

Press Release

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Summer Principals Academy Alumni Raises \$2 Million for Public Charter School

Teachers College Summer Principals Academy 2019 Alumni Darren Ramalho to launch new public charter school in Perry County, Alabama.

Press Conference: Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 3:30 CST via Zoom Webinar. [Join webinar here.](#)

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MARION, AL – November 2020 – After receiving the highest external evaluation score of the 2020 cycle, Mr. Darren Ramalho, a 2019 Alumni of Summer Principals Academy (SPA) at Teachers College Columbia University, received notice that his application for Breakthrough Charter School had been approved by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission and was on its way to becoming a reality. After transitioning out of the classroom in 2019, Ramalho fundraised nearly two million dollars for his dream of improving Alabama public schools with support from numerous local organizations in Perry County.

With only two public K-12 schools in Perry County and only four charter schools across the state, Breakthrough Charter School will ensure that all children have access to high-quality public education in Alabama. As a student in the 2019 Cohort of SPA New Orleans, it became evident that Ramalho's commitment to promoting equity and excellence in education and using innovative and transformative education leadership practices would guide him to unmatched success as an education leader in his community. The Faculty, Administration, Alumni and current students of SPA are overjoyed for Ramalho and Breakthrough Charter School. "Darren has taken some of the best elements of what he learned in SPA and created a school for a community that will greatly benefit from its implementation," said SPA Director Dr. Brian K. Perkins. Dr. Perkins also served as Ramalho's coach during his internship in SPA.

Opening for the 2021-2022 academic year, Breakthrough Charter School will be ready to prepare students in Perry County, AL, for success as citizens and leaders by providing a rigorous, service-oriented, and project-based public education that supports the social-emotional development of each child. "Not only does Darren show great promise and have crystal clear visions for the betterment of the Perry County community, but he also has enlisted a team of experienced individuals and organizations to help actualize his vision," said Tyler Barnett, New Schools for Alabama Executive Director. Ramalho's vision for Breakthrough Charter School is to become the leading education option for students in Perry County and to produce a citizenry that is empowered to achieve their personal ambitions, break the cycle of poverty, and give back to their community.

"It's been quite the journey so far, and this is just the beginning. I am grateful to my family, my friends, SPA|NOLA, and our supporters," said Ramalho, Founder and Head of Breakthrough Charter School and 2019 SPA Cohort Alumni. "We believe Breakthrough will provide a transformative, high-quality education option for students, and we are thankful SchoolWorks sees the strength of our model. Our work is just beginning for students!"

Summer Principals Academy at Teachers College Columbia University will be celebrating Darren Ramalho's achievement on December 3, 2020, at 3:30 CST with a virtual press conference to extend an official congratulations and to welcome prospective reporters. [You may access the webinar here.](#)

For additional information on the Summer Principals Academy, please visit <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/summer-principals-academy/>

For additional information on Breakthrough Charter School, please visit <https://breakthroughcharterschool.org/>.

About Summer Principals Academy

Summer Principals Academy (SPA) is a proven & effective principal training program through which aspiring school leaders earn a Master's Degree in Education Leadership from Teachers College Columbia University, the oldest and largest graduate school of education in the United States. Advocating innovation, creativity, and risk-taking to promote institutional change, our outstanding faculty introduce students to new possibilities for student learning, school improvement, social equity, and creative school design. With cohorts in both New York City & New Orleans, teachers from all over the U.S. and abroad can earn their Master's Degree in just 14 months without having to miss a day of teaching. Applications for Summer 2021 are now open and can be found at tc.edu/apply.

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Darren Ramalho

Founder and Head of Breakthrough Charter School
Marion, AL

Summer Principals Academy, Teachers College
2019 Alumni

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- Dr. Brian K. Perkins, Director
Summer Principals Academy
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