

## **Breakthrough Collaborative Reviews**

(Available in Robertson Connect)

De'Ivyion Drew (2022)

I worked with Breakthrough Collaborative New Orleans at the Isadore Newman Location. As a Teaching Fellow, I was assigned a grade and subject to teach, 8th grade Literature, and a corresponding Instructional Coach for that subject. There is a multitude of meetings involving professional development and teacher effectiveness, as well as, songs and chant practices for the Breakthrough students. The average work day lasted from arrival at 6:45 am to departure after meetings at 6:00pm. Breakthrough is a synthesis of academic and summer camp organization and as some one who does not plan to teach professionally, I enjoyed the experience overall.

Bring snacks for yourself and the kids. This job is among the most demanding and rigorous of the opportunity offered, so find your pace early and stick to it, don't compare yourself to other teaching fellows who desire to become a teacher after college. LISTEN and CONNECT with your kids before teaching them, this will help them engage with your class and give their all. Teaching is more about the connections that students can make with what you teach than memorizing material, so be adaptable. Lesson Planning can be very frustrating but the reward comes when students can fully comprehend and explain to others a taught topic versus just rote memory that will disappear in a month. Invest in intentional decorations for your classroom, as well as, gift/incentives for the kids to perform well. Contact me for additional advice about Breakthrough New Orleans or how to navigate New Orleans as a city.

Montana Lee (2022)

I worked at Breakthrough Collaborative New Orleans as an eighth grade math teacher. In addition to planning, teaching, and tracking two math classes, I taught Local Government and Introduction to Engineering electives. When I wasn't teaching, I was spending time with the students at meal times and recess. I was also a member of the culture committee that planned assemblies and fun events for the students on a weekly basis.

I would recommend Breakthrough to anyone who loves kids, is interested in education, or wants a job with a lot of structure and little downtime. The job is definitely not the best fit for everyone, as the culture of Breakthrough is intense and demanding. However, even if teaching isn't your passion, the students make everyday worth it. I learned so much from just talking to and spending time with the Breakthrough kids, and I will never forget the relationships I built with them. Breakthrough is also one of the few jobs where your coworkers are mostly other college students, and it's really beneficial to get to know them.

Patrick Clinch (2021)

My summer was an incredible experience of discovery. I discovered a great deal about the very unique city of New Orleans and a great deal about myself. I had a position as a teaching fellow at Breakthrough New Orleans. I was teaching 6th grade science to kids who were often from difficult situations. The teaching part of my summer was incredibly challenging but deeply

rewarding. I had to develop lesson plans and present information while also working to provide a good summer experience for my kids and an environment where they could feel at home. I often ran into challenges with kids who had deep difficulty in trusting me, kids who had unaddressed emotional problems and kids who simply did not want to learn. Most of the time, however, I was able to push through these challenges and feel as though my kids truly were getting something out of my class, but sometimes the results of my work were not so clear. What was clear, however, was the impression my kids made on me. I will always remember them and they will likely shape my future self in ways I cannot yet see. I was also glad to be working in the city of New Orleans with its music, food and singular character. I fell in love with many places that I was happy to discover along with my wonderful friends that I experienced this summer with. Preservation Hall, Camellia Grill, Audubon Park. All these places will forever hold a place in my heart. I am grateful for this challenging and fulfilling experience and for the amazing people I got to experience it with.

My advice for other scholars is two-fold. First, do not expect to be incredible at your job immediately. That is not the point. Allow yourself to fail many times and you will learn a great deal. Also, explore! Wherever you may be you are surrounded by incredible things but you have to take the initiative to find them and experience them (you're gonna be tired but don't waste any time!).

Ben Keegan (2021)

My Community Summer experience was an fantastic journey that I'm never going to forget. Working at Breakthrough, on a day-to-day basis I taught two 7th Grade Math classes and an elective short course, all to very capable kids from disadvantaged communities or difficult home situations. Teaching was difficult at times - making lesson plans was tiring and it was even more tiring to see those lesson plans fall apart when applied to the real world class setting. Different kids had different paces; some would finish all of the work you had planned while others were still stuck on the first question. I had a kid who just didn't want to do anything on Fridays; some kids didn't ever want to do work. Addressing these bumps in the road proved to be a challenge, but embracing it by connecting with these kids as people, not just students, allowed me to grow in ways I didn't imagine would happen over community summer. I feel that I grew a lot and learned a lot from these kids, some of whose life experiences far surpassed their years. In general, just being around the kids and getting to know them on a personal level made it so worthwhile.

Despite all that happened in work, the main two reasons I will never forget Community Summer are New Orleans and my fellow Robbies. I fell in love with New Orleans - the spontaneous jazz parades that would pop up in the French Quarter, the fact that every single building had its own different sense of character, how friendly the people were, Dat Dog Trivia Tuesdays, Preservation Hall, the JCC, The Swamp, Bearcat brunches, Soniat Sing-Alongs. Work was great, but my summer experience was so much more, and living in a city like New Orleans and becoming so close to the other scholars was what made it such an incredible adventure. I am so happy with how my summer went and I know that I will always be longing to relive it.

Breakthrough is a challenge, but the kids are what make it all worthwhile, so get to know them on a more personal level, and ask them about their hobbies and interests etc. You'll find that by doing this, they open up to you more and are more willing to learn from you. I found that with a lot of the other teachers, if the kids didn't like them, they would just switch off. Also, remember that you are not expected to be an incredible middle school teacher from day 1, or even by the end of summer for that matter. You are getting thrown in at the deep end teaching 3 classes, so expect to struggle, but embrace it as a great opportunity to learn and grow as a teacher. Outside of work, don't be lazy! Even if you consider yourself to be the lazy type (which I did before community summer), under no circumstances should you be doing nothing with your weekends. New Orleans has such a rich culture of music, food, and sights, so make sure to get out there and try to see and do as much as you can, because 8 weeks goes by so quickly!

Sydney Adams (2020)

Sydney Adams, Becca Sullenger, Brooke Porter (2020)

Brock Schoenwald (2020)

I taught 8th grade science to high achieving but disadvantaged students. They came from a background that included things like living below the poverty line, qualifying for reduced lunch, being a potential first generation college student, and a person of color. My job included modifying lesson plans, preparing materials for class, conducting two classes of 8th grade science, and grading papers. It further included creating and running two elective courses for students of all grades, mentoring kids in an advisory group, and interacting with the students during breakfast, lunch, and recess. It is much more than just teaching a single subject. Breakthrough is a mix between regular school and a summer camp.

Be prepared for long days. This job takes a lot of energy (a lot more than I thought), but it is well worth it. You are on your feet and moving all day. It will give you an insight like no other to what teachers go through and education inequality in general, two things that I now greatly appreciate. You will also be able to meet a lot of other college students from all over the country that you'll be working very closely with. In terms of New Orleans, make sure to get out and explore. The city has such a rich and unique history that there is always something to do. There are plenty of good restaurants and cool areas to explore other than the French Quarter, such as City Park, the Bayou, and Uptown where you will stay. Magazine St is a great street with restaurants and stores that is very close. Go on a Swamp Tour and see what Louisiana is outside of New Orleans, because it is very different and don't miss out on the WW2 museum. Overall, the best advice we received was from the locals we worked with. Most of them know the city inside and out and would give us the best recommendations.

Henry Feng (2019)

Summer '16 I worked at Breakthrough Collaborative in New Orleans, Louisiana. During my time there, I taught Chemistry to middle school children who were "high risk, high potential". However, that's a pretty big simplification, because Breakthrough really is a complete package. Breakthrough is a family, not only of teachers, but of students and their parents, the staff, and the coaches. BT focuses on non-conventional teaching methods, incorporating a lot of active

participation and artistic performance. A lot of the day is dedicated to reflecting, extra-curricula activities, planning etc. so teaching only takes roughly 2 and a half hours. There is homeroom and recess too, opportunities for furthering relationships with students, and short courses, which are based on personal interests. For example, I taught one on "explosive chemistry". There is a high time and intensity requirement, and I typically worked 7AM-6PM. Outside of Breakthrough, New Orleans is an extremely fun place to be, and proximity to Houston and Mississippi makes it a great summer location.

Breakthrough definitely challenges you in all aspects. Culturally, interacting with kids whose backgrounds differ completely to mine, and with the continued racial and social issues in America, its a great place to listen and learn, and also a place where you can become a truly positive role model. Be aware that the kids are very impressionable, and try listen before presuming things about them. Its a hard job but definitely worth doing. New Orleans is again a fantastic place to be albeit a little hot in the summer. There is fantastic food locally and downtown, and the house is very accessible by public transport. Some places to check out are: Frenchmen's St, Ye Olde College Inn, NOMA, Mississippi Day Tour, the New Orleans Farmer's Market.

Gentry Fitch (2019)

Breakthrough New Orleans is an organization that brings together talented youth from across New Orleans and college students from across the country to create an rigorous learning environment for the students' academic acceleration. Throughout the summer, among many other administration tasks, you will develop class curriculums and lesson plans, exercise group leadership skills, and gain new insights on community and relationship building.

- Find time for yourself, reflect and decompress
- But at the same time spend as much time learning about all of the people around you. It's called community summer for a reason
- Taste the city but don't forget to workout

Matthew Kaplan (2019)

As a Breakthrough Teaching Fellow I had the opportunity to plan and teach 7th grade writing. I also co-taught elective courses and mentored a group of Breakthrough students. Breakthrough is a fun, fast-paced learning community, where students have fun while they learn! I'd recommend teaching at Breakthrough without hesitation. It changed my life.

Be intentional about creating time for your house to bond. Our house had family dinners 3-4 times a week, which allowed us to talk about our weeks, bond, and reflect. But also don't hesitate to advocate for yourself if you need time to decompress. Sometimes balancing work and house life can be difficult, so reach out to others if you need support and prioritize self-care.

Mia King (2019)

I worked as a teaching fellow under Breakthrough Collaborative in New Orleans, Louisiana. I taught 8th grade writing as well as several elective courses of my choosing and design. The

topics of these elective courses included computer coding, debating current events, and personal identity in the scope of modern-day diversity & inclusion issues. I taught core classes two periods a day and electives one period per day. I was also responsible for an advisory with two other teachers. We met with that group twice a day. An Average day meant being at the school around 7:15 and staying until about 5 O'clock. I would then take homework or papers home to grade, and lesson plans to complete, before doing it all over again the next day.

I had some issues with the Breakthrough administrators this summer which you can ask me more about, but overall I believe SO much in the program and what they stand for. The kids were a handful in the best way. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Breakthrough and in New Orleans. I have a long long list of things to do, but above all, you must visit the following places:

- The Fly (beautiful at sunset)
- Audubon Park (nice running paths/ fields to toss a frisbee)
- Frenchman Street (there's an art market at night)
- CREOLE CREAMERY (best ice cream in the world)
- Surrey's (great brunch)
- Chicken & Watermelon (self-explanatory)
- Willie's Chicken Shack (see above)
- Dat Dog (they put a bunch of stuff on delicious french bread buns)
- Toast (BRUNCH TO DIE FOR)

The streetcar will be your best friend!