

**Breakthrough
Birmingham**

2013

Impact Report





“Go Breakthrough! Breakthrough Birmingham is a magnificent program which opens the world of learning to the students that join this family. The energy, creativity, and collaborations that are exhibited are phenomenal. I love the way students and teachers are jointly in control of their knowledge. I witnessed an enormous increase in some of the students’ self-efficacy from pre to post Breakthrough.

This is a much needed program within our demographics and being a member of the team that creates an atmosphere which guides and encourages ALL students toward college makes me smile. With Breakthrough Birmingham, the sky is the limit! Love It!”

— Tywana Pressley, W.E. Putnam Middle School Teacher
Breakthrough Birmingham Student Support Specialist





Breakthrough Birmingham's Inaugural Summer

In partnership with Birmingham City Schools and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Breakthrough Collaborative was thrilled to launch Breakthrough Birmingham, a new Breakthrough site in Birmingham, Alabama in the summer of 2013. Built on Breakthrough's *Students-Teaching-Students* model, refined over three decades and in practice at 33 sites in 25 cities across the country, Breakthrough Birmingham made a significant impact through the intensive experiences provided to students, Intern Teachers, and Instructional Coaches. In its first year, Breakthrough Birmingham served an initial cohort of seventh-grade students, and will scale to serve at least 300 students annually in grades seven through nine.

The Students

- 4 Birmingham City Schools
 - Hayes K-8 School, J.H. Phillips Academy, W.E. Putnam Middle School, and Malachi Wilkerson Middle School
- 100% students of color
- 85% low-income students
- 47% will be first-generation college graduates



The Staff

- 2 Directors
- 1 Student and Family Support Specialist
- 4 Instructional Coaches
 - Experience ranged from 2-14 years
 - 3 Birmingham City School Teachers
 - 2 Teach for America Alumni
- 12 teachers from 12 different colleges and 10 different states
 - Average GPA of 3.5
 - 58% People of Color

“This summer was a summer of growth. I particularly feel this growth is largely attributed to the structure of feedback that I received on a daily basis. I had such an incredible support system that automatically set me up for success this summer.”

— Victoria Solis, Breakthrough Birmingham Teacher



The Program

Students

- 6 weeks of programming
 - 5 days per week
 - 8 hours per day
- 4 academic classes: Literature, Math, Writing, Science
- Exciting Electives: Poetry, Music, Dance, Improvisation, Hands-on Science
- Advisory sessions on Bullying, Self-Awareness, Self-Advocacy, Goal Setting, Notetaking, Teambuilding, Managing Stress

Teachers

- 9-week commitment with extensive pre-summer preparation
- 150 hours of professional development

Co-Curriculum

- College Day at UAB
- Career Day with Birmingham professionals
- Trip to the Birmingham Zoo
- SpeakFirst Debate programming
 - 2-week debate program that culminated in a Breakthrough debate tournament



“The Breakthrough program had a huge impact on the Putnam students and has helped develop them into future leaders. The students continue to sing the praises of the program and are excited to continue the connection with the program and its teachers. Parents have expressed their delight in having their children participate in the program and have seen a great deal of growth and development in their kids.

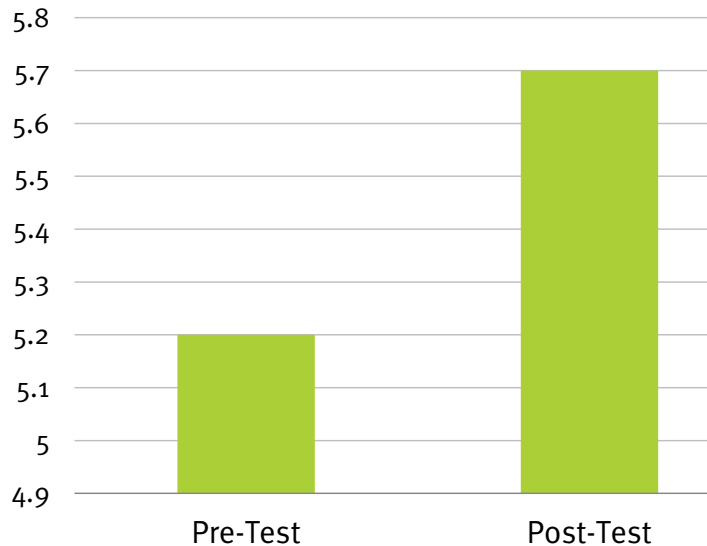
As an administrator, it is always rewarding when students are exposed to academics in such a meaningful way and I look forward to additional collaboration with the program and am honored to have my students participate.”

— Brenda Dial, Principal, Putnam Middle School



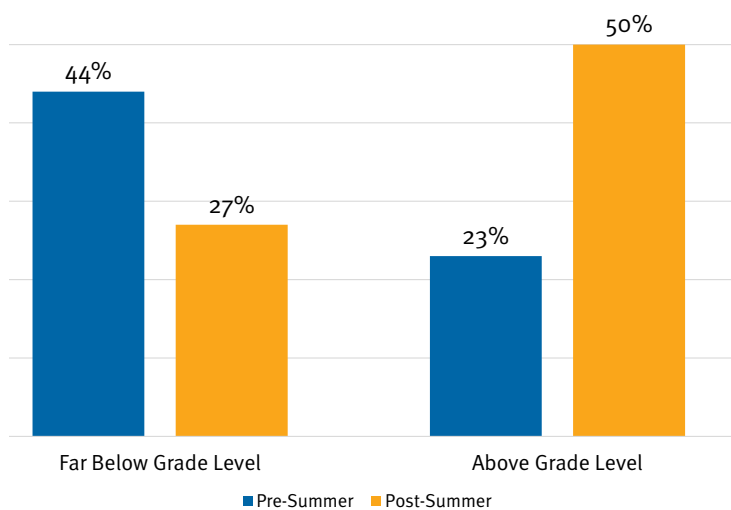
Student Achievement Growth: Reading

Instructional Reading Level



On the Renaissance STAR Literacy Assessment, students increased their reading levels by 5 months in just 6 weeks. Most low-income students lose months of reading skills over the summer.

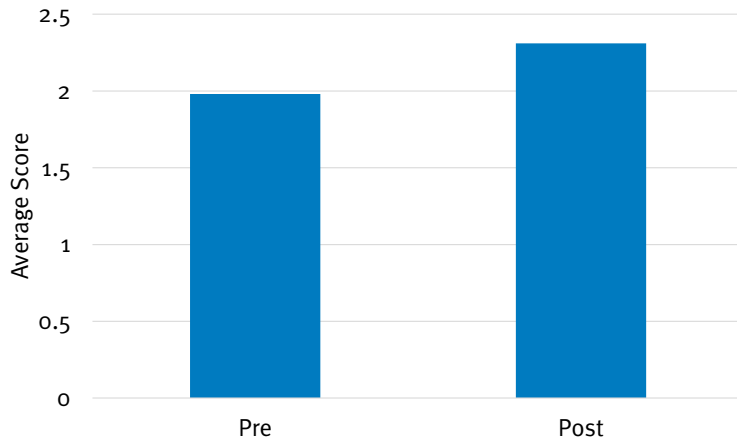
Percent of Students at Grade Level



The percentage of students above grade level increased by 117%.

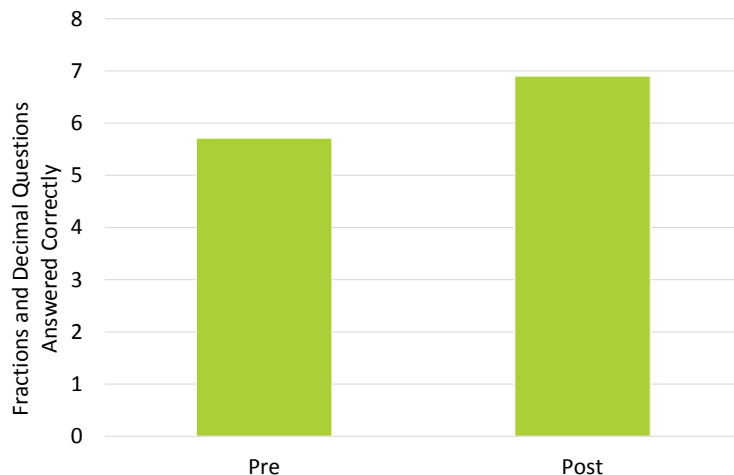


Student Achievement Growth: Writing



The Breakthrough writing rubric uses a scale of 1-4 to measure students writing in 4 areas: organization, content, style, and mechanics. On average, student scores rose from 1.98 to 2.31, an increase of 17%.

Student Achievement Growth: Math



The Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project assesses student readiness for advanced mathematics. Breakthrough students studied fractions and decimals intensively and increased their performance by 21%.

“At Breakthrough, I have learned the importance of persistence. I have always worked hard, but now I know that when I am challenged I have to persist to be successful.”

— Sydney Urqhart, Breakthrough Birmingham Student



Student Growth

Breakthrough students agreed that they are more confident in their academic abilities since participating in Breakthrough



Breakthrough students agreed that their desire to attend college increased since participating in Breakthrough.



Breakthrough students agreed that they became more academically motivated since participating in Breakthrough.



Breakthrough students agreed that they became more organized and prepared since participating in Breakthrough.



Breakthrough Birmingham Students: In Their Own Words

“I liked my writing class, not because it was fun, but because I learned a lot more than I expected.”

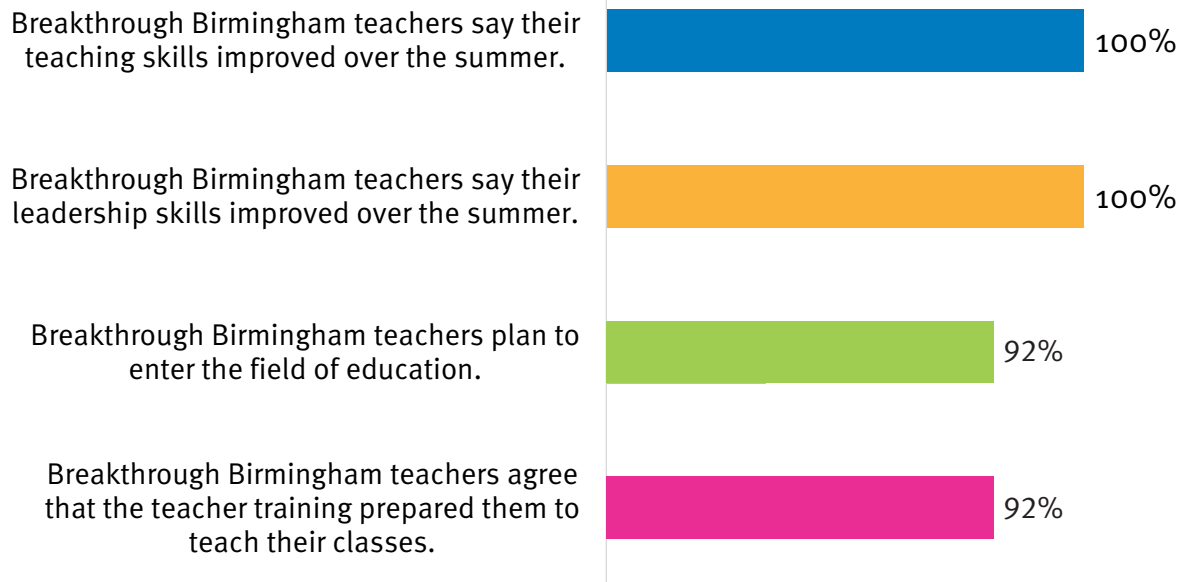
“What I liked most about Breakthrough was that we learned new things and had teachers that loved and cared about us.”

“I liked the teachers because they were so nice, young, and exciting, and they really explained everything very well.”





Teacher Growth



“I have never felt more professionally or personally empowered in a workplace before in my life. The infrastructure that is Breakthrough Collaborative made me feel like failure was nearly impossible. My peers and directors provided me with all of the tools necessary to succeed. There was no time I ever felt as if something was expected of me that hadn’t been previously laid out as a task I would be expected to complete.

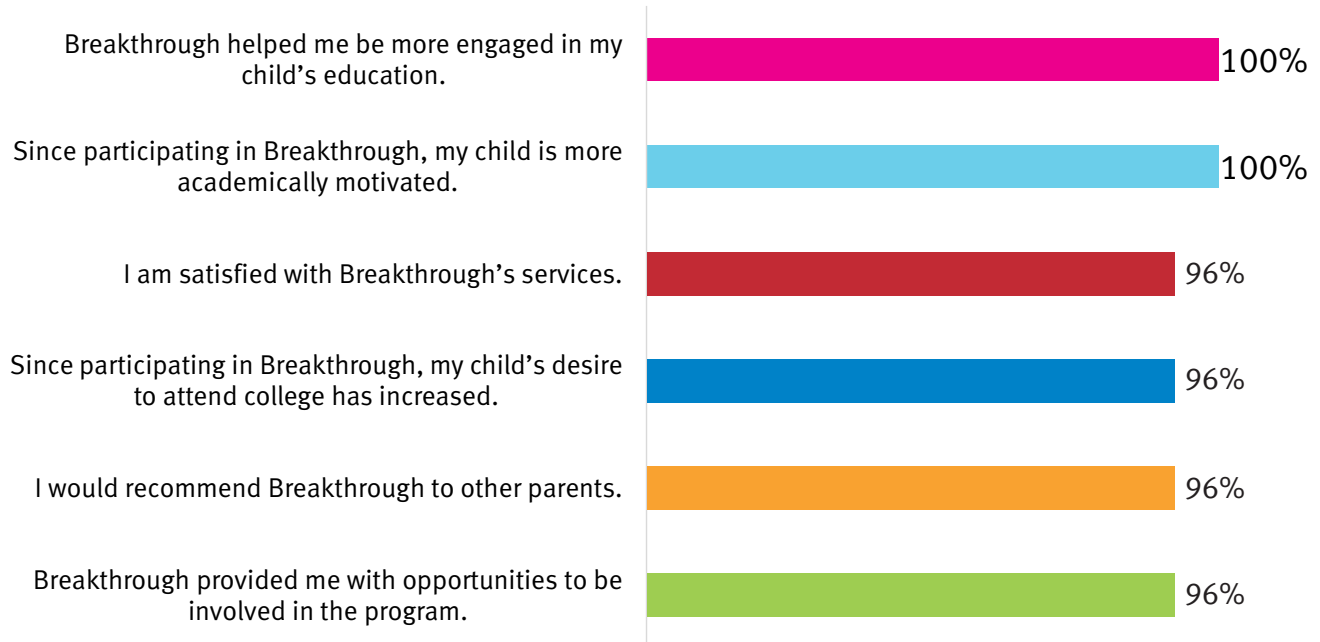
Yes, I worked harder than I’ve worked in my entire life, but I did so with a cohort of equally hard working peers, and arrived on the job site expecting such. I could not have asked for a more positive Breakthrough experience.”



— Katelyn Moss, University of Alabama Student
Breakthrough Birmingham Teacher



Parent Feedback



“Breakthrough applied an academic science that helped my child grow educationally and allowed him to build character at the same time. The timing was absolutely crucial. It’s great to be able to send your child to a place, free of charge, for the majority of the summer and know that they are being educated, developed, and nurtured to the extent that the values you teach at home are the same values that are being taught by the Breakthrough teachers and staff. The dedication of the staff was evident by Mr. Hebert calling my son before the first day of school—long after Breakthrough Birmingham had ‘technically’ ended.

The impact of the program is evidenced by my son coming home last night, September 8, 2013 and telling me that he is getting ready to start working on thesis statements and box outlines in his classes—something that he covered over the summer while attending Breakthrough Birmingham.”

— Breakthrough Birmingham Parent



“What I learned as an Instructional Coach at Breakthrough has changed what I do in the classroom significantly. I think feedback is the number one thing any new teacher needs, and Breakthrough does a terrific job providing it, more than any other program or school I’ve heard of. The amount of feedback the teachers get is unparalleled. It helped me grow being able to see firsthand what feedback would help student achievement the most in a teacher’s classroom. As a result of what I learned at Breakthrough, I’ve taught more in the last week and a half than I did in a month of teaching at the end of last year!”

— Breckan Duckworth, Breakthrough Birmingham Instructional Coach

