



S P A R K
2009 Annual Report

Spark's Mission

Spark's mission is to provide life-changing apprenticeships to youth in underserved communities across the United States. Spark operates summer and after-school programs that match students with apprenticeships in professions of their choice at local workplaces in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles.

The United States has a dropout crisis: 30% of American youth fail to complete high school, with 1.2 million students dropping out annually. 50% of African American and Latino students fail to complete high school within four years. Spark is the only program nationally that addresses the high school dropout crisis by re-engaging at-risk middle school students in their education with hands-on, individualized apprenticeships. This model leverages the significant and under-utilized skill base in professional workplaces, which normally goes untapped in strengthening American education.



Spark student Israel at his architecture apprenticeship with Apprentice Teacher Andy Raymundo.



Dear Friends,

The past year has been one of great learning for Spark. In the midst of the global financial crisis, we've come out leaner, with new-found approaches to efficiency and growth, and even more deeply connected with the generous community of Spark supporters. We move ahead now with great excitement to apply these lessons as we launch in Los Angeles, grow in the San Francisco Bay Area, and explore other promising opportunities to help students find inspiration through apprenticeships and successfully complete high school.

In 2009, we created 180 high-impact, individualized apprenticeships in San Francisco and Redwood City, in dozens of professional fields. We built partnerships with four core Los Angeles partners, paving the way for an early 2010 launch. We re-built our partnership model to more tightly integrate into schools. And at year's end, we were deeply honored to receive by the Ashoka Fellowship, one of the top awards for non-profit innovation in the world.

This award goes to a passionate team of staff and Board members, and it goes to those who are the reason Spark exists: our students and volunteer Apprentice Teachers. Throughout 2009 I visited dozens of apprenticeships that underscored the impact our programs have on at-risk youth. I was moved by SGH, a structural engineering firm in San Francisco that worked with Dylan, a young man who was struggling in school. Dylan dreams of becoming an architect, and he was welcomed into SGH not only by his Apprentice Teachers Taryn and Peter, but also by the entire staff. Because of his apprenticeship experience, I have no doubt that Dylan will have the confidence and motivation necessary to complete school and find a path toward his career of choice.

We know the economic challenges of 2009 are not yet behind us, but we will also remember 2009 for the generosity of those around us, offering their time or resources to help young people find inspiration, motivation, and success in their education. I look forward to working with you to ensure that Spark can provide a critical, individualized program to those students who need it most, and to a growing number of students. Thank you for your support of Spark.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Balme". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Chris Balme
Executive Director



“At Spark, I learned that anything is possible. By working hard and doing my best I can achieve anything I put my mind to.”

- Dylan, Structural Engineering Apprenticeship

About Spark

Spark's mission is to address the dropout crises by providing life-changing apprenticeships to middle school youth in undeserved communities across the United States. 30% of students in the United States drop out of high school each year, averaging 7,000 students every day. Among Hispanic and African American students in the highest need neighborhoods across the U.S., the dropout rate exceeds 50%. Studies have shown that high school dropouts have dramatically higher chances of landing in prison, have lower life expectancies, and face high barriers to finding the employment needed to lift their families out of poverty. This is one of the greatest social justice issues of our lifetime. Spark's solution is to inspire at-risk 7th and 8th grade students to stay in school through hands-on, individualized apprenticeships.

Spark piloted its first Redwood City program in Summer 2005 in collaboration with the Redwood City School District. Co-Founders Chris Balme and Melia Dicker developed the Spark model following their experiences as middle school teachers and after-school program leaders. Balme and Dicker felt that the traditional classroom environment caused many of their students to lose interest in school. Students eagerly engaged with learning, however, when provided with active, collaborative, and personally relevant projects. In response to the lack of programs for San Francisco middle school students, Spark then established a partnership with the San Francisco Beacon Initiative and launched a San Francisco pilot program in Fall 2008. Spark now operates after-school and summer programs that will serve an estimated 250 Bay Area youth and mobilize over 400 volunteers in 2010. After five years of successful programming and growth in the San Francisco Bay Area, Spark is piloting a Los Angeles program in 2010, in collaboration with Para Los Niños, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, PUC (Partnerships to Uplift Communities), and Bright Star Schools.

Spark's innovative approach to tackling the dropout crisis targets at-risk 7th and 8th grade students. Historically, most youth development programs for teenagers have focused on high school students. Unfortunately for many at-risk youth, intervention in high school is often too late. Spark engages middle school students by giving them the opportunity to explore real-world learning alongside a caring mentor. Spark's data to date shows strong results, particularly with significant gains in students' confidence, communication skills, and professional skills. All students who complete the program demonstrated mastery of the professional skills learned through their apprenticeship, as well as public speaking skills, demonstrated through a final presentation. **An initial study of 57 of the first Spark students shows that 56 are currently enrolled in high school, equivalent to a 98.2% retention rate, a rate significantly higher than that of their non-Spark peers.**

While many schools do not have the means to provide individualized learning opportunities to their students, communities do. There are thousands of professionals across California who are eager to share their experience and enthusiasm for their profession with a student fascinated by their work. Spark recruits and trains these willing community members, connects them with students, and, in the process, draws new volunteers into the education system. These connections provide the real-world experience that youth need in order to see the value of school and build motivation for personal and academic success.

“Because of Spark, school has changed for me. I'm working harder to get to my dream job in the medical field!”

- Gloria, Health Care Apprenticeship



CA Assemblywoman Fiona Ma speaks at the San Francisco Dream Builders' Breakfast.



Spark Advisory Board member Robert Wineland with Spark students Lilly and Victoria.

Dream Builders' Breakfasts

Spark hosted two Dream Builders' Breakfasts in 2009 to build awareness for our programs, and raise the funding necessary to ensure Spark's continued success.

Spark's Redwood City Dream Builders' Breakfast on June 2, 2009 was hosted at the Pacific Athletic Club, and was emceed by Edward Everett – former City Manager for Redwood City. The San Francisco Dream Builders' Breakfast on June 10, 2009 took place at the Kimpton Hotel Monaco, and was emceed by John McKee, Chair of Spark's Board of Directors and Dean of Development for UC Berkeley, with a keynote speech by CA Assemblywoman Fiona Ma. Current Spark students and alumni, as well as Apprentice Teachers, also spoke at the event and shared their unique perspectives.

Event Sponsors



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Sugar Rush 2009

Spark's 3rd Annual Sugar Rush Fundraiser was the best yet! We saw the return of some of the best pastry chefs in San Francisco, including veterans Bill Corbett from Michael Mina, Michelle Polizine from Range and Jessica Sullivan from Boulevard, as well as several new exciting additions. The following restaurants participated, generously donating their time and their delectable desserts.

- Boulevard**
- Chez Panisse**
- Gastronaut**
- Humphrey Slocum**
- Michael Mina**
- Michael Recchiuti Chocolates**
- Millenium**
- Range**
- Sibby's Cupcakery**
- Spruce**
- Uniekaas**



Humphrey Sloccombe



Chez Panisse



Sibby's Cupcakery



Spark Outreach Staff Members Natasha, Kelly & Danielle

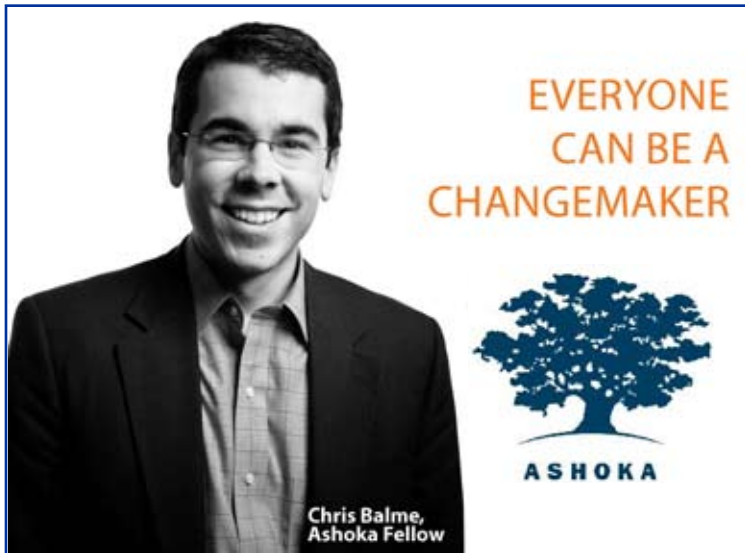
Chris Balme Wins Ashoka Fellowship

Spark's Executive Director, Chris Balme, recently received the prestigious Ashoka Fellowship, among the highest honors for social entrepreneurs in the world. In recognition of Spark's innovative approach to combating the dropout crisis, this

award puts Spark among the leading nonprofits worldwide recognized for having innovative solutions to social problems, and the potential to change patterns across society.

Chris Balme has taught with the Breakthrough Collaborative and worked as a National Science Foundation Fellow, developing and teaching new science curricula in the Philadelphia public

schools. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and the Wharton School of Business, Balme founded a successful tutoring cooperative in San Francisco before launching Spark in 2004. We are thrilled and humbled by this honor, and see it as true testament to the importance of our mission to provide life-changing apprenticeships to underserved youth across the United States.



Spark in the News!

- **ABC7 News** - *Spark: Preparing the Workforce of Tomorrow*: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6B5drX_alg
- **Examiner.com** - *SPARK middle school apprenticeships makes dreams come true*: <http://www.examiner.com/x-9790-SF-Tween-Education-Examiner~y2009m10d23-SPARK-middle-school-apprenticeships-makes-dreams-come-true>
- **KCBS Radio** - *Kids Get Their Dream Jobs*: <http://www.kcbs.com/pages/3892493.php>
- **San Francisco Business Times** - *Profile, Chris Balme*: <http://sanfrancisco.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/stories/2009/11/23/tidbits2.html>
- **San Francisco Chronicle** - *Mentoring program gives kids incentive to learn*: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/12/20/BAML1AV3PR.DTL>



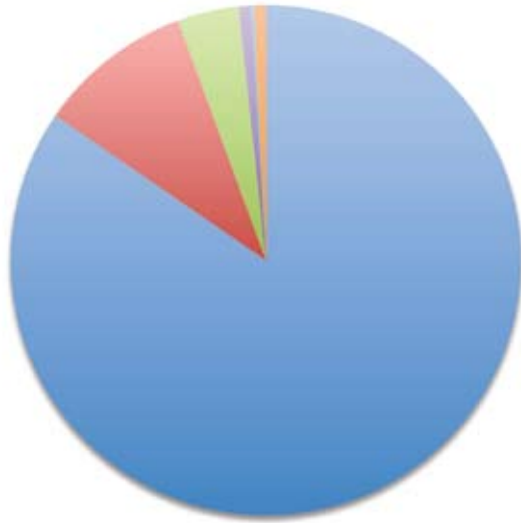
Yamileth and her Apprentice Teacher Felcia - profiled in the San Francisco Chronicle

Financial Statement

	2009	2008
Ordinary Income/Expense		
<i>Income</i>		
Foundation support	\$751,950	\$423,944
Individual support	\$87,130	\$121,229
Corporate support	\$34,775	\$57,221
Tuition revenue	\$7,080	\$9,220
Interest revenue	\$1368	\$5,372
Government support	\$0	\$150
Other earned revenue	\$6516	\$0
TOTAL INCOME	\$888,819	\$617,136
<i>Expense</i>		
Personnel	\$704,446	\$369,990
Occupancy	\$178,149	\$77,622
Program	\$35,840	\$30,962
Professional fees	\$18,596	\$27,072
Fundraising	\$9,099	\$10,782
Marketing & Outreach	\$1,957	\$ 6,823
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$948,087	\$523,252
TOTAL NET ORDINARY EXPENSES	-\$59,270	\$93,885
<i>Other Income/Expense</i>		
In-kind income	\$51,830	\$19,353
In-kind expenses	\$51,830	\$19,353
Net other income	\$0	\$0
NET INCOME	-\$59,270	\$93,885

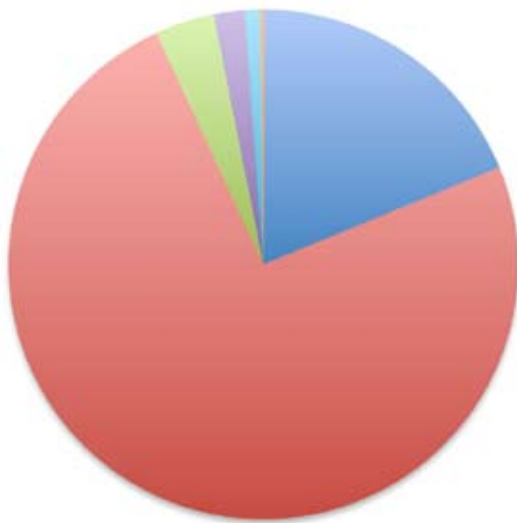
* Net Income is carried over to the next year's programs, and refers largely to funds raised at the end of 2009 for 2010 programs.

Income



- 84.60% Foundation
- 9.8% Individual
- 3.91% Corporate
- .79% Tuition
- .15% Interest
- .76% Interest

Expense



- 74.3% Personnel
- 18.79% Occupancy
- 3.78% Program
- 1.96% Professional Fees
- .96% Fundraising
- .21% Interest

Spark's Individual Donors

A special thank you to ...

Leader's Circle:

\$1,000 +

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Schrene Whitmore
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Cynthia Wong
Tushar Yadava



Gloria at Discovery Night, showing the skills she learned during her health care apprenticeship at San Francisco General with Apprentice Teacher Erica.

Spark's Corporate & Foundation Donors

\$100,000+

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\$50,000-\$99,000

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SF MOMA
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Trader Joe's
WholeSpeak



Tiffany at her alternative energy apprenticeship with Apprentice Teachers Kyle and Courtney

Spark's Board of Directors & Staff

Board of Directors & Spark Staff

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Grants Manager

Katie Krummeck
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Lupita Rodriguez
Program Coordinator

Nathalie Wade
Community Outreach Manager

Spark provides life-changing apprenticeships for youth in underserved communities across the United States



“I have real goals for my future now. I want to be a veterinarian, and I know what I’m going to have to do in school to make that happen.”

– Daniela,
Veterinary Apprenticeship

SPARK’S PARTNERS

Para Los Niños
PUC (Partnerships to Uplift Communities)
Camino Nuevo Charter Academy
San Francisco Beacon Initiative
Bright Star Schools

Youth Adelante
Friends for Youth
Cal Alumni Association
Sequoia Union High School District
Redwood City School District

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