

## Nonprofit's college prep program will help poor Brooklyn students 'breakthrough' and achieve success

Breakthrough New York set to open its second program in the city at Bishop Loughlin High School in Fort Greene

BY [MARK MORALES](#)



LaSalle Hall at Bishop Loughlin High School. Starting next summer the Fort Greene school will be the second site in the city to host the Breakthrough New York tutoring and college prep program for disadvantaged students.

Sharp middle schoolers from poor Brooklyn neighborhoods will be getting a boost into college starting next summer. Breakthrough New York - a nonprofit group that runs a rigorous after-school and summer program for low income students with high potential - is setting up shop at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School in Fort Greene starting next June, offering tutoring and college preparation. The new site will be the program's second location in the city.

"Affluent students have every opportunity available and low income students are limited by their circumstances," said Breakthrough New York executive director Rhea Wong. "Unless we start focusing our attention and resources on our best and brightest from poor neighborhoods, we will not move the needle on college attendance rates in this city." Wong, herself a former straight-A student from a poor immigrant Chinese family in San Francisco, said recent city data released last month showed only 21% of high school students were college ready.

Wong said 96% of the students who participated in the six-year Breakthrough program - which meets twice a week for two hours during the school year and 5 days a week during the summer - graduated and are now attending a four-year college.

"Being a child of immigrants and knowing the value of education but not necessarily having the means to access certain opportunities, Breakthrough was what I needed," Wong said.

Cypress Hills mom Grisel Rosado said her daughter Rebecca, 12, a seventh-grader who travels from Brooklyn to the program on the Upper East Side, has made a big difference in the girl's grades.

"They're encouraging her and motivating her," said Rosado. "She's a good kid but this is making her stronger. She's going to have many more opportunities and challenges because of it."

Upper West Side resident Tomas Olivier, 18, whose immigrant father from the Dominican Republic was the superintendent in the building where Tomas grew up, said his stint in Breakthrough opened his eyes to other opportunities.

"It made me happy to hear (about)...more opportunities (available) to students," said Olivier, 18, now a freshman at SUNY Buffalo. "Things are really looking up for these students that aren't getting the kind of support that they should be receiving."

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