



Breakthrough New York

# NewsBreak

Winter 2011/2012



## A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear BTNY Friends,

Welcome to our first issue of *NewsBreak*, our newsletter intended to provide a window into the work we do and the students we help.

As I start my seventh year as Breakthrough's Executive Director, it's a natural time to reflect on how we have grown and changed over the years. Summerbridge has become Breakthrough New York, we have begun our 13th new school year and the sixth graders I worked with when I first arrived are now sending me letters from college!

While many things have changed, many stay the same – we are proud that our eighth class of students left for college this fall. From the Class of 2011, 100% were admitted to college and our 9th graders enrolled in college-prep high schools which include Brearley, Packer Collegiate, Bronx Science and Hunter.

Last year Breakthrough New York became an independent 501(c)3 after twelve years of operating under the umbrella, and with the generous support, of The Town School. Our first financial audit has been completed, we have increased our staff size and established an administrative office space in the Financial District with the help of the Edwin Gould

Foundation, and welcomed four new board members within the past two years. To me, all of those successes happening during the uncertain times of a major global recession, show how determined our staff and supporters are to providing educational opportunities for deserving students.

Within these pages, you will also read about our next exciting initiative: opening a second BTNY site in Brooklyn in June 2012. It is said that heroes are made over turbulent times. No doubt this is a time of great turbulence, but the opportunity to double the number of students we reach far out weighs the risks involved. Breakthrough New York is among the best in the field helping low income, high achieving students get to college so that the cycle of poverty ends in their life forever. We aspire to be heroes because of and not in spite of turbulent times.

I look forward to sharing more with you as Breakthrough New York embarks on this exciting adventure. As the modern troubadours\* of our time famously wrote: "No Sleep 'til Brooklyn."

Warm regards,

Rhea Wong,  
Executive Director

\* Who are the troubadours? E-mail us the right answer and we'll send you a **BTNY ♥ BK** button: [info@btny.org](mailto:info@btny.org)

Welcome to our Inaugural Issue! We hope you'll learn more about us, become involved and help support our students.



*Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.*

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

WE ARE PROUD to announce that Breakthrough New York is going to Brooklyn. BTNY will open a second site in June 2012, thanks to a partnership with Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School in Fort Greene. Ours will be the only academic enrichment program of its kind operating in Brooklyn.

After thirteen wonderful years of success at the flagship site in Manhattan at The Town School, Breakthrough's staff and board felt compelled to replicate their model in the highest-need areas of New York, and concluded that a Brooklyn site would allow more impact on low-income, high-potential students.

"The vision was always to scale up our operations and serve more children," commented Rhea Wong, Executive Director. "Every year, we receive four times as many applications from sixth graders than we can accommodate. The need for high-quality education programs for New York's best and brightest is ever-growing."

The location of Breakthrough's newest home will open the recruitment area to schools in low-income neighborhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, East Flatbush, Crown Heights and East New York.

Breakthrough will recruit its inaugural Brooklyn class in January and looks forward to welcoming its Brooklyn cohort in late June.

"It is tremendously exciting to be part of an organization that is growing thoughtfully and in the areas of most need," said Alex Brady, Brooklyn Middle School Director. "I'm ready to take on the challenge of opening our first replication site."

Turn to page 4 to see highlights of our Brooklyn Expansion Reception on November 10th.

If you'd like to find out how to sponsor a BTNY student, contact us at [info@btny.org](mailto:info@btny.org).



## Spirit Day 2011



## Letters We Love To Get

Hi Rhea,

How have you and everyone at BT been? Brearley is a bit overwhelming but I'm getting the hang of things. The classes are challenging but the teachers do give a lot of personal attention. The only stressful side is that there is a test or quiz every day, but I've managed to join a study group and stay calm. I've joined three extra curriculums that I find pretty interesting: Asian Awareness (we mainly learn about different Chinese foods!!), Math Team (no doubt the first club I joined), Business and Financial Awareness (reminds me of your talk to me about money-related matters).

I'm taking Advanced Mandarin and Advanced Spanish, which tend to keep me busy studying new vocabulary. Geometry is fun, though it seems like my third time learning about proofs. Global History and English provide a new challenge for me mainly because I'm used to having Humanities in place of them, but it is growing more manageable as time progresses.

Tell everyone I said hi! I'll try to visit sometime soon when I don't have a load of homework to toil through.

Amy L., 9th Grader



# Student Speak

“ Every day I go to Breakthrough I see many differences, but one thing is the same. Everyone is familiar and accepts me. It gives me pride to be a part of it and belong. Breakthrough also helps me meet new people and shows my personality that once had no smile.”

— WENDY X., 8TH GRADER

B...T...N...Y...

Today, we are learners  
 Tomorrow, we will lead  
 Work hard, aim high  
 I've got college on my mind  
 Everyday, I will try  
 With my teacher by my side  
 BTNY! —BTNY AFFIRMATION



I'm from disaster  
 I'm from harmony  
 I'm from unparalleled divineness  
 I'm from my own world  
 I'm from my family  
 I'm from my friends  
 I'm from East New York  
 I'm from getting down in my house  
 to avoid bullets  
 I'm from the blood that I see  
 on the cement  
 I'm from togetherness  
 I'm from education  
 I'm from uniqueness  
 I'm from nowhere  
 But where I am  
 Myself  
 I'm from my motivation  
 I'm from my mistakes, problems  
 and failure  
 I'm from my own person  
 No one gave technical birth to me  
 By the choices I made  
 The people I call my family  
 The success I had  
 The mistakes I had  
 The success I seek  
 I gave birth to myself

— Rahmel R., 9th Grader

To see a video of Rahmel reading his poem, visit: "What's New" on [www.BTNY.org](http://www.BTNY.org).



Career Day



Thank You to Our Hosts!  
 Gap, Goldman Sachs, Google,  
 Metropolitan Real Estate,  
 ScoJac Music, Skadden  
 and TowerBrook



Thank You  
 Susan &  
 Michael  
 Blum!



Olympics  
 Day



The  
 Chairman's  
 Corner

OUR COMMITMENT to expanding our program requires an investment in additional staff. It is with pride and pleasure that I introduce you to many new members the Breakthrough New York family.

We welcome **Alex Brady**, **Natalie Cox**, **Hannah Miller** and **Barbara Welsh** who will now join Rhea Wong, Executive Director, Sika Bediako, Placement and High School Director, Leonard Perlson, Finance Director and Yia Hang, Grants Manager.

**Alex Brady**, working currently at our after-school program will become the Middle School Director for our new Brooklyn site in historic Fort Greene. After receiving his B.A. in English from Boston College, Alex joined Teach for America in 2007. Before coming to Breakthrough New York in May 2011, he taught eighth-grade English and Social Studies in the Bronx for four years.

With one season of the BTNY school year under her belt, **Natalie Cox** takes over from Maureen Yusuf-Morales as the Middle School Director of the Town School. Natalie earned her B.A. in English and Communications from Tulane University. A Teach for America 2006 Bay Area alum, Natalie taught high school English for four years, and worked with Oakland Teaching Fellows.

Our newest member of the staff is **Hannah Miller**. As our Operations Manager, Hannah will coordinate our operations in our two school locations (Upper East Side and Brooklyn so far!) and our administrative offices in the Financial District. Hannah is a graduate of the University of Tulsa and a recent arrival to New York City.

Finally, our commitment to expand to Brooklyn required a staff member that would be fully focused on all areas of fundraising. **Barbara Welsh**, Director of Development and Communications, brings a long career in New England and New York to BTNY. Barbara is a graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology and a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and Women in Development-NY.

A part of BTNY's growth includes saying goodbye to someone who was also instrumental in building our organization to where it is today. Such is the case with **Maureen Yusuf-Morales**, Senior Program Director at BTNY for six years.

Maureen, better known to many of you as "Mo", leaves us to continue her studies at NYU and teach at Leadership Prep Bedford Stuyvesant. We are grateful to Mo for all that she has done for BTNY and our students, and wish her well in her new endeavors.

We also said hello and goodbye this summer to two talented members of our staff – our summer interns, **Isabelle Avildsen**, Development Intern from the University of Pennsylvania and **Alison Karasyk**, PR Intern from Oberlin College. They provided invaluable service to BTNY and our students.

Our ambitious goals are the responsibility of a committed board as well as staff. While we have the benefit of many board members who joined us in building the organization from its early days, we also have the benefit of a new incoming class. Trustees for the Class of '14 include **Roszell Mack III** and **Dan Mezzalingua**. We look forward to continuing to build an excellent organization with our newest talent.

Serving on several corporate and philanthropic boards, **Roszell Mack** brings a level of expertise that will benefit BTNY greatly. Long familiar with BTNY through his board work with the Edwin Gould Foundation, Rosz will serve on the BTNY Finance Committee as well as the Development Committee. Rosz manages a busy professional and volunteer life shuttling between Washington, D.C. and New York.

**Dan Mezzalingua** is originally from Syracuse, New York where he and his family are strong members of the business and philanthropic community. Now living in New York City, Dan runs The Trawler Group in addition to managing his philanthropic interests. Dan is a member of the Development Committee as well as the Expansion Committee responsible for our new Brooklyn site.

On behalf of the entire board, we look forward to building on our previous success to create the best Breakthrough experience for even more deserving students and hope that we can count on you to join us in our efforts.

Ted Federici, Board Chair



Maureen Yusuf-Morales, Roszell Mack III and Dan Mezzalingua.

# In College, Working Hard to Learn High School Material

**U. gotta be kiddin'!**  
Only 25% of City HS Grads Set for College

## NY's 4th Graders Only Students to Lose Ground in National Math Testing

### BTNY Answers the Headlines

You've seen the headlines and read the statistics.

Late last month, the New York City Department of Education released its school report card which detailed that New York's

high schools were graduating only 71% of its classes within four years. Of that number, only half are enrolling in college.

**Our lack of collective outrage about these statistics is, in and of itself, outrageous.**

As a country, we fall behind countries like South Korea, Finland, Singapore, China and Canada in reading, math and science. We spend less of our GDP on a percentage basis than countries like Cuba, Vanuatu and Barbados. We continue to see the achievement gap between affluent and low-income students grow and are nowhere closer towards ensuring more four-year college graduates.

#### What to make of this?

Breakthrough New York is doing its part to address the problem. Though we currently serve only 140 students, we serve them over six years and, most arguably, the most critical years of middle to high school. We know that high-quality out-of-school time programs are the best chance most of them have to close the opportunities gap and to go to four-year colleges.

We're doing our part in other ways, too. By recruiting, training and inspiring the most accomplished high school and college students in this country, we are helping to build the pipeline of talented educators who can attack educational inequality head-on. Our methods, based on the latest educational research available, focus on mastering instructional methods proven to most directly impact student achievement. If we can inspire the best and brightest of this country to teach, our students will learn.

The need for Breakthrough and other programs of its kind is staggering. Yet, while the problem is immense, we know that student by student we are creating college-going young people who, but for our intervention, would not otherwise have the opportunity.

The case for Breakthrough is clear and we hope to put ourselves out of business one day. That day is not here yet and so we continue the work of investing time, energy and education into each of our Breakthrough kids.

## Are you Smarter Than a Breakthrough Student?

Test your knowledge against the subjects our students are currently studying. (answers at the bottom this page)

1.  $3\frac{2}{9}$  is what percentage? (7th Grade Math)
2. Which of the following is a proper unit for acceleration? (8th Grade Science)
  - a) s/km<sup>2</sup>
  - b) km/hr
  - c) m/sec<sup>2</sup>
  - d) cm/sec
3. Is the world described in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* more utopian or dystopian? (9th Grade Literature)
4. What is a writer's appeal to a reader's character (using good will, wisdom, or virtue) called? (9th Grade Writing)
  - a) Ethos
  - b) Logos

## Student News

Our very own **Gabrielle N.**, 11th Grader, a member of the Young People's Chorus on New York City met with First Lady Michelle Obama on November 2nd to celebrate the Arts and Humanities Program for Youth. Watch a video of their performance – you can fast forward to minute 27:00. Gaby is in the back row, 2nd from the left, wearing the orange scarf: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2011/11/02/first-lady-honors-arts-and-humanities-programs-youth>.

The Posse Foundation selects high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential to become Posse Scholars. We are proud to announce that BTNY again has finalists in contention: **Tyler G.**, 12th Grader, for Vanderbilt University and **Lual C.**, 12th Grader, for Wheaton College. Selections will be made in December – congratulations to both for the honor of their nomination.



## Letters We Love To Get

Dear Rhea,

I love my school so far. I have met a lot of new friends and love the friendly environment. As of now I am in field hockey as a sport however, it changes every season. I am involved in the Justice League, Habitat for Humanity, and Black Latina Student Union for clubs. I am really nervous about my game this Saturday against Pomfret, however I am really excited for the on campus carnival this weekend. They are going to have bungee jumping and laser tag.

I love it here and can't wait to come to New York to tell all the Breakthrough kids about how much fun Ethel Walker School is. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come to the Ethel Walker School. Without Breakthrough I don't think I would be having this much fun. I have attached a picture of me and a couple of my friends below.

Sincerely,  
Amina N.,  
9th Grader



**We are grateful for the support we receive to make our program possible. Thank you.**

#### FOUNDATION GIFTS

*Sincere thanks to the Corporations and Foundations that have funded our program.*

Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation, Inc.  
Altman Foundation  
Amy Beren & Robert I. Bressman Foundation, Inc.  
Bernard Rothfeld Children's Foundation, Inc.  
BMO Bank of Montreal  
Bollinger Insurance  
Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation  
Con Edison  
David L. Klein, Jr. Foundation  
DJM Fund  
Edwin Gould Foundation  
Gap Foundation  
Goldman Sachs  
Heckscher Foundation for Children  
M. Lapenna Refrigeration  
Macy's Foundation  
McKesson Foundation, Inc.  
Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation  
Pinkerton Foundation  
Rowland and Sylvia Schaefer Family Foundation  
Scott Margolin Scholarship Foundation

Shippy Foundation  
Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom  
Sponsors For Educational Opportunity  
Stephen & May Cavin Leeman Foundation, Inc.  
Third Point Foundation  
TowerBrook Foundation  
Town School  
Toyota Tsusho America  
United Way of New York City  
Verizon Foundation

#### HONOR & MEMORIAL GIFTS

*A gift to BTNY is not only a thoughtful way to honor or remember others, it also helps another child pursue their dream of obtaining a four-year college degree.*

IN MEMORY OF  
Mabel Wong

IN HONOR OF  
Susan Blum  
Ilene Cranin  
Ted Federici  
Amy Levere  
Noa Pearl Liebgott  
Lisa M. Schweitzer  
Elizabeth Sherman  
Barbara Welsh

OUR MISSION is to maximize academic performance and build leadership skills of under served, motivated middle school students to obtain four-year college degrees. We provide a rigorous academic program by training high school and college students to teach our younger students.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Ted Federici Board Chair  
 Liz Sherman Vice Chair  
 Christine McWalters Treasurer  
 Ilene Cranin Secretary  
 Susan Blum  
 Michelle Bork  
 Jason H. Caldwell  
 Maria Cruz Melendez  
 Amy Levere  
 Bonnie Litt  
 Roszell Mack III  
 Christopher Marblo  
 Andrew Marks  
 Dan Mezzalingua  
 Ali Morgan  
 Lisa Schweitzer  
 Rhea Wong Executive Director



**“Recess” at Hudson Terrace**

The Young Professionals Committee hosted a great night of music, cocktails and games for several hundred people at Hudson Terrace this spring. Our thanks to the Recess Committee:

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Eric Anton        | Daniel Belke    |
| Kate Bregman      | Ellie Bressman  |
| Olivia Cranin     | Robyn Feldstein |
| Jenna Gottlieb    | Adam Green      |
| Jordana Kerschner | Jillian Kranz   |
| Allie Levine      | Winston Nguyen  |
| Lana Powers       | Julia Roy       |
| Hayley Russman    | Megan Sobel     |
| Jamie Wainer      |                 |

**Annual Book Fair**

Breakthrough New York held its annual book fair at Barnes & Noble on the Upper East Side. Authors **Sarah French**, *Summer Friends*, **Torrey Maldonado**, *Secret Saturdays* and actor/author **Chad Michael Murray**, *Everlast*, entertained and enlightened us while helping raise money to buy the books our students will be reading this year...



- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*
- *Ender’s Game*
- *The Handmaid’s Tale*
- *Raisin in the Sun*
- *Secret Saturdays*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- *Warriors Don’t Cry*



**That’s A Wrap!**

Look for us **Fridays in December** at the Barnes & Noble (86th and Lex). We’ll be wrapping your gifts to raise money for our student book fund. If you want to help and can work a shift between 9am and 11pm e-mail [barbara@btny.org](mailto:barbara@btny.org).



Looking to make a real contribution in the life of an exceptional student? BTNY has a variety of volunteer opportunities that assist in raising money to fund needed supplies, field trips and extracurricular activities. For more information about becoming a BTNY volunteer call Barbara at 917-258-3455 or e-mail [barbara@btny.org](mailto:barbara@btny.org).

**Special Thanks to This Year’s TEACHER INTERNS ...they’re hard-working students too!**

LITERATURE 7

Elizabeth Doi, *University of Pennsylvania, Class of 2013*

LITERATURE 8

Ritza Calixte, *Duke University, Class of 2013*  
 Sabin Ciocan, *University of Florida, Class of 2012*

LITERATURE 9

Jamie Biondi, *Yale University, Class of 2012*  
 Catherine Lum, *Wesleyan University, Class of 2012*

MATH 7

Datona Bradley, *SUNY Binghamton, Class of 2014*  
 Edwin Quintanilla, *California State Univ. – LA, Class of 2013*

MATH 8

Diane Kim, *Mount Holyoke, Class of 2012*  
 Yomalis Rosario, *Dartmouth College, Class of 2015*

MATH 9

Eliot Kim, *Yale University, Class of 2012*  
 Imani Loudon, *Connecticut College, Class of 2014*

SCIENCE 7

Daniel Lubber, *Univ. of Southern California, Class of 2013*  
 Marvin Vilma, *Colgate University, Class of 2014*

SCIENCE 8

Lee Marcus, *University of Pennsylvania, Class of 2013*  
 Kerry Stern, *University of Florida, Class of 2013*

SCIENCE 9

Bianca Hernandez, *Univ. of Chicago, Class of 2013*  
 Joanne Jordan, *Columbia University, Class of 2012*

WRITING 7

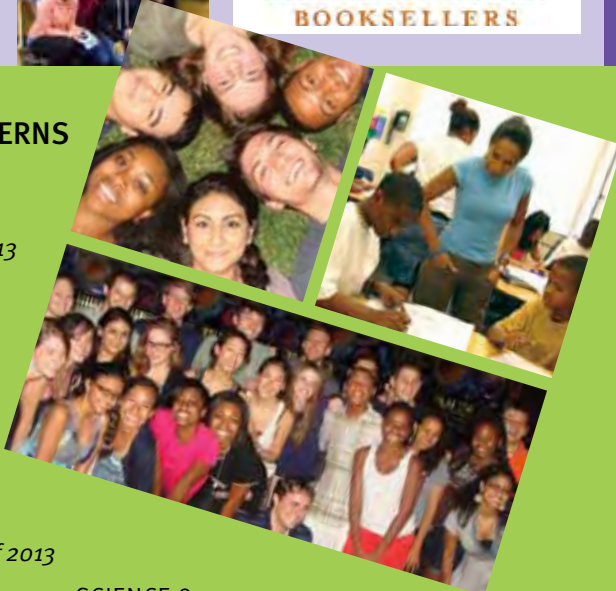
Benjamin Hart, *Wesleyan University, Class of 2011*  
 Rachel Jackson, *DePaul University, Class of 2013*

WRITING 8

David Campuzano, *SUNY Stony Brook, Class of 2012*  
 Taina Paredes, *Tufts University, Class of 2014*

WRITING 9

Daniel Grimes, *University of Virginia, Class of 2012*  
 Whitney Mufson, *Univ. of Pennsylvania, Class of 2012*



This summer, Breakthrough New York again employed a staff of exceptional teacher interns. We thank them for their contribution to the success of our students and wish them every success in their careers.

Every year, we recruit the best and brightest high school and college students to teach in our afterschool and summer programs. BTNY has consistently been recognized by the *Princeton Review* as a Top Ten Internship.

Breakthrough New York selects 90% of summer faculty by mid-February. Visit [www.btny.org/GetInvolved](http://www.btny.org/GetInvolved) for more information.

**Demographic breakdown of summer 2011 teachers:**

- 50% males / 50% females
- 72% teachers of color
- 77% current college students

Congratulations to: Eliot Kim, Sabin Ciocan, Whitney Mufson, and Daniel Grimes, who were accepted as Teach for America 2012 Corps Members! Several other BTNY teacher alums are applying for later TFA deadlines – stay tuned!

**Brooklyn Expansion Reception**



**Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz proclaimed November 10, 2011 Breakthrough New York Expansion Celebration Day in Brooklyn, USA.**



**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Fun Friday - Ice Skating..... 12/9
- Barnes & Noble Wrapping for Books..... 12/9
- Barnes & Noble Wrapping for Books... 12/16
- High School Holiday Party..... 12/21
- Barnes & Noble Wrapping for Books... 12/23
- Barnes & Noble Wrapping for Books... 12/30
- Student Interview Days..... April
- Teacher Interview Days..... March