

EDITION #7

BREAKTHROUGH

BULLETIN

Our efforts. **Their success.**



Dear Breakthrough Community,

As we pass this school year's mid-point, I find myself reflecting on what this season represents for our network. Winter is often the hardest stretch of the year: long days, cold weather, and the natural fatigue that comes with sustained effort. And yet, this is when culture, commitment, and clarity matter most. I'm proud to share that across our schools, those foundations are holding strong.

Scholar retention remains steady at 93%, exceeding last year's performance at this time. Our families are choosing to stay with us. Families continue to share that they feel positive about their experience, and through our recent Scholar Intent to Return outreach, 98% of respondents have already indicated they plan to return next year. That speaks not just to satisfaction, but to trust, and trust is something we work to earn every day.

The same is true for our staff. Talent retention is also holding strong at 93%, a powerful indicator of stability across our campuses. Through our Staff Intent to Return process, the vast majority of staff have expressed a desire to continue their work here, many in the same roles and on the same campuses where they are already making an impact. That kind of consistency matters deeply for our scholars. It allows us to deepen practice, strengthen relationships, and build momentum year over year.

This winter, I also had the privilege of spending time on every campus hosting CEO Family Focus Groups. Sitting with families, listening to their stories, answering their questions, and hearing both their pride and their push for us to be even better was a powerful reminder of why this work matters. Families spoke about teachers who go above and beyond, about scholars who feel safe and known, and about the hope they have for their children's futures.

They also offered thoughtful, candid feedback that will make us stronger. That dialogue, open, honest, and grounded in shared commitment, is exactly the kind of partnership we want to build.

We have work ahead of us. Attendance took a hit during the challenging weather in January, and we are rebuilding that momentum with urgency. Academically, we are pushing toward greater rigor and stronger outcomes as we head into the final stretch of the year. And behind the scenes, we are already laying the groundwork for Fiscal Year 27; aligning staffing, enrollment, and strategic priorities so that next year begins from a position of strength.

What stands out most to me at this point in the year is consistency. Our families are engaged. Our staff is committed. Our leaders are focused. And our scholars continue to show up ready to grow.

Thank you for your continued partnership. The stability and momentum we are experiencing are the result of sustained investment, disciplined leadership, and a community that believes deeply in what our schools can make possible.

With gratitude,



ANDREW MCRAE

Chief Executive Officer
Breakthrough Public Schools

CONNECT ON LINKEDIN

WINTER SPORTS AT BREAKTHROUGH:**Strong Season, Big Finish Ahead!**

Our Breakthrough winter athletes have had an incredible season on the court and the mat! Both our basketball and cheer teams have demonstrated commitment, growth, and true school spirit all winter long.

Our basketball teams have shown tremendous hustle and teamwork, competing hard each game and continuing to sharpen their skills. From fast breaks to strong defensive stands, they've represented Breakthrough with pride and determination.

Meanwhile, our cheer team has brought unmatched energy and positivity to every game and event. Their dedication to practice, precision in routines, and unwavering support for our athletes have been inspiring to watch.

As we head into March, tournament and competition season is just around the corner! We are excited to see our teams finish strong and showcase all the hard work they've put in this season.

Join us in cheering them on as they head into their final stretch—
Go Breakthrough!



Dear Friends,

15 Years of Breakthrough: A Milestone Built by You!

This spring, Breakthrough Public Schools is celebrating a milestone that many thought was impossible 15 years ago. What began as a bold dream to transform urban education has blossomed into a cornerstone of Cleveland, proving every day that a zip code does not define a child's destiny.

As we move into the final months of our 15th-anniversary year, we are reflecting on the "full-circle" impact of our mission:
Kindergarten to Career—Every Step. Every Stage.

The Impact of Your Partnership

Whether you have been with us since day one or are just getting to know our story, your interest in our scholars has fueled incredible growth:

In our Classrooms: We are currently serving approximately 3,000 scholars across five flourishing K-8 campuses, providing the supportive, rigorous environment they need to finish the school year with excellence.

Beyond the Classroom: Our alumni network has grown to over 3,300 graduates. Through our Beyond Breakthrough program, now in its fifth year, we ensure they have the support needed to navigate high school, college, and career transitions.

A Growing Legacy: Many of our very first scholars are now returning to Cleveland as teachers, professionals, and community leaders - the ultimate "return on investment."

Join Us for the Next 15 Years

The momentum of our 15th year is still building. As our 8th graders receive their high school acceptance letters this month, we are working to ensure every single scholar has the supplies and transition support they need for the fall.

Will you help us write the next chapter?

Renew or Add to Your Impact: Donate. Advocate. Volunteer. There are so many ways that you can help.

See the Mission in Action: Seeing is believing. If you haven't visited a campus lately, we invite you to join us for an upcoming school tour to see this transformation in person. And, commit to joining us at our **15th annual Breakthrough BASH: Breakthrough in The Land!** on Friday, April 24th.

Thank you for being a vital part of our history. Together, we are shaping the future of Cleveland's leaders.



SUSAN ERTLE

President
Friends of Breakthrough Schools

LET'S STAY CONNECTED

15TH ANNUAL
BASH
BREAKTHROUGH
in The Land

Presenting Sponsor
& Honoree

KeyBank 
Opens Doors.SM

DATE: Friday, April 24, 2026

LOCATION: Hilton Cleveland Downtown
Complimentary valet/self parking available

ATTIRE: Casual Chic and Cleveland Proud!

Don't miss out!

We're celebrating 15 years of opportunity, impact,
and excellence in Cleveland education.

WHAT'S IN STORE:

Scholar-Led Program:

Hear directly from our incredible
scholars and alumni.

Honoring Partnerships:

Celebrating our 2026 Honoree
and presenting sponsor, KeyBank.

Art Showcase:

"What Cleveland Means to Me"
featuring original student works.

Local Eats:

The best cuisine Cleveland
has to offer.

Party Time:

Get on the dance floor with DJ
Christian Dela Vega!

Paddle Raise:

Help us build full-service libraries at all
five campuses, featuring dedicated on-
site librarians to support student literacy.

REGISTER TODAY! at <https://event.gives/bash26>

KINDERGARTEN to CAREER every step. every stage.



We are thrilled to share some exciting news with you: Breakthrough Public Schools has been awarded a match grant that will pave the way for libraries and dedicated librarians at all of our campuses!

This investment marks a major step forward in our commitment to literacy and to ensuring every scholar has access to rich, engaging reading experiences. We expect initial work to begin this summer, with the program rolling out thoughtfully over the next couple of years as we build high-quality library spaces and staffing across the network.

Libraries, and the librarians who bring them to life, play a powerful role in fostering a love of reading, supporting academic growth, and creating welcoming spaces where curiosity can thrive. We are truly excited to expand these opportunities for our scholars and families.

As timelines are finalized and milestones are reached, we will continue to share updates with you along the way. Thank you for being such an important part of our community and for your ongoing support of our scholars.

Help write the next chapter. [Donate today!](#)



Breakthrough Woodland Hills Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On January 29th, the air outside may have been chilly, but the energy inside was electric as we welcomed many guests, including state and city officials, partners from Marous Construction, donors, board members, faculty and staff, and the families of our Breakthrough Woodland Hills Campus and community—all to celebrate the long-awaited opening of our new gym and multipurpose facility!

The festivities kicked off with a high-energy welcome from the Woodland Hills Lions cheerleading squad. The moment we had all been waiting for arrived - when the ribbon was officially cut by Breakthrough CEO, Andrew McRae, and Breakthrough Woodland Hills Campus Principal, Ron Brownrigg, ushering our guests into the beautiful new space.

HONORING A CHAMPION

A highlight of the afternoon was honoring Larry Orwin, Board Member of Friends of Breakthrough Schools. To recognize his tireless dedication to bringing this project to fruition, Larry was presented with his very own Woodland Hills jersey.



LEARN MORE:

Larry's extraordinary fundraising efforts have been instrumental in this success. You can read more about his journey and impact in [this recent article](#).

THANK YOU!

This milestone would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our community. Thank you for helping us provide our students and neighbors with this beautiful new addition to the Breakthrough Woodland Hills Campus - a place to play, gather, and grow!



Emerging Leaders

Professional Breakthroughs: Cocktails and Conversations

On Wednesday, March 4th, the Emerging Leaders hosted Professional Breakthroughs: Cocktails and Conversations, a successful mashup of our social happy hour and educational speaker series.

We were lucky enough to have Susan Chiancone join us. Susan is a Fractional CFO with FocusCFO and a dedicated Friends of Breakthrough Board member. She didn't hold back, giving us a deep dive into the realities of career pivots and the importance of confidence and clear communication. It was a great opportunity to learn from her years of experience in a more relaxed, approachable setting.

The rest of the night was spent catching up and making new connections. We are already looking forward to more events like this one where we can level up our careers while supporting the incredible work happening at Breakthrough Public Schools.



MISSED THE FUN?

Don't worry—you can still catch the highlights!

[Watch Susan's inspiring presentation.](#)



STAY IN THE LOOP

Ready to join a community of young professionals dedicated to Cleveland's urban scholars? Here is how to get involved:

BECOME A MEMBER: Learn about the benefits of joining our Emerging Leaders and [register here.](#)

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS: Want to get your company or organization involved? Contact Karen Solomon at ksolomon@breakthroughschools.org to explore the possibilities.

Swing for the Stars

Monday, July 27, 2026

8:00 AM | Registration Begins
10:00 AM | Shotgun Start (shamble format)
2:30 PM | Cocktail Reception,
Earlybird Dinner, Awards

Canterbury Golf Club
22000 South Woodland Road | Beachwood, OH

Your day includes:

Green fees, lockers, cart, bag handling, driving range, coffee station, lunch, on-course food and refreshments, contests, cocktails, early bird dinner and awards.

**Each foursome will be provided with two (2) carts and one (1) forecaddie (gratuities included!)*

***The use of golf carts is subject to course conditions*

**Register your
sponsorship or
foursome today!**



SWING FOR THE STARS

16TH ANNUAL GOLF OUTING Friends of BREAKTHROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presented by
PALMERHOLLAND
DEPENDABLY INDEPENDENT



Friends of Breakthrough

Semper Virens Legacy Society

The Semper Virens Legacy Society was created in concert with the formation of the [Friends of Breakthrough Schools Legacy Fund of the Cleveland Foundation](#). The establishment of the fund represents the next step in strengthening our partnership with our donors, as well as with the Cleveland Foundation.



Legacy gift commitments strengthen the fund corpus established by Friends of Breakthrough Schools. The growth of the fund will strengthen our investment portfolio to help ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our network of schools. Through this partnership, Friends of Breakthrough Schools gains access to the large investment pools of the Cleveland Foundation, as well as their years of experience and proven track record of success in this arena.

Live Your Values. Leave a Legacy.

Questions? Contact Susan Ertle at sertle@breakthroughschools.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

BREAKTHROUGH BASH

Friday, April 24, 2026



For information and sponsorship opportunities, visit our website

<https://event.gives/bash26>

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.

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!](#)

SWING FOR THE STARS



SWING FOR THE STARS

16TH ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Friends of BREAKTHROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Monday
July 27, 2026

REGISTER TODAY!



PALMERHOLLAND

DEPENDABLY INDEPENDENT

Presented by

Beyond Breakthrough Alumni Are Thriving

Our 25–26 Midyear Survey of 173 alumni shows just how meaningful Beyond Breakthrough’s work is — and how our team’s support helps alumni succeed in school, careers, and life.

RELATIONSHIPS DRIVE IMPACT

Alumni consistently say one-on-one relationships with our team are the most meaningful part of their experience. Regular check-ins and personalized guidance help them feel seen, encouraged, and supported. One alumnus stated:

“Beyond Breakthrough has been there whenever I needed help or had questions about school or my future.”

Why it matters: Trusted relationships help alumni stay on track, build confidence, and make decisions about school and career with clarity.

ALUMNI TRUST THE TEAM

Our alumni gave Beyond Breakthrough a **Net Promoter Score of +51**, showing they would recommend our support to others.

Why it matters: This trust proves the team’s approach works — alumni feel supported beyond graduation.

CONSISTENT SUPPORT MATTERS

Over 60% of alumni met with a team member at least 3 times this year.

Why it matters: Frequent, relationship-driven check-ins help alumni succeed academically, explore careers, and plan for their future.

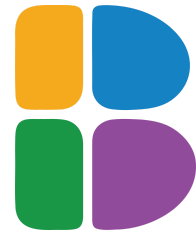
CELEBRATING ALUMNI WINS

Beyond Breakthrough alumni are achieving major milestones:

- Completing IT internships with our Breakthrough Public Schools home office
- Earning a CNA license on the first attempt
- Maintaining 4.0+ GPAs and receiving college acceptances
- Joining advanced programs like the Cleveland Museum of Art Teen Portfolio Project

Why it matters: These successes show the lasting impact of one-on-one support and the value of career exploration opportunities with the Beyond Breakthrough team.

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHTS



Meet your emcees for the upcoming Breakthrough BASH!



Nevaeh

Q: How long have you attended Breakthrough Schools?

A: 7 years

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

A: A challenge I have faced with school in the past was not feeling a sense of belonging. The accepting community at the Breakthrough Willard Campus has helped me gain the confidence to socialize more.

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

A: My future plans are to attend Saint Joseph Academy, attend law school and become a civil rights attorney.

Q: What are you most excited about for emceeing the upcoming Breakthrough BASH?

A: I'm most interested in gaining new public speaking skills; my future career is going to be based in public speaking.



Martelis

Q: How long have you attended Breakthrough Schools?

A: I attended kindergarten at Breakthrough Willard Campus, but I didn't attend in 1st grade; I then came back in 2nd grade and have been here ever since.

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

A: One challenge was my poor English skills; I overcame that challenge by getting the help I needed by going to small groups, asking teachers, and even staying after school for help. I now speak with a passion and I carry myself with pride.

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

A: My future plans are to attend high school, then college and possibly study abroad, and pursue the field of I.T. or engineering.

Q: What are you most excited about for emceeding the upcoming Breakthrough BASH?

A: I'm most excited for the opportunity to present at the upcoming Breakthrough BASH and the new faces I'll see as a result, and so my mother can be more proud of me than she already is.



Be sure to join us At BASH on April 24th and see Naveah and Martelis in action!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Jada Johnson

Middle School, Class of
Citizen's Southeast, 2023

High School
Cleveland Early College High School

Current Grade
Junior, Class of 2027



Q: Tell us a little about your high school experience.

A: It's a lot of work. I've started my college classes this fall. And I already finished AP testing.

Q: What's advice you would give current 8th graders?

A: Don't play with that GPA. You should try and go to tutoring and ask questions. That will make your life a lot easier.

Q: Why is Beyond Breakthrough special?

A: It helped me with a lot, finding colleges that I like and looking for stuff that interests me. Also going on a trip and seeing a real college campus - going outside of the city and seeing new stuff, that also helps.

Q: What is something that surprised you about high school?

A: Back in middle school and elementary school I was really close with my teachers, and now I only have one or two teachers that I'm close with. I'm used to being close with all of them.

Q: Why should alumni work with Beyond Breakthrough?

A: A lot of people don't have any idea where they're going to go for college, or what they want to do, or how they're gonna get there. You guys help a lot with that.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Phoenix

Breakthrough Public Schools Teacher
K-8 Art



Q: How long have you been with Breakthrough Schools? What roles have you had?

A: This is my fourth year at Breakthrough. During my time here, I've served as a building substitute, a 1:1 aide, a 2nd grade math teacher, and now a K-8 art teacher.

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

A: Originally, I was drawn to the strong sense of community and the people I work with—we truly feel like a family. I also appreciate the hands-on, in-the-moment coaching that supports our growth as educators.

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

A: I've grown by learning how to implement feedback effectively and finding my voice and confidence in the classroom.

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

A: Stay open-minded and focus on building strong relationships with your students and their families.

Q: What would you like our donors to know that hasn't been shared above?

A: Our students are incredibly creative, resilient, and full of potential. The support from donors helps provide opportunities, resources, and experiences that allow them to explore their talents and believe in what they can achieve.

BREAKTHROUGH

PUBLIC SCHOOLS



breakthroughschools.org

