

# BREAKTHROUGH MONTESSORI PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



**Breakthrough**  
MONTESSORI

## **TAKOMA CAMPUS**

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Washington DC 20012

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## **PETWORTH CAMPUS**

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**BOARD CHAIR:** Mr. Keith Whitescarver

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## Message from the School

In 2019-20, Breakthrough Montessori served 225 children in PK3-second grade. We offered six primary classrooms and three lower elementary classrooms.

While the 2019-20 school year was indelibly marked by the coronavirus pandemic, it was also defined by the strength of the Breakthrough community. Breakthrough faculty members demonstrated creativity and perseverance as they pivoted to distance learning. They preserved the pillars of Montessori philosophy, including a holistic approach to child development and a personalized education for each student. Throughout the spring, they cultivated classroom community across Zoom, provided one-on-one support to students, held regular conferences with parents, and sparked inquiry and learning in the new online format. Breakthrough families leaned into the community, supporting their students, the faculty, and one another. Families mobilized to ensure everyone had a laptop, groceries, and support to weather the turbulent spring.

We are immensely proud of the work the Breakthrough staff and faculty undertook during a school year unlike any other. We are grateful for our students' families and their steadfast support. We continue to look to our students as a source of light during this challenging time. In the words of Maria Montessori: "Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future... Let us treat them with all the kindness which we would wish to help to develop in them."





# School Description

## Mission Statement

The mission of Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School is to provide families of Washington DC with a fully-implemented, public Montessori program designed to enable children to develop within themselves the power to shape their lives and the world around them.

## School Program

Breakthrough Montessori implements the time-tested Montessori instructional approach, which builds upon the following core beliefs:

- Every child is unique, with individual strengths and weaknesses, learning style, and learning pace. Each stage of their development requires a specific type of environment and learning experience.
- The early years -- birth to age 6 -- are an intense period of formative development with lasting cognitive, social, and emotional impact.
- From ages 6-12 children move into abstract thought and create mental independence while they deepen their social understanding through a strong connection with their peers.

Our early childhood curriculum (ages 3-6 years) includes standards for the following areas of study:

- Language
- Mathematics
- Practical Life
- Sensorial
- Cultural Studies (includes science and social studies)

Our elementary curriculum includes standards for the following areas of study:

- Math
- Language
- Geometry
- Biology
- Geography
- Art
- History
- Music

Our instructional approach is defined by the following characteristics:

***Personalized instruction.*** Instruction at Breakthrough Montessori is differentiated, individualized, and tailored to the specific needs of each student. Children receive lessons individually or in small groups with their teacher. Students move through the curriculum at their own pace, and the presentation of new concepts follows the child's developmental needs, rather than a predetermined timetable. Students receive assignments that vary in complexity according to their ability levels and/or learning styles, and they are allowed to devote different amounts of time to achieve mastery of tasks.

***Self-guided learning.*** Students work independently with materials that enable them to master concepts in language, mathematics, science, etc. Manipulation of these materials satisfies the young child's developmental need to learn by doing. The materials inherently develop independence, concentration, and control of movement while instilling a love of work and a joy of learning. Materials are sequenced progressively, supporting students as they move toward increasingly complex work.

***Observation.*** Teachers carefully observe students, track progress, and invite them to receive new lessons when they are ready. One of the most important aspects of a teacher's work is gathering data and continuously assessing students' performance in order to make appropriate and timely instructional interventions that ensure every child achieves academic success.

***Mixed-age classrooms.*** Breakthrough's classrooms host students in three year cycles. A child begins as a member of the youngest cohort in the room, benefitting from the example set by older children. Over the course of three years, a child builds trusting relationships with teachers and becomes a leader for younger peers. Likewise, because only a third of a classroom changes each year, Breakthrough's learning communities enjoy stability, with teachers getting to know both students and their families well.

Thanks to this instructional model, children in Montessori schools experience deep learning. The method is a response to a universal plea among children: "I want to learn, but help me to do it myself."

At Breakthrough Montessori, we take this instructional model and further increase its efficacy by embedding it within an institutional commitment to development, prevention, and engagement.

***Development.*** We support human development through rigorous and uncompromising application of the Montessori method. Our school is staffed with fully-accredited Montessori teachers who receive ongoing coaching from the director of curriculum and instruction.

***Prevention.*** Because instruction at Breakthrough Montessori is tailored to the individual needs of students, our team is effective at addressing development challenges early.

**Engagement:** Our multifaceted commitment to community is grounded in robust family engagement, which begins with authentic, two-way communication with all Breakthrough families. In addition to monthly family events, parent-teacher conferences, and progress reports, families engage with their child's education by regularly observing the classrooms and hosting their teacher for a home visit that fosters strong school-home communication.



## Family Engagement

Breakthrough seeks to serve not only the whole child, but the whole family. In the 2019-20 school year, Breakthrough organized the following opportunities for families to engage with the school.

- **Family education:** monthly seminars to help parents and guardians learn more about the Montessori model

- **Social:** potlucks and picnics to strengthen our school community
- **Feedback:** regular family surveys; monthly “coffee with leadership” meetings for family members to ask questions and share concerns with school administrators; and “coffee with the coach” meetings for families to dive into pedagogical conversations surrounding Montessori practices
- **Classroom:** parent-teacher conferences, classroom observations, and special events that welcome parents and guardians into their child’s classroom
- **Equity:** guided discussions, guest speakers and monthly reading groups to enable families to explore the topic of equity in education
- **School Home Association:** Breakthrough’s robust and active family organization, which holds regular meetings, fundraisers, social events, and service projects that allow families to connect with one another both within and outside the school.



## COVID-19 Response

Breakthrough Montessori closed on March 12, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. On March 24, the school launched its distance learning program, which included the following components:



- **Synchronous Learning for All Students:** Each weekday, teachers hosted a classwide meeting for 30 to 40 minutes. This synchronous opportunity allowed students to stay connected with their teacher and classmates while receiving academic content and social-emotional support.
- **Tiered Support for Students:** After carefully reviewing student achievement and growth data, Breakthrough organized students into three groups. Students in Group 1 met one-on-one with their teacher once a week; students in Group 2 met with their teacher three times a week; students in Group 3 met with a member of their classroom team five days a week. In addition, elementary teachers hosted small reading groups for all students. Breakthrough administrators and faculty reviewed data regularly to adjust groups as necessary to best support students.
- **Asynchronous Learning Opportunities:** In addition to large group, small group, and individual synchronous learning, Breakthrough provided students with rigorous, individualized academic content through a variety of online platforms. Breakthrough used Seesaw to deliver asynchronous lessons and assign follow-up work. Students in grades K-2 used RAZ Kids to develop their reading fluency. Students in grades 1-2 used Khan Academy to progress in mathematics and practice their skills.
- **Personalized Offline Learning Opportunities:** Each student received a personalized work packet with activities, materials, and extension lessons. Teachers selected activities based on each child's work and progress in the classroom at the time of school closure. The work packet included instructions from the teacher about the sequence, timing, and frequency of different activities. Elementary and kindergarten students also received a composition book for journaling, pencils and an eraser, as well as suggestions for level-appropriate journal activities. This initial work packet provided 6 weeks of activities (assuming 2-4 hours of engagement a day).
- **Regular parent-teacher conferences:** Teachers met with families of students in K-2 each week (teachers met with families of PK students once every two weeks). During conferences, teachers reviewed the student's learning goals, options for follow-up and practice, as well as next steps.

During distance learning, Breakthrough employed the following strategies to track and assess student learning:

- Classroom staff kept a record of what children were working on, what they should work on next, and any additional support needed. Plans for each student were reviewed on a weekly basis.
- Teachers assigned books via RAZ Kids to each student (K-2), per their reading level. Students met one-on-one with teachers weekly for a read aloud. During this time, students read to their teachers from the assigned books. Teachers used this exercise to determine when a student was ready for the next reading level.
- Students (grades 1-2) completed math assignments in Khan Academy. Results were reviewed by the teacher who then determined when a student was ready to move on.
- Students received weekly assignments via Seesaw (at least 5 assignments a week). Students completed and uploaded work by Friday. Teacher reviewed student work to determine the appropriate next assignment.
- Families with students in PK3 and PK4 had a one-on-one meeting with their teacher every other week. Feedback from parents served as the central data to assess PK learning.



# School Performance

## Performance and Progress

In 2019-20, Breakthrough Montessori made notable strides towards achieving its mission to provide families in Washington DC with a fully-implemented, public Montessori program designed to enable children to develop within themselves the power to shape their lives and the world around them. Each of our nine classrooms was led by a certified Montessori teacher and outfitted with a set of Montessori materials that correspond to each area of the curriculum. All classrooms hosted mixed-age groups of students. The instructional day offered long periods of uninterrupted work time for students to move through the curriculum at their own pace. When students became ready for new content, they received lessons individually with their teacher or in small groups. These characteristics are the hallmark of Montessori education, and Breakthrough's ability to implement them with consistency and fidelity points to the school's commitment to the full realization of its mission.

Breakthrough Montessori uses the Public Charter School Board's Performance Management Framework (PMF) to establish and monitor our academic achievement expectations and outcomes. In addition to the PMF, we employ a number of assessment tools to evaluate the progress our school makes towards achieving our mission. Below is a summary of the results of each of these assessment tools.

***Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS):*** CLASS is an observation-based assessment of PK environments that focuses on the quality of teacher-child interactions. CLASS assesses three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Throughout the school year, the director of curriculum and instruction observes Breakthrough classrooms and tracks several indicators of a high quality learning environments, including the indicators identified by CLASS. The director of curriculum and instruction and the director of student support also hold weekly coaching meetings with faculty members to discuss emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support, among other aspects of their practice. In 2019-20, Breakthrough's CLASS assessment was scheduled for the spring. Due to the school closure, we were unable to complete the assessment. Classroom observation notes nonetheless provide data to support Breakthrough's continued improvement in these domains.

***Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD*** TS GOLD is the tool we use to assess the progress of PK3 and PK4 students. This assessment measures growth over time in social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy and mathematics. We conducted TS Gold in September 2019 and January 2020. According to winter data, 89.19% of PK students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics, and 86.49% of PK students meet or exceed expectations in literacy. Due to the pandemic, we did not collect spring TS Gold data.

***Northwest Evaluation Association - Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP)*** NWEA - MAP is an adaptive test that identifies the ceiling of a student's skills in reading and math. In 2019-20, we conducted NWEA MAP for all students in grades K-2 in the fall (September) and winter (January). This data was used to inform literacy instruction and the frequency of additional literacy interventions, chiefly the use of the Orton Gillingham Method, American Reading Company Independent Reading Level Assessment Framework (IRLA), and the Waseca Reading Program. When we transitioned to distance learning, we used winter NWEA MAP data to determine the frequency of each student's one-on-one meetings with teachers and other faculty members. Due to school closure, we were unable to conduct spring testing.

***Essential Elements Rubric*** Each year, Breakthrough Montessori engages in an annual evaluation based on the Essential Elements Rubric of Montessori in the Public Sector. The rubric rates schools in five domains: Montessori Adults, Montessori Learning Environments, Family Engagement, Leadership and Organizational Development, and Assessment. Due to school closure, we were unable to complete our spring assessment using the Essential Elements Rubric. Data collected with the rubric from previous years indicate that the majority of Breakthrough's classrooms are high-functioning Montessori environments.

***Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS)*** The DERS is an environment rating scale designed for environments such as Montessori (and others) which support the development of executive function, linguistic and cultural fluency, and social fluency and emotional flexibility. The DERS measures qualities such as patience and persistence in children, precision and clarity in lessons, and order in the environment. Trained observers use the DERS iPad app to rate 60 research-based environmental attributes over a one hour observation. The DERS allows schools to classify classroom environments as optimal, high functioning, developing or low functioning. In 2019-20, Breakthrough was unable to conduct the DERS due to school closure. Data from the DERS



conducted in previous years show that most classrooms at Breakthrough Montessori are high functioning or optimal.

***Attendance and Re-enrollment*** In addition to assessments, Breakthrough looks at attendance and re-enrollment as indicators of our school's success. In seat attendance through March 13, 2020 was 93.7%. Re-enrollment rates were not validated by the DC Public Charter School Board. Breakthrough's unvalidated re-enrollment calculations show a total re-enrollment for SY19-20 of 75%. Breakthrough unvalidated re-enrollment of eligible students (removing students who left Washington DC from the calculation), is 80%. Re-enrollment at the Petworth campus was significantly lower than re-enrollment at the Takoma campus, suggesting that attrition is, in part, driven by our facility transition (Breakthrough will only operate the Petworth campus through the 2020-21 school year). We anticipate an improvement in re-enrollment once our school community is consolidated at our Takoma campus.



## Unique Accomplishments

During the 2019-20 school year, the Breakthrough playground committee, composed of Breakthrough parents and administrators, finalized the design for our school's playground. Once

built, the playground will be an extension of our classrooms and will uphold the Montessori values of independence and exploration. We plan to convert an old loading dock into a natural playscape that inspires good stewardship of our environment. Children will test their strength and agility by climbing over logs, boulders, stumps, and fallen trees. Plants, shrubs and trees will offer students a natural refuge in the heart of the city. Multi-purpose play equipment and natural materials will inspire open-ended play. While the coronavirus pandemic delayed plans to break ground, we look forward to making this playground a reality for students.

## List of Donors

We are grateful for the families, neighbors, and partners who donated to Breakthrough Montessori in 2019-20. Below is a list of individuals and organizations that made financial and in-kind donations of \$500 or more.

- Jacqueline Cossentino and Keith Whitescarver
- City Blossom
- DC Education Equity
- GenYouth Inc.
- Malgorzata Marmurowicz and Piotr Bakowski
- Maria Burton and Jonathan Skladany
- School Home Association
- Suzanne and Niklas Munck af Rosenschold
- Virginia P. Clagett
- Vivek Swaminathan
- Zachariah Walls

## SY19-20 Data Report

### School Year (SY) 2019-20 Annual Report: Campus Data Report

A note on SY 2019-20: The COVID-19 pandemic caused DC public and public charter schools to transition to remote learning after **March 13, 2020**. Schools were not required to report daily

attendance or discipline events during this initial period of remote learning. Therefore, it is important to note that the data for SY 2019-20 effectively end on March 13, 2020.

Source	Data Point
PCSB	LEA Name: Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School
PCSB	Campus Name: Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School
PCSB	Grades Served: PK3-2nd
PCSB	Overall Audited Enrollment: 225

## Enrollment by grade level according to OSSE's Audited Enrollment Report

Grade	PK3	PK4	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6
Student Count	56	60	40	33	36	0	0	0	0

Grade	7	8	9	10	11	12	Alternative	Adult	SPED*
Student Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*Note: This field is only filled in for St. Coletta Special Education PCS as it is the only charter LEA that exclusively serves students with disabilities.

## Student Data Points

School	Total Number of Instructional Days: 170
PCSB	Suspension Rate: 0.0%
PCSB	Expulsion Rate: 0.00%
PCSB	Instructional Time Lost to Out-of-School Suspensions: 0.00%
PCSB	In-Seat Attendance: 93.7%*
PCSB	Average Daily Attendance:





2020. However, the validated rates that schools will confirm with OSSE during Metric Calculation Confirmation this fall may vary slightly.

- Unvalidated MYW and MYE rates are provided based on examining student movement between 10/6 and 3/13 in SY 2019-20, attempting to mimic the DC School Report Card business rules as closely as possible. However, the validated student mobility rates that schools will confirm with OSSE during Metric Calculation Confirmation this fall may vary slightly.

# Appendix A: Staff Roster

## Administration

Emily Hedin, Executive Director

Hannah Richardson, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Katherine Park, Director of Operations

Allison Jones, Director of Student Support

## Faculty

Sasikala Venkataraman, primary teacher (PK3-PK4)

Grace Lim, primary teacher (PK3-K)

Carolina Gil Jiménez, primary teacher (PK3-K)

Ebony Marshman, primary teacher PK3-K)

Marissa Howser, primary teacher (PK3-K)

Danielle Lazarre, primary teacher (PK3-K)

Johari Malik, elementary teacher (grades 1-2)

Zanso Dalili, elementary teacher (grades 1-2)

Rachel Wilson, elementary teacher (grades 1-2)

Michael Sesay, primary classroom assistant

Hoandi Seibes, primary classroom assistant

Samuel McKinley, primary classroom assistant

Pam Evans, primary classroom assistant

Heba Almostafa, primary classroom assistant

Paola Nunez, primary classroom assistant

Maira Miranda, primary classroom assistant

Shahad Al Samarrai, primary classroom assistant

Jonathan Miot, primary classroom assistant

Rachel Kuchinsky, primary classroom assistant

Jordan Barney, primary classroom assistant

Kevin Kelly, primary classroom assistant

Fadhila Khettab, elementary classroom assistant

Matt Hirsch, elementary classroom assistant

Max Dorsey, elementary classroom assistant

Andrea Solay, floating assistant

## Instructional Support Staff

Ashley Anderson, Montessori Support Specialist

Lauren Williams, Montessori Support Specialist

Di'Andra Price, dedicated aide

Brianna Little, dedicated aide

Miriam Smith, dedicated aide

Phebe Simpson, dedicated aide

Khiilique Eatman, dedicated aide

Derrick Glenn, dedicated aide

## Administrative Support Staff

Meareg Tewolde, Operations Associate

Landy Cervantes, Operations Associate

Genet Lemma, Front Desk Receptionist

Deontae Byrd, Custodian

## Qualifications

- 100% of administrators hold a graduate degree.
- 100% of primary and elementary teachers are certified Montessori educators (having completed a year-long, full-time training course by an institute accredited by either the Association Montessori Internationale or the American Montessori Society).
- 100% of teachers hold a Bachelor's Degree.

- 73% of teachers hold a Master's Degree.
- 75% of classroom assistants hold a Bachelor's Degree
- 100% of managing level instructional support staff hold a Master's Degree
- 100% of faculty, classroom assistants, and instructional support staff participate in professional development and in-service training specific to their role and responsibilities with children.
- Breakthrough faculty dedicated 132 hours to professional development at minimum in SY 2019-20.

## Appendix B: Board Roster

- **David Bagnoli\*** (*Principal, Studio MB*) Trustee
- **Rachel Kimboko\*** (*Child Study Lead, Lee Montessori Public Charter School*) Trustee
- **Christopher Lohse** (*Senior Vice President and Managing Director, Education Practice, Software and Information Industry Association*) Trustee
- **Sara Suchman** (*Acting Executive Director, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector*) Secretary
- **Keith Whitescarver** (*Director of Innovation, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector*) Board Chair
- **Katie Brown\*** (*DC Regional Coordinator, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector*) Trustee
- **Vivek Swaminathan\*** Trustee and Parent Representative
- **Michael Bing\*** Treasurer and Parent Representative
- **Bonnie Gallion\*** Trustee and Parent Representative

(\* DC Resident)

# Appendix C: Unaudited Year-End 2019-20 Financial Statement

Income Statement		Actual	Budget
<b>Revenue</b>			
	State and Local Revenue	4,593,626	4,351,396
	Federal Revenue	130,057	135,919
	Private Grants and Donations	17,976	36,503
	Earned Fees	149,545	326,967
	Donated Revenue	22,382	0
	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>4,913,586</b>	<b>4,850,785</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
	Salaries	2,083,707	2,116,289
	Benefits and Taxes	392,949	419,799
	Staff-Related Costs	26,014	14,573
	Rent	710,551	882,968
	Occupancy Service	184,438	202,034
	Direct Student Expense	538,446	445,663
	Office & Business Expense	324,806	347,121
	Donated Expense	22,382	0
	Contingency	0	30,000
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>4,283,293</b>	<b>4,458,448</b>
<b>Operating Income</b>		<b>630,293</b>	<b>392,337</b>
<b>Extraordinary Expenses</b>			
	Interest	308,013	306,210
	Depreciation and Amortization	296,412	310,365
	Total Extraordinary Expenses	604,425	616,575
<b>Net Income</b>		<b>25,868</b>	<b>(224,238)</b>



## Appendix D: Approved 2020-21 Budget

		<b>SY20-21</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
	State and Local Revenue	5,244,059
	Federal Revenue	195,257
	Private Grants and Donations	15,316
	Earned Fees	34,114
	Donated Revenue	7,424
	Revenue Total	5,496,169
<b>Expenses</b>		
	Salaries	2,718,290
	Benefits and Taxes	495,540
	Staff-Related Costs	20,174
	Rent	716,552
	Occupancy Service	270,902
	Direct Student Expense	481,197
	Office & Business Expense	389,121
	Contingency	42,000
	Donated Expense	7,424
	Expenses Total	5,141,200
<b>NET ORDINARY INCOME</b>		<b>354,969</b>
<b>Extraordinary Expenses</b>		
	Depreciation and Amortization	318,149
	Interest	421,700
	Extraordinary Expenses Total	739,850
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>5,881,050</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>		<b>(384,881)</b>
<b>Cash Flow Adjustments</b>		
	Add Depreciation	318,149
	Operating Fixed Assets	(92,136)
	Other Operating Activities	36,301
	Per-Pupil Adjustments	1
	Facilities Project Adjustments	990,524
	Cash Flow Adjustments Total	1,252,839
<b>CHANGE IN CASH</b>		<b>867,958</b>
Starting Cash Balance		1,703,589
Change In Cash		867,958
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE</b>		<b>2,571,547</b>