

BREAKTHROUGH MONTESSORI PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



**Breakthrough**  
MONTESSORI

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Washington, DC 20012

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**Board Chair:** Mr. Keith Whitescarver

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# Message from the School

In 2020-21, Breakthrough Montessori served 271 children in PK3-third grade. We offered six primary classrooms and five lower elementary classrooms.

Breakthrough began the 2020-21 school year in virtual learning. Despite the challenges, Breakthrough faculty members preserved the pillars of Montessori philosophy, including a holistic approach to child development and a personalized education for each student. Throughout the fall and winter, they cultivated classroom communities 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 year. Breakthrough provided onsite support with distance learning during the fall of 2020 and winter of 2021. In April 2021, we welcomed 68% of our student body back for in-person learning on an adjusted schedule.

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 2020-21 school year, Breakthrough organized the following opportunities for families to engage with the school.

- **Weekly family seminars to support distance learning:** Each week from September 2020 to April 2021, Breakthrough leaders met with parents on Zoom to support families through distance learning. Topics included the preparation of the home learning environment, how

to support a child's literacy development, how to use the distance learning materials supplied by the school, how to support a child's social emotional well-being during school closure, and much more. Simultaneous interpretation in Spanish and ASL was provided during weekly seminars to ensure accessibility. Each seminar was recorded and posted to Breakthrough's website so families could access the content at a time that worked for them.

- **Quarterly family surveys:** Each quarter, Breakthrough circulated a family survey to gauge satisfaction with distance learning and invite feedback on the school's progress towards safe reopening. Survey results helped improve distance learning as well as inform the school's approach to in-person learning.
- **Community meetings on health & safety:** Breakthrough regularly met with families via Zoom to review COVID-19 data from Washington DC, discuss the school's health & safety measures, and hear family feedback.
- **Virtual Classroom:** Families of students in kindergarten through third grade had weekly conferences with their child's teacher during distance learning. Families could also join the teacher on Friday afternoons for "office hours" where the teacher presented the material and activities for the upcoming week.
- **School Home Association:** Breakthrough's robust and active family organization continued to organize regular virtual meetings, social opportunities and volunteer opportunities during distance learning.





# School Performance

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. Due to the pandemic, Breakthrough did not conduct the CLASS assessment in 2020-21.

*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. Due to the pandemic, we did not collect TS Gold data during 2020-21.

PK3 and PK4 students participated in internally-designed assessments that include the following:

- Reading: alphabetic principle (letter sounds), phonemic awareness (ability to blend and segment verbally), reading ability (ability to read CVC words, blending, sentences)
- Math: Ability to count aloud, identification of numerals, 1:1 correspondence, concept of addition, mathematical thinking (ability to solve simple one step word problems).

*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 2020-21, we conducted NWEA MAP in the fall. The results served as baseline data. Seventy-four percent of students scored above the 50th percentile in achievement in math; 83% of students scored above the 50th percentile in achievement in reading. Breakthrough conducted this assessment virtually. Students took the assessment from home while proctored by a faculty member via Zoom. As Breakthrough could not ensure a consistent and equitable testing environment and experience for all students, we recognize that fall NWEA MAP data is somewhat compromised.

*iReady*: iReady is an adaptive test that identifies the ceiling of a student's skills in reading and math. Following Breakthrough's Five Year Charter Review, Breakthrough selected iReady as the externally validated assessment it will use to measure student growth in reading and math. The school conducted iReady for the first time in spring 2021.

In between fall NWEA data and spring iReady data, Breakthrough conducted an internally-designed assessment every quarter for all students PK3 through grade 3. All kindergarten students were evaluated on a number of skills in the following categories of ELA: alphabetic principle, phonological awareness & language comprehension, decoding, sight recognition and sentence writing. All kindergarten students were also evaluated on a number of skills in mathematics, including: number

identification, counting, number-quantity building, shape identification, size, telling time, math facts, word problems, and measurement. All students in grades 1-3 were evaluated on a number of skills in the following categories of ELA: alphabetic principle, phonemic segmentation fluency, decoding, middle sound fluency, and oral reading fluency & comprehension. All students in grades 1-3 were also evaluated on a number of skills in mathematics, including: quantities, comparisons, arithmetic, geometry, measurements, word problems, reading graphs and telling time.

During iReady testing in spring 2021, 76% of Breakthrough students scored at or above grade level for reading, and 65% of students scored at or above grade level for mathematics.

**PARCC** Breakthrough planned to conduct PARCC with students in grade 3 during spring of 2021. While the assessment was cancelled due to the pandemic, Breakthrough conducted a practice assessment so that children and faculty could gain familiarity and comfort with the test.

**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 the pandemic, 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 2020-21, 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. According to data certified as part of OSSE Metric Calculation process, In Seat Attendance for SY20-21 was 81.36%. Re-enrollment for SY20-21 was 84.95%.

***Leadership Retention*** Per the conditions set forth by DC Public Charter School Board during the school's Five Year Review, Breakthrough Montessori designed a leadership retention plan during SY21-22. This year was submitted to the DC Public Charter School and was approved on March 8, 2022. The plan articulates Breakthrough's strategy for comprehensive staff development and retention, including leadership. Leadership development must be embedded within a comprehensive strategy for developing the talent pipeline for all roles necessary to operate a high-fidelity, high-quality public Montessori program. Likewise, leadership retention is inextricably linked to overall staff satisfaction and retention.

The plan articulates the following strategies for leadership retention:

- Professional development for leadership team
- Professional development for administrative team
- Leadership coaching
- Leadership review
- Flexibility and autonomy

At the time of writing (during SY21-22), Breakthrough has made progress on this plan through the following activities:

- Professional development in fund development for the executive director
- Coaching for the executive director and director of curriculum & instruction
- Plans underway for a 360 review of the executive director by the Board of Trustees



# Unique Accomplishments

During the 2020-21 school year, the DC Public Charter School Board conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. Breakthrough was selected to undergo a QSR in fall 2020 because the school was eligible for its five-year charter review. A QSR team conducted a virtual site review of Breakthrough Montessori from September 28, 2020 to October 9, 2020. The QSR team observed strong evidence that Breakthrough Montessori is achieving its mission. The team saw clear evidence of the school upholding Montessori principles. Teachers and students exhibited grace and courtesy, consistently treating each other with respect. The team also observed ample opportunities for exploration with students freely expressing their ideas and asking questions. Notably, the language and materials of the Montessori program were observed to have been successfully adapted to the remote setting.

# List of Donors

- Albertsons Companies Foundation
- Niko and Efythmia Alexiou
- Damiana Astudillo and Paul Montesano
- Breakthrough Montessori School Home Association
- Church of the Advent
- Angie and David De Groot
- Gartner, Inc. through the Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Suzanne and Niklas Munck af Rosenschold
- Vivek Swaminathan
- Keith Whitescarver

## SY20-21 Data Report

Source	Data Point
PCSB	LEA Name: Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School
PCSB	Campus Name: Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School
PCSB	Grades Served: PK3-3rd
PCSB	Overall Audited Enrollment: 271

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

Grade	PK3	PK4	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6
Student Count	55	59	47	42	38	30	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: 180
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: 75.9%*
PCSB	Average Daily Attendance: The SRA requires annual reports to include a school's average daily membership. To meet this requirement, PCSB will provide following verified data points: (1) audited enrollment; (2) mid-year withdrawals; and (3) mid-year entries.
PCSB	Midyear Withdrawals: 3.3% (9 students)*
PCSB	Midyear Entries: 0.0% (0 students)*
PCSB	Promotion Rate (LEA): 98.3%
PCSB (SY19-20)	College Acceptance Rate: Not Applicable
PCSB (SY19-20)	College Admission Test Score: Not Applicable
PCSB (SY19-20)	Graduation Rate: Not Applicable





# 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

### Primary Guides

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)  
Ashley Kareithi, primary teacher (PK3-K)

### Elementary Guides

Alex Guyton, elementary teacher (grades 1-3)  
Zanso Dalili, elementary teacher (grades 1-3)  
Rachel Wilson, elementary teacher (grades 1-3)  
Pradipa Lenora, elementary teacher (grades 1-3)  
Evan Cook, elementary teacher (grades 1-3)

### Assistants

Michael Sesay, primary classroom assistant  
Heba Almostafa, primary classroom assistant  
Hoandi Seibes, primary classroom assistant  
Samuel McKinley, primary classroom assistant  
Miriam Smith, 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/elementary classroom assistant  
Jordan Barney, primary classroom assistant  
Kai Stuckey, elementary classroom assistant  
Fadhila Khettab, elementary classroom assistant  
Matt Hirsch, elementary classroom assistant  
Sarah Magno, elementary classroom assistant  
Menen Stroud, elementary classroom assistant  
Olivia Smith, elementary classroom assistant  
Andrea Solay, floating assistant

## Instructional & Student Support Staff

Ashley Anderson, Special Education Coordinator  
Terrill Coles, Social Worker  
Dustin Tamsen, Literacy Specialist  
Lauren Williams, Montessori Support Specialist  
Di'Andra Price, Montessori Support Specialist  
Brianna Little, dedicated aide  
Phebe Simpson, dedicated aide  
Khiilique Eatman, dedicated aide  
Pam Evans, dedicated aide  
Chiquita Carpenter, dedicated aide  
Judith Stern, RBT

## Administrative Support Staff

Landy Cervantes, Operations Associate  
José Guevara, Operations Associate  
Deontae Byrd, Custodian  
Anthony Toyos, Family Technology Assistant

## 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.
- 54% of teachers hold a Master's Degree.
- 83% 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 130 hours to professional development at minimum in SY 2020-21.

# 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*)
- **Vivek Swaminathan\*** Trustee and Parent Representative
- **Michael Bing\*** Treasurer and Parent Representative
- **Emily Raskin\*** Trustee and Parent Representative

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

Income Statement	6/30/2021
<b>Revenue</b>	
State and Local Revenue	5,636,120
Federal Revenue	747,643
Private Grants and Donations	26,019
Earned Fees	4,679
Donated Revenue	0
Total Revenue	6,414,461
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries	2,670,208
Benefits and Taxes	504,240
Contracted Staff	13,425
Staff-Related Costs	8,755
Rent	773,811
Occupancy Service	145,703
Direct Student Expense	665,335
Office & Business Expense	359,723
Donated Expense	0
Contingency	0
Total Expenses	5,141,200
<b>Operating Income</b>	<b>1,273,261</b>
<b>Extraordinary Expenses</b>	
Interest	307,353
Depreciation and Amortization	318,319
Total Extraordinary Expenses	625,672
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>647,589</b>

# Appendix D: Approved 2020-21 Budget

<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>
<b>Starting Cash Balance</b>		1,703,589
<b>Change In Cash</b>		867,958
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE</b>		<b>2,571,547</b>