland Hills Campus



Noah W.

Q: How long have you been with Breakthrough Public Schools?

A: Since 2023

Q: What is a challenge you have faced with school and how did you overcome it?

A: The other kids making sounds sometimes are hard to ignore.

Q: What about your schooling over the years has made an impact on you?

A: I like my nice teachers. They encourage me.

Q: What are your future plans? High School? College? Military? Career...?

A: I want to be a YouTuber and hit 1 million subscribers and make a lot of money.



Niger B.

Niger B. is a 3rd grader in our upper Multi-Intensive Autism Center (MIA) and has attended since the 2024/25 school year. At the beginning of that school year, Niger was an extremely reserved young man. He struggled to trust the adults around him and had very limited academic skills. When we would attempt to get a baseline for what he knew, he would always respond with, "I don't know how," and then proceed to shut down. After a few weeks in our room and the use of highly structured learning, routines, and curriculum, Niger began to come out of his shell. We gave him opportunities to show us what he could do but also respected when he needed space or time to work through what he was feeling. He began to trust his teachers. The more we built trust, the more we saw him grow both academically and socially. A few months into the school year, we saw Niger start to open up very suddenly. One day, he volunteered to do a math problem on the board (a huge feat for him!). Not only was he able to complete the problem unassisted, but he was able to do it in front of the whole class! When we let his family know, we were informed that he had NEVER had the confidence to do that before. From that point on, Niger was always willing to come up to the board. In the next few months, Niger went from "I don't know how," to being willing to try everything, even if he gets it wrong or needs assistance. He went from working on basic addition and ended the year working on grade-level skills. He loves to read, even when the words are challenging and is never upset or embarrassed if he makes a mistake. He is a scholar who always puts in his best effort, and now he knows how capable he is of learning. - Ashley Thoren, Intervention Specialist, Woodland Hills Campus

Q: How long have you been with Breakthrough Public Schools?

A: 2 years

Q: What is a challenge you have faced with school and how did you overcome it?

A: Math is hard and I practiced a lot to get better.

Q: What about your schooling over the years has made an impact on you?

A: I like reading. I know how to read now and want to read even higher.

Q: What are your future plans? High School? College? Military? Career...?

A: I want to go to college.



Joe Von C.

Joe Von C. is a 5th grader in our upper Multi-Intensive Autism Center (MIA). Joe Von started during the 24/25 school year. At the start of the school year, Joe Von arrived with high levels of maladaptive behavior and very low academic skills. In those first few weeks, it was a struggle to get Joe Von to make safe choices, let alone work on academic skills. We had to focus immensely on the social-emotional piece before we saw Joe Von make academic progress. Through the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, Zones of Regulation curriculum, and consistently high expectations, Joe Von's behavior started to change for the positive. We built a strong relationship with his family and had consistency between home and school. By building a strong, trusting relationship with Joe Von's family, we set him up with a full team that was supporting his growth and progress both in school and at home. By the end of the first trimester, Joe Von had gone from having upwards of 200 instances of maladaptive behavior to the double digits. By the end of the school year, Joe Von only had a few occasional instances of maladaptive behavior. According to Joe Von's mom, he has never liked school and never had meaningful academic success. Now, Joe Von is one of our star scholars. He loves to be here, he loves to participate, and he loves to learn. He has come so far in the last year, and both his family and teachers are so proud of where he is today and all he has accomplished. - Ashley Thoren, Intervention Specialist, Woodland Hills Campus

Q: How long have you been with Breakthrough Public Schools?

A: 2 years

Q: What is a challenge you have faced with school and how did you overcome it?

A: Reading. I listen to my teachers. I practice and get better.

Q: What about your schooling over the years has made an impact on you?

A: I like to learn. This is where I want to be. I like being around everybody.

Q: What are your future plans? High School? College? Military? Career...?

A: I want to be a principal and a chef.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

A'Miracle Green

Middle School, Class of
Citizens Leadership Academy, 2019

High School
St. Martin de Porres, 2023

College and Year
Alabama State University, 2027



Q: Why did you choose Alabama State for college?

A: I got the opportunity to go on a bus tour, visit other HBCUs. I stuck with Alabama State University because it felt most like home. I knew I could grow at Alabama State.

Q: What is your favorite memory from Breakthrough?

A: This was sixth grade at Citizens Leadership Academy. At the end of each quarter or each trimester, we had a celebration of learning. And that was my favorite part of being at Breakthrough, where we could showcase what we learned during school. It was just a lot of fun.

Q: What advice would you give Breakthrough students entering high school soon?

A: I would tell them to leverage their relationships and make sure they shadow the schools or the high schools that they want to attend. I got the opportunity to shadow St. Martin while I was attending Breakthrough and that really helped with me wanting to attend St. Martin.

Q: How has Beyond Breakthrough supported you?

A: I get to connect and network with other alumni. I go to events, recently a bowling event, to meet alumni from other schools and see classmates I went to school with. It's a great way to stay in touch and see new faces.

Q: How has Beyond Breakthrough supported you?

A: They sponsored my educational trip to Egypt this past December. It was a great opportunity from Beyond.

Q: Any advice for alumni?

A: Continue to leverage Beyond's connections. Beyond has helped me in my early career and in my personal endeavors, and keeping up with the alumni network is something everyone should do.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Nicole Nagy



Q: How long have you been at Breakthrough?

A: I have been with Breakthrough Schools for 4 years.

Q: What roles have you had at Breakthrough?

A: Middle school math teacher Grade 6

Q: What originally attracted you to Breakthrough, and what has kept you here?

A: I was initially attracted to Breakthrough because of the network's strong commitment to coaching and professional growth. From the beginning, it was clear that Breakthrough invests deeply in developing its teachers through consistent feedback, high-quality training, and a clear vision for instructional excellence.

What has kept me here is seeing that commitment lived out every day. The coaching structures, opportunities to refine practice, and the emphasis on ongoing development have helped me grow both as an educator and a leader. I feel supported, challenged, and seen — and I value being part of a network that prioritizes teacher growth as a pathway to stronger outcomes for students.

Q: In what ways have you grown as an educator?

A: I have grown significantly as an educator through the coaching and development structures at Breakthrough. Consistent feedback and targeted support have helped me refine my instruction — from planning more intentionally to delivering lessons with stronger clarity, pacing, and engagement.

Q: What advice would you give to a 1st year educator?

A: My advice to a first-year educator is to stick with it, even when the work feels overwhelming. The first year comes with a steep learning curve, but growth happens through consistency and reflection. Don't try to do it alone — lean on your team for support, ask questions, and allow yourself to learn from the people around you. Strong colleagues and good coaching make a huge difference, and using those supports will help you build confidence and find your footing.

Q: How has being here longer allowed you to make an impact?

A: Being at Breakthrough for multiple years has allowed me to build deep, lasting relationships with students and families. Those long-term connections mean I understand their strengths, needs, and goals on a much deeper level, which helps me support them more effectively.

Staying here has also helped me create consistency in my classroom and within the school community. I've been able to watch students grow across grade levels, partner with families year after year, and contribute to a stable, supportive culture. That continuity has strengthened my impact both academically and relationally.

BREAKTHROUGH

PUBLIC SCHOOLS



breakthroughschools.org

