



737 Pine Avenue, Suite 201, Long Beach, CA 90813 • [www.lbblast.org](http://www.lbblast.org)  
(562) 437-7766 fax:(562) 437-7719

20 December 2012

To whom it may concern:

Dennis Frayne participated in the Long Beach Better Learning for All Students Today (BLAST) Academic Mentoring Program (AMP) during the Fall 2012 semester. Dennis volunteered at Lindbergh Middle School in Long Beach, CA, where he mentored at least two hours per week over the course of 8 weeks. Dennis completed a total of 20 hours with Long Beach BLAST.

Dennis served as an Academic Mentor to help young children with homework, social development, and future thinking. BLAST mentors provide much needed one-on-one attention to children who are at risk for school failure. Our volunteers encourage the youth they work with to think about the future and make positive decisions. By volunteering with BLAST Dennis demonstrated a desire to serve the community, educate and inspire children, and open the doors to a brighter future for youth in Long Beach. The feedback from his site director was phenomenal as Dennis displayed remarkable patience and understanding towards his mentees.

I have included a copy of our BLAST program description to aid you in learning about our organization.

If you need additional information regarding our program, please contact me at (562) 437-7766, extension 202.

Sincerely,

Michelle Olmstead  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Long Beach BLAST



**Mission: The mission of Long Beach BLAST is to improve success for at-risk students through collaboration and innovative approaches to mentoring and learning.**

**Goals:**

1. Provide skilled and caring college volunteers to act as academic mentors for the most at-risk children in Long Beach.
2. Offer academic enrichment opportunities to after school programs in high risk neighborhoods through volunteer skills.
3. Promote community activities and build partnerships to strengthen services provided to at-risk children and youth.
4. Reduce LBUSD student drop out rate and increase the number of highly at-risk youth attending college by providing individual and group academic mentoring, intensive literacy training, high school exit exam preparation, career guidance and college application assistance.
5. Provide opportunities for college students to enrich their educational experience through meaningful community engagement.

**Who we are:**

Launched in September 2000, Long Beach BLAST (Better Learning for All Students Today) is a nonprofit organization improving success for at-risk students through collaboration and innovative approaches to mentoring and learning. Primary partners include the City of Long Beach, California State University Long Beach, Long Beach City College, Long Beach Unified School District and youth-serving organizations including the Carmelitos Housing Development, Northpointe Housing Development, the Villages at Cabrillo, Peace Partners, and the YMCA. All of our youth-serving partners offer safe, productive places for LBUSD students to learn. We also work with parents, teachers, and community and business leaders who share our deep commitment to effecting positive change in the development and education of at-risk youth.

BLAST has received numerous awards for its work including the CSULB Community Service Learning Center's award for "Outstanding Community Partner", the Long Beach Superintendent's "Distinguished Community Service" award, and the County of Los Angeles Community Development Commission's "Outstanding Services Award" for serving the children and families of the Carmelitos Housing Development. In 2004, in collaboration with the Greater Long Beach South Bay Community Partnership, BLAST received one of only six national awards from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials for its collaborative work at Carmelitos. Long Beach BLAST has also received: in 2008 BLAST received the Literacy Award from the Beach Cities International Reading Association, and the LBUSD Partnerships in Education Awards from Longfellow School (2009) and Reid Continuation School (in 2010).

## **What we do:**

BLAST recruits, screens, trains, places and supports college student volunteers in schools and community locations, where they work with at-risk K-12 students. Our volunteer objectives are to improve academic performance, encourage healthy social and emotional growth, and promote future thinking of participating children. BLAST academic mentors work with children one-on-one to provide homework assistance and high-quality lesson plans in academic subjects such as language arts and math, as well as literacy support (including reading and technology-based learning). Enrichment program mentors work with children in small groups to provide specialized activities such as art, computers, sports and recreation. All BLAST mentors fulfill a meaningful function as positive role models: interaction with college volunteers open the doors to the possibility of higher education for the K-12 students with whom they work.

BLAST also operates a full-service after school program at the low-income Northpointe Housing Community that serves approximately 70 students daily.

BLAST's newest program, "Bridge to College", is providing the most highly at-risk high school students in Long Beach with a pathway from high school graduation to enrollment in a college, trade or technical school.

In addition to these programs, BLAST also plays a leadership role in collaborative activities that improve learning for Long Beach children and youth, with a focus on fostering collaboration between higher education and the K-12 system. A signature achievement was, as co-chair of a task force of community organizations in partnership with the LBUSD, bringing new after school programs to over 60 Long Beach schools.

Since it was founded, BLAST has screened, trained, placed, supported, and recognized 5,160 volunteers, helped over 7,000 children, and served 40 after school sites. Evaluation results consistently demonstrate that volunteers, K-12 participants, participating site-based personnel, college students and college faculty are overwhelmingly satisfied with the BLAST program, believing that an impact had been made both on children's learning and social development. Classroom teachers report significant improvements in areas such as reading, writing, math, finishing homework on time, and getting along with others. An independent researcher who studied 200 children in the program concluded children's reading skills as measured on the SAT 9 increased, and that children improved in attendance and self expression.

Our most recent independent evaluation (July 2010) on our new "Bridge to College" program surveyed nearly 100 eleventh and twelfth grade continuation students participating in the program, 75% of which were referred to BLAST by the LA County Probation Department. After one year in "Bridge to College", the number of students making college plans nearly tripled to 82%, those planning careers that require higher education increased from 12% to 71% and students who are expecting success in their future increased nearly four-fold from 12% to 47%.

## **Benefits:**

BLAST's annual evaluations consistently show that all BLAST participants benefit. Children and youth gain access to additional academic, enrichment and social support and improve in overall student achievement, study skills, self-esteem, interpersonal behavior, and consideration of higher education. Participating after school programs benefit because the effective use of volunteers contributes significantly to the quality of successful after school programs. College volunteers are provided with a rich career exploration opportunity and make their own gains, including an increased awareness of community problems and more positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. In short, the entire Long Beach community (including schools, families and businesses) benefits by building into its infrastructure additional options for safe, healthy, and enriching environments for children and youth to learn and grow