

ANNUAL REPORT

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Celebrating after spirit week!



Breakthrough students at the college visit to the University of St. Thomas

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When one looks at the deeply embedded problem of systemic inequities for our young people, it's hard to imagine it could ever be solved. It's an issue hundreds of years in the making encased in an educational system "working" too similarly to how it operated a century ago. All with predictable results based on factors that shouldn't matter.

My whole career has been in youth work — in the classroom, as school board director, as a nonprofit leader serving youth. I've worked with countless people who are passionate, intelligent, hard-working, and care so darn much about young people. And I'd ask myself, "Why haven't we figured this out yet?"

What attracted me most when I first joined the Breakthrough Twin Cities team was the programmatic model. More specifically, it was the approach to solving this seemingly intractable issue. To me, it's brilliant! Finding a way for capable, deserving students to overcome the odds requires a solution that is multi-faceted, innovative, and holistic. That's Breakthrough!

What I've now seen firsthand over my seven years at Breakthrough is an organization committing to individual students, while also looking ahead to support long-term shifts. Breakthrough tackles present-day needs and does so over the course of six years for every student while also providing meaningful learning and growth opportunities for the future educators we need to affect broader systems change.

You don't find that long-term consistency and commitment to individual students in many places – and what's wild to me is how much fun we have doing it! But, when you think about it, it makes complete sense that supporting young people in a joyful, loud, and silly way results in success. It's what childhood is for!

I appreciate your involvement in our community and I hope you will continue to engage with us with all the youthful optimism, wonder, and awesomeness we as adults can muster.

In service, Josh Reimnitz



Josh Reimnitz
Executive Director

Finding a way for capable, deserving students to overcome the odds requires a solution that is multi-faceted, innovative, and holistic. That's Breakthrough!



Tanya SchmittBoard Chair

I believe more than ever in the work of Breakthrough Twin Cities and the potential for the future of this organization and everyone involved.

Greetings BTC Community!

The two-fold mission of supporting students' journey to college and developing a diverse, passionate pipeline of educators has never been more important. It was incredible to see the energy and culture of our program in action across our three sites. I'm so grateful to the Breakthrough staff, Teaching Fellows, faculty, and scholars that fully engage in learning, relationships, and community not only in the summer program but also throughout the year.

After navigating unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, racial injustice in our local community, and much more the last few years, our board of directors created a strategic plan for 2023-2026 in partnership with key stakeholders. Together, we aligned on the following priorities for near future:

1. Increasing impact of student-facing programs by serving more students and increasing the depth and quality of programming

2. Strengthening the pipeline of diverse future eductors by increasing the size of our critical Teaching Fellowship program and making exploring the profession more attractive and accessible

3. Scaling the program model in preparation for increased capacity and future site growth

4. Assembling and developing the human capabilities needed to lead future growth

These priorities are in support of our bold vision, that by the Fall of 2026, through a culture of restoration, we will have established an equitable, just, and inclusive platform for the future. Breakthrough is committed to sustainably reaching more young people and potential future educators by building a strong post-pandemic foundation and community now. It's never been a better time to be at Breakthrough!

The work continues and I look forward to the collaboration and partnership across the Breakthrough Twin Cities community to bring this ambitious plan to life. I believe more than ever in the work of Breakthrough Twin Cities and the potential for the future of this organization and everyone involved.

Best, Tanya Schmitt

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Angel Ponce ('23) and Eddie Reynosa ('w23) were two of the graduates of the Class of 2023 to speak at our first annual Senior Celebration. The event celebrated their accomplishments and honored the six-year commitment students make to Breakthrough Twin Cities.

Angel and Eddie volunteered to give a speech about their experience and what Breakthrough meant to them. "In our time working with Breakthrough Twin Cities, we have seen firsthand the incredible impact that this organization has on the lives of its students – young and older."



This impact wouldn't be possible without the college and high school students who serve as Breakthrough Teaching Fellows. To Angel, Eddie, and many other students, this means having teachers and mentors "who truly understand their experiences." They were able to form close bonds with their teachers and peers, and appreciated being part of a community of learners who supported and encouraged each other.

"We both believe education is a powerful tool for creating positive change in our communities," they said. "And we are proud to be a part of an organization that is making a difference in the lives of young people."

Now, as Breakthrough alumni, Eddie and Angel are continuing their educational journeys. They will be attending Augsburg University and Century College, respectively.

As they wrapped up their speech, they encouraged everyone to learn more about Breakthrough Twin Cities and consider supporting the mission. "Every donation, no matter how small, can help to provide critical resources and opportunities to students who need them

most."



Eddie Reynosa ('23) and his family at the Senior Celebration



Angel Ponce ('23) and fellow graduate, Everlyn Balvoa Granda ('23)



Peter Nguyen ('23)

Like many students before their first Breakthrough summer, Peter Nguyen was a nervous 7th grader, unsure about what was to come. He knew joining Breakthrough meant making a commitment that would follow him not just through summer, but through both middle school and high school. However, he told us, after three summers of friendship, Friday events, All School Meetings and its skits, and the 9th grade retreat at Carleton College, he knew he made the right decision.

"Through all these fun things I did over those summers, the most important thing I did was make friends," Peter said. "It made moments like learning how to write papers for the first time, fun, because thinking together was encouraged."

After those six years of commitment to Breakthrough, Peter became a speaker at the 2023 Senior Celebration. In his speech, Peter chose to honor a Teaching Fellow who influenced who he is today – Bhavana, his math teacher the Summer of 2018.

"When Bhavana would teach I could feel not just me but the entire class engaging with what she taught," Peter said. "She may not know it, and I don't know what she's doing today, but I hope she knows that when I chose to become an education major she played a role in it."

In the future, Peter is interested in traveling the world as an English teacher. "It's clear to me now that without Breakthrough in my life, it's likely that I wouldn't have even considered a career in teaching."

Peter is attending Loyola University-Chicago. He may become a teacher, a professional flutist, or even run for local office one day. The possibilities are endless and so is his potential.



Senior Celebration speakers (left to right): Yuna Vue, Ka Yeng Yang, Peter Nguyen, Angel Ponce, Everlyn Balvoa Granda, and Ywa Paw



ABOUT US



Middle School Program

is a 5.5 week summer program with monthly Saturday sessions during the school year. Middle school students receive 150+ hours of rigorous academic instruction in STEM, literature, writing, and electives. They also experience social-emotional skill-building, community building, and 1x1 support.



High School Program

provides students with social-emotional skill building, academic support, individualized college counseling, as well as career exploration through monthly Saturday Sessions and individual advising.



VISION

Breakthrough Twin Cities envisions a future where all students have the resources to reach their full potential, where every classroom is led by an engaging teacher committed to each student's success, and where society as a whole realizes the ultimate social and economic benefits of fully investing in its youth.

MISSION

In May 2023, the Breakthrough Twin Cities Board approved a new mission statement to reflect the collective contributions and assets of our stakeholders, especially our students and Teaching Fellows.

Breakthrough Twin Cities (BTC) supports students on their journey to college by fostering a community of mutual learning with the next generation of educators so they both can collaborate, grow, and thrive.

In addition to approving an updated mission statement, the Board also approved a three-year strategic plan. By the Fall of 2026, through a culture of restoration, we will have established an equitable, just, and inclusive Platform for the Future by:

- Ensuring our model is scalable in a way that ushers sustainable future growth
- Reaching more students and improving the student experience
- Earning a reputation for attracting and developing aspiring educators



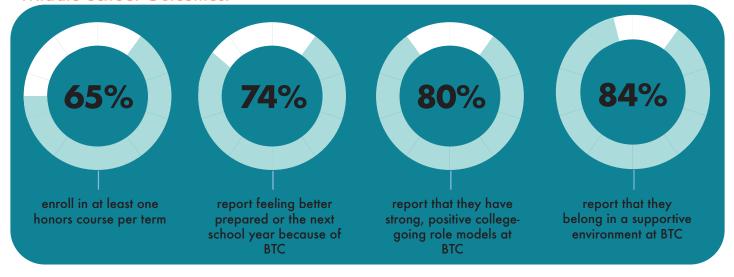
PROGRAM UPDATES: Summer and School Year

We were thrilled to be fully back in-person for Summer 2022. During the five-and-a-half-week, intensive summer program, we hosted a total of 349 7th through 9th grade students. Every day, each student received 90 minutes of science and math instruction, 90 minutes of literature and writing, and participated in at least one additional elective. Students also went on field trips – including a visit to the Minnesota State Capitol and tour of St. Thomas University.

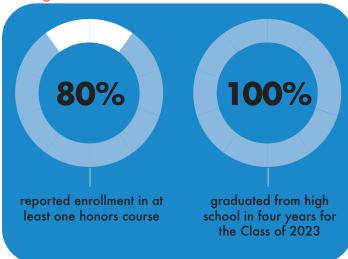
Our Breakthrough Leaders Program (BLP) is for rising 9th grade students to develop their leadership skills and be prepared for high-school. This year, 47 9th grade students were excited to experience the three-night BLP retreat at St. John's University. Upon their return, they took the lead in developing the theme for a week, determining and leading student activities as well as supporting the Teaching Fellows.



Middle School Outcomes:

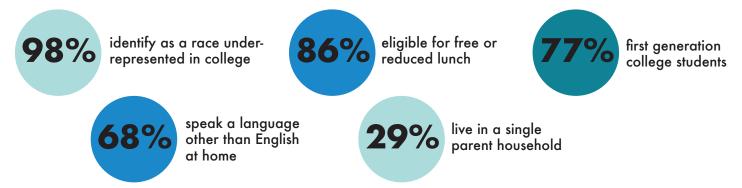


High School Outcomes:



Our School Year Saturday Sessions kicked off in September and we welcomed back our students from the Summer program as well as our rising 10th, 11th, and 12th graders. We have experienced strong attendance at our Saturday sessions. Some topics have included: financial literacy, learning about cultural holidays, career exploration, and a college visit to demystify life after high school.

All students received monthly check-ins with their BTC advisors to check in on grades, electives, extra curriculars, resources needed, goal setting, problem-solving, and mental health. For our 11th and 12th graders, we also hosted ACT preparation and college essay workshops. During the 2022-2023 school year, we served 533 middle and high school students. Our students are required to meet at least two of the following criteria to be eligible to participate:



Teaching Fellows

Breakthrough prepares the next generation of culturally competent educators. In summer 2022, we had 54 Teaching Fellows. Of that cohort:

- 63% people of color (vs. 7.3% teachers of color in MN)
- 20% of our Teaching Fellows were male
- 11% of our Teaching Fellows identify as non-binary
- 17% of Teaching Fellows had at least one-year of previous teaching experience at BTC

Teaching Fellows received over 125 hours of training before the 5.5-week summer session began as well as five days of follow-up training during Wrap-Up Week. Each Teaching Fellow provided more than 175 hours of hands-on classroom instruction to our 7th - 9th grade students.

We want to be leaders in the field for equitable pay for aspiring educators. For summer 2022, our stipend for Teaching Fellows increased and we also piloted an opportunity for free housing as an additional incentive for our Teaching Fellow applicants, especially our international college students and Teaching Fellows from other states. Learning from this experience, we have made some minor changes for summer 2023 as we will offer housing again to reduce the barriers of participation.





BTC CLASS OF 2023

Samuel Acosta Vega, Concordia University Khaliifo Aden, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Khalid Ahmed, St Paul College Lena Ahmed, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Jaqueline Alonso Carrera, St Catherine University Kidus Assefa, University of St Thomas San Aye, Augsburg University Everlyn Balvoa Granda, Augsburg University Abdulhmed Beder, Dougherty Family College Chia Chang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Daniel Chang, Century College Marley Christian Jamila Dauda, Augsburg University Franck Djoumessi, Metropolitan State University Sidra Fathi, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Bilien Habtemaryam Gay Htoo, Augsburg University John Htoo, Winona State University Nebiel Ibrahim, University of St Thomas Nuradin Kawo, Century College Hla Khay, Augsburg University Mue Hsae Klue, St Paul College Saw Ku, Augsburg University Bilise Kumela, University of Wisconsin-River Falls Mu Tu Hsa Lah, St Paul College Allen Lainfiesta, Augsburg University Muajtsim Lee, University of Minnesota-Duluth Jennifer Lor, University of St Thomas Tashera Mitchell, St Paul College Maymuna Mohamed, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Kuyu Mohammed, Bethany Lutheran College Eh Mu, St Mary's University-Winona Polly Murray, Carleton College Angela Nguyen, Stanford University Martin Nguyen, St Paul College Congratulation Peter Nguyen, Loyola University-Chicago Yussuf Omar, St Paul College

Samiya Osmon, Carleton College Mu Sar Paw, Century College

Shem Paw, Bethel University Ywa Paw, College of St Scholastica Angel Ponce, Century College Mariana Preciado Sanchez, University of Minnesota-**Twin Cities** Giselle Quiroga Say Reh, University of St Thomas Eduardo Reynosa, Augsburg University Manny Rivera, Hamline University Christian Roldan, Century College Nevaeh Sanders-McCoy, University of Wisconsin-August Say, Century College Abraham Sisay, Concordia University Coreti Soe, Metropolitan State University Satori Soulisak-Hoang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Samrawit Tesfaye Kristy Thao, Military-Marines Angelyna Thor Saykao, University of St Thomas Christopher Tufino-Vazquez, St Paul College Kyle Vang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Sean Vang, Augsburg University Shenyin Vang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Monaire Vaughn, Waldorf College Yuna Vue, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Merican Xiong, St Paul College Cassandra Ya, Dougherty Family College Anjali Yang Ka Yeng Yang, St Olaf College Terry Yang, College of St. Benedict

Betselot Yigezu, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

BTC CLASS OF 2023 STATS

scholarship awarded to a BTC graduate: \$43,382

91%
costs covered by
Scholarships and
Grants

3.74

average GPA for the BTC Class of 2023

91%

were accepted to college!*

*compared to the 69% state average

◀ Jamila Dauda, '23

Congratulations to the BTC alumni graduating from college or university!

Taw Bee, Augsburg University
Hawi Dinsa, University of Minnesota-Duluth
Alexia Hang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
William Hoang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Kenia Martinez Villa, Augsburg University
Onyinyechi Onuegbu, Grinnell College
D'Lanie Perry, University of Minnesota-Duluth
Mayte Rodriguez Ortiz, College of St Benedict
Deborah Shefa, St Mary's University-Winona
Kayshooly Thao, Gustavus Adolphus College
Kong Pheng Thao, University of St Thomas
Mai Soua Vang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Bee Yang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Ger Yang, Gustavus Adolphus College

TEACHING FELLOW FEATURES



Emani Marks (she/her) is a Breakthrough Twin Cities alumna who keeps showing up for the community. Not only has Emani been a Breakthrough student and Program Intern, she has also returned as a Teaching Fellow three times in the past!

Emani is a student at the University of Evansville in Indiana where she just completed her sophomore year. She was thrilled to be in-person with students again. Because it's the little things, she says— All School Meetings, locker signs, hallways music, and more— that make Breakthrough summers such a fun and special experience.





Emani Marks

"Even though you're only together for about six weeks, the changes you see in the students' confidence, abilties, and interpersonal skills are transformative!"

Hnukusha Vue

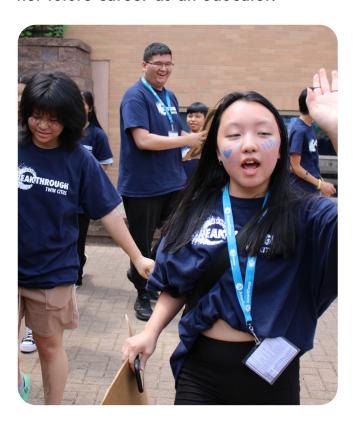


Hnukusha Vue (she/they) went to high school mostly in Minnesota and now lives in the Twin Cities with her extended family. She is a rising junior at St. Olaf College, majoring in Music Education. Her goal after college is to become a music teacher!

Something that Hnukusha finds special about Breakthrough Twin Cities is the relationships – whether that's between the students themselves, the students and Teaching Fellows, or the community as a whole. Those relationships are what drive her to give back and continue investing in the Breakthrough Community.

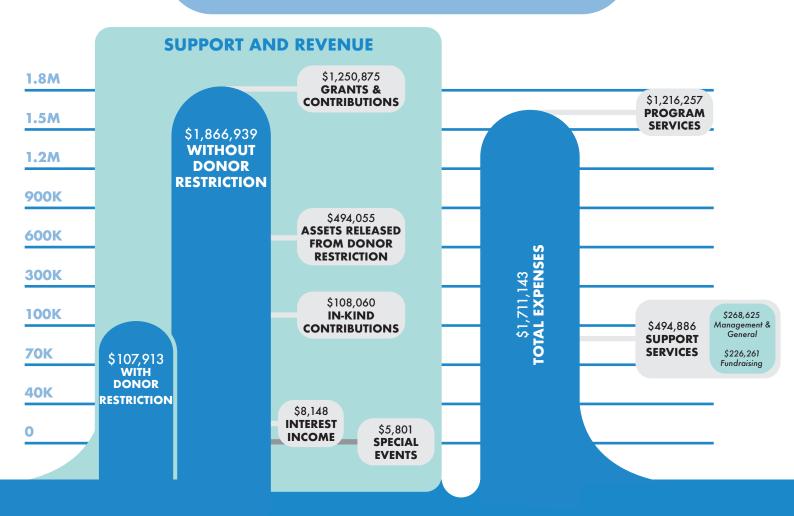


As for what's ahead for Hnukusha, she's working hard to get accepted into the Music Education program at her college while also ensuring that she continues to stay open to opportunities and experiences that will aid in her future career as an educator.



"As a Teaching Fellow, I was told by many- my Instructional Coach, aunt, and coworkers-that the importance should be placed on the life skills that you help foster in the students in class instead of the content that you're teaching. Growing the skill to ask questions, make observations and find patterns is more important for students... than learning about the Pythagorean Theorem."

2022 - 2023 Fiscal Year



CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	Without Donor Restrctions	With Donor Restrctions	Total
Net Assets: Beginning of Year	\$1,084,016	\$670,912	\$1,754,928
Net Assets: End of Year	\$1,239,812	\$284,770	\$1,524,582
TOTAL CHANGE	\$155,796	(\$386,142)	(\$230,346)

Breakthrough Staff

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Lesley Chester
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Andrea Hite Community Engagement Officer

Simon Lee Program Manager Martha Malinski College Counselor

Solina Nhil Program Manager

Wade Peterson College Counselor

Josh Reimnitz
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Cristian Villalobos School Year Program Director

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