

# THE EDUCATOR

at Breakthrough

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CEO NOTE

Dear Breakthrough Team,

February marks the time each year when we pause to honor and celebrate the history, contributions, and enduring impact of African Americans in the United States. Black leaders, nationally and here in Cleveland, have shaped our educational systems, fueled movements for justice, and advanced the ongoing pursuit of equity in our communities.

This month, we are reflecting on what it means to communicate honestly and openly. Honest communication begins with acknowledging our current reality. It requires us to face where we are with clarity, to hold a joyful and ambitious vision for what is possible, and to commit to the actions necessary to build something better.

At Breakthrough, that means taking a hard look at our progress—what we've accomplished, where we've fallen short, and how we will continue building a stronger future for our scholars. It means engaging in deep, authentic conversations with scholars and families about where they are today and what it will take to ensure meaningful growth and achievement through the remainder of the academic year.

I couldn't be prouder of the work our team is doing across our communities and the legacy we are helping to carry forward. The commitment to educational excellence, activism, and opportunity for underserved students, particularly Black students in Cleveland, did not begin with Breakthrough. But we are part of that legacy, and our work each day strengthens it.

Thank you for your dedication, your honesty, and your belief in what's possible. Let's continue to ensure that the legacy of excellence lives on through our actions and our impact.

With gratitude,  
**Andrew McRae** | Chief Executive Officer



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ON THE GROUND

# Operations Corner

## Security Updates

We'd like to take a moment to recognize the recent retirement of Director of Safety and Security, Ralph Spotts.



**As Dennis Hill steps into his new role as Director of Safety and Security, he reflects:**

"I am deeply appreciative of the guidance and mentoring Ralph provided. Ralph leaves a lasting legacy and big shoes to fill. Thank you for the opportunity to work at BPS as the first Security Manager and for the confidence to leave your department under my tutelage."

Breakthrough was the incredibly fortunate recipient of Ralph Spotts' time, treasure, and talent for the ten years. He created a lasting legacy at Breakthrough - from establishing the security function, building out a professional network of guards across campuses, providing unwavering support to our teams, and spending his free time mentoring and helping our students grow through athletics. Ralph's impact on our scholars and staff was immeasurable. Ralph approached his work with the significance it requires, but never took himself too seriously. His commitment to our kids, willingness to engage in challenging situations, tackle problems head-on, speak his mind candidly, and approach his work with a sense of humor made him a critical member of the BPS team.

**-Matt Sattler, COO**



## Congratulations, Carlton Garner!

After more than a decade of service as a security officer, Carlton Garner has been promoted to the role of Manager, Safety and Security.

Carlton brings vast knowledge of school safety protocols and community connections to the role. He can often be found coaching our basketball teams (his passion), mentoring our security officers, and engaging with our families and staff.

Welcome to the Safety and Security management team. We look forward to ascending higher heights with you!

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## Welcome to the team, Jasmine Rogers and Jevion Hairston!

BPS has two new additions to the Safety and Security team, both with previous ties to our school community.

Jevion Hairston joins the team at Breakthrough Southeast. Jevion is a 2019 graduate of Woodland Hills and a 2023 graduate of Cleveland Saint Ignatius High School. He aspires to become a teacher. He epitomizes one of our core principles: We support our students from kindergarten through career.



Jasmine Rogers joins the campus team at Woodland Hills. Jasmine has children who graduated from Woodland Hills, and she was an active member of the school community as a parent.

Please help me in welcoming them both to the BPS security team!



## Super Bowl Tailgate with Aramark

In anticipation of the Super Bowl, Aramark brought the tailgate to campus with a Gameday Grill theme!

Scholars enjoyed concession-style favorites like mozzarella sticks, chicken tenders, and waffle fries, plus touchdown turkey sandwiches, sideline salad, gridiron grapes, and stadium slushies! Even the paperware got into the spirit, and staff showed their team pride by rocking NFL-themed gear! (See photos right)

## Policy Update

On January 28, 2026, our board members voted to update our policies, including revisions to our existing guidelines. You can review the latest changes by [clicking here](https://bit.ly/4qVKoOb). (<https://bit.ly/4qVKoOb>). As a reminder, you can access all of our policies on the InfoHub's Operations Resources page.





**CYBER SMART**

# IT Corner

## CYBER SMART USER OF THE MONTH

### Andrew McRae

**Andrew successfully identified and reported 13 actual phishing attempts.**

While that number is impressive on its own, it's the ripple effect of his actions that truly saved the day.

**FROM 13 REPORTS TO 132 SAVES** ❤️

Because Andrew reported these threats immediately, the Knowbe4 software was able to identify the digital signature of the attack. This allowed it to perform a proactive search and removal of 132 identical malicious emails from BPS/FOB inboxes before they were ever opened.

## REMINDERS

### **DON'T CLICK LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS.**

#### **Use the "Orange Hook"**

Use the KnowBe4 Phish Alert button in your Gmail to report the message.

#### **Let IT Handle It**

Reporting the email allows our team to safely scan the contents and block the sender for the entire organization.

## UPDATE YOUR DUO MOBILE APP

To ensure the continued security of our systems, Duo has released **new security enhancements** that are now going into effect. These updates are designed to stay ahead of evolving digital threats and provide a smoother, more secure authentication experience.

**What you need to do:** Please visit the Apple App Store or Google Play Store on your mobile device as soon as possible to ensure you are running the latest version of the **Duo Mobile** application.

**Important:** Failure to update your application may result in service disruptions or the inability to log in to your computer. Keeping your app current is the easiest way to avoid any access denied messages during your workday.



## GOOGLE PASSWORD RESET

As a reminder, to maintain account security, Google passwords are required to be updated every six months. Since the majority of users last refreshed their credentials in August, you should expect an automated prompt to reset your password starting next month. Updating your password regularly is a key step in protecting your data.



BY THE NUMBERS

# Finance Corner

## FY27 BUDGET PHILOSOPHY & DEVELOPMENT

This month, we focused on how our financial strategy supports both day-to-day stability and long-term mission impact.

### Where we are now

We are in a solid financial position. Our current network reserves and investment returns provide stability for ongoing operations and give us flexibility to make targeted, high-impact investments that strengthen outcomes for scholars.

### How we make budget decisions

Our budget process is mission-driven. We aim to be disciplined about core operating needs while also being intentional about where additional dollars can accelerate academic impact. The central question is: how do we deploy resources for the greatest return for students and communities?

### What shapes our financial planning

Public funding rules and cash flow realities influence how we plan and manage resources across the network. This includes navigating restrictions tied to public dollars, managing the timing of revenue and expenses, and monitoring cash reserves to respond to needs while protecting long-term sustainability.

### Where dollars go: Across the network, the largest investment remains in people.

- **Schools:** Staffing is the largest portion of school budgets, alongside academic services and supplies, and network supports that strengthen student experience and school operations.
- **Home Office:** Spending is also primarily staffing, with additional investment in operational services and outsourced functions that support schools and improve efficiency.

### Looking ahead

We will continue moving through the FY27 planning cycle by refining budget priorities, reviewing and monitoring school budgets, and sharing updates as decisions are finalized!



# Family Experience

## CEO FAMILY FOCUS GROUPS: ELEVATING FAMILY VOICE ACROSS ALL CAMPUSES

Throughout February, our CEO visited all five campuses to host Family Focus Groups as part of our commitment to strengthening trust, communication, and partnership with families across Breakthrough Public Schools.

These sessions created space for families to share authentic feedback, reflect on their experiences, and help inform priorities for the remainder of the 2025–2026 school year and beyond.

Across campuses, families consistently shared that our schools feel welcoming and community-oriented, and they expressed strong confidence in campus leadership. At the same time, we heard important opportunities for growth, particularly in refining security and safety practices (including classroom management) and ensuring greater consistency in communication, information sharing, and classroom experiences.

Importantly, families shared that their belief in our leadership and the strengths of our schools keep them connected and invested in our mission. In the coming months, we will begin sharing how these reflections are shaping our FY27 planning and long-term strategic priorities as we continue to cultivate belonging — every scholar, every family, every day.

**THE FAMILY CONNECTION** 

**Read the February Family Connection Newsletter!**



TEAM & TALENT

# People Corner

## MEET THE PEOPLE TEAM!

The People Team has completed a strategic realignment to optimize service delivery to you... our employees! Under our new structure, roles have been rescoped to better support our employees and achieve our network goals.

Our team is organized into three departments - Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, and People Operations - designed to optimize the employee lifecycle and ensure a seamless, high-quality experience for every employee from their initial onboarding to retirement.

Please visit the People Team website on the InfoHub to [“Meet the People Team”](#) and learn more about how we are here to serve you!

You can contact us for assistance by submitting a JitBit - we look forward to hearing from you!

## IMPORTANT: LICENSE RENEWAL & RETURN OFFERS

If your license expires this year, please note that license renewal is required before return offer letters can be issued. Requirements vary by license type—please review your category below:

### SUBSTITUTE & AIDE LICENSES

Renewal is required prior to receiving your return offer. We recommend renewing now to ensure you stay aligned with our spring timelines.

### PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

The LPDC has already signed off on approved licenses for the year. If you have not yet submitted your Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), please contact your [campus reps](#) and [submit it here](#) to avoid delays in your renewal.

### RESIDENT EDUCATOR LICENSES

Because end-of-year sign-offs are not available until later this spring, you will be able to apply to advance your license once program criteria are entered in April or May.

Note: Please double-check your expiration dates soon to ensure a smooth transition into the next school year!

## RETIREMENT 101: UNDERSTANDING YOUR PENSION & SAVINGS OPTIONS LUNCH & LEARN

Join The People Operations Team, with special guests from Equitable, for an upcoming Retirement Planning Lunch & Learn to better understand your retirement benefits and savings options. We'll provide a helpful overview of your retirement resources, update you on recent legislation, and answer common questions to help you feel more confident about planning for the future.

### Home Office Lunch & Learn

 March 3rd

 12:00 PM – 12:45 PM

 In Person (Home Office Cafe)

 Lunch will be provided by Equitable

### Virtual Lunch & Learn

 March 5th

 11:30 AM – 12:15 PM

 Hosted online for your convenience

Whether you're early in your career or approaching retirement, these sessions are designed to provide valuable insights for everyone. Calendar invites will be sent out in the coming days.

**We hope you can join us!**

## STAFF INTENT-TO-RETURN SURVEY RESULTS

Thank you for participating in our annual school-based Staff Intent-to-Return Survey! With a 96% participation rate, your engagement and voice are clearly strong across our network.

Here's a quick snapshot of the results (1 = low likelihood of returning; 5 = high likelihood):

Average  
intent-  
to-return

**4.1**

**81%**

plan to remain in  
their current role at  
their current campus

**13%**

are seeking  
opportunities outside  
of Breakthrough

School  
leadership  
average

**4.5**

We're encouraged that staff across campuses continue to express strong alignment with our mission and a deep commitment to our scholars.

You also highlighted important areas for growth, including classroom autonomy, differentiated professional development, increased prep time, and support with managing student behavior. Your feedback in these areas is critical and will inform next year's planning.

In the coming weeks, school leaders will follow up based on individual feedback. If you have questions about your role or next year, please connect directly with your principal or coach.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our scholars and to one another.  
We are grateful for you!



## CORE VALUES IN ACTION

In each issue of the Educator, we're celebrating those in our community who embody our core value of the month!

# We Communicate Openly and Honestly

*We operate with transparent integrity, even when sharing uncomfortable truths, because we know that together we can forge a new path forward.*

### HOME OFFICE

*Dennis Hill*

Director of Safety & Security

Dennis consistently models what it means to communicate openly and honestly. He advocates effectively, names challenges directly, and doesn't shy away from difficult realities. At the same time, he approaches conversations with thoughtfulness and collaboration, ensuring that challenges lead to productive solutions. His clarity and candor help move our work forward.

### SOUTHEAST

*Karen Walker*

1st Grade Teacher

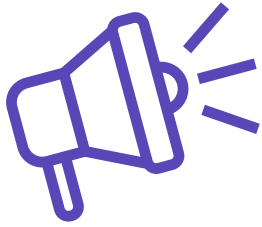
Karen lives this value through consistent, caring communication with families. She keeps families informed about classroom incentives, reaches out proactively when a scholar is absent, and partners with families every step of the way. Karen approaches each family with empathy and a motherly care, honoring their unique experiences. Even when sharing uncomfortable truths, families stay engaged and trusting because they know Karen communicates with honesty, compassion, and their child's best interest at heart.

### WILLARD

*Kori Roth*

ENL Teacher

Kori consistently demonstrates the core value of communicating openly and honestly. She approaches her work with transparent integrity, naming both strengths and areas of opportunity within the ENL program with clarity and professionalism. Even when conversations are uncomfortable, she remains matter-of-fact and solutions-oriented, always grounding her feedback in what will best serve students whose first language is not English. Her willingness to speak candidly, paired with her commitment to high-quality instruction, helps the team move forward thoughtfully and collectively toward stronger outcomes for multilingual learners.



# Breakthrough Shoutouts!

## Shoutout to George Kemmett!

Shout out to George Kemmett for his incredible work with the LPDC! From tackling years of backlogged filing to guiding colleagues through their professional licensure steps, George has been a powerhouse of productivity. He brings both structure and heart to everything he does at Midtown. We're so lucky to have you, George!

## Shoutout to Nicole Finley!

I want to recognize Nicole for the thoughtful coordination and care she brought to scheduling and facilitating our Family Focus Groups across all five campuses.

Because of her behind-the-scenes leadership, I was able to be fully present — listening and learning directly from our families. These conversations meant a great deal to me and to our future as a network, and Nicole made them possible. Thank you, Nicole, for strengthening family voice and helping create spaces where our community feels heard.

[SUBMIT A SHOUTOUT](#)





ONE-STOP SHOP FOR ALL THINGS  
BREAKTHROUGH

Share with us! Submit anything relevant to BPS and  
our network to The Educator, your input matters!

SUBMIT TO THE EDUCATOR



**BREAKTHROUGH**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

