

Students on the Wishbone programme

# WISHBONE

2014 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2014

## **NARROWING AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY GAP THROUGH CROWDFUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS**

Project URL: [wishbone.org](http://wishbone.org)

Project Twitter: [@wishboneorg](https://twitter.com/wishboneorg)

- Economic Empowerment
- Education
- Social Exclusion
- Social Software

Wishbone connects promising students from disadvantaged backgrounds in San Francisco's Bay area and New York with donors to crowd-fund scholarships.

Research shows that rich families spend ten times as much on out-of-school programmes as those from less privileged backgrounds. Wishbone sets out to harness the crowd to even the playing field.

The site works through referrals: with teachers in schools in deprived areas (classed as places where 70% of children qualify for free school meals) nominating children who they think show promise and have a particular enthusiasm for a specific subject of study.

Donors then browse students' profiles online and see what programmes they want to attend: choosing either to fund an individual or let Wishbone allocate funds. Donors receive updates on the student's progress through the academic summer camps or after-school programmes Wishbone has referred them to, based on their interest and location. Each child has an adult advocate, a teacher or another mentor, to coach them through the experience and help them promote their campaign.

80 young people attended programmes this year, and just being selected as a Wishbone scholar can have a profound effect on students, says founder Beth Schmidt: 'There's a dramatic shift in the way they think about what's possible for themselves.'

They return to classrooms more engaged, 'inspiring peers with a heightened sense of personal motivation and involvement in their education,' and as TechCrunch reports, 'The ripple that starts when a student gets a Wishbone scholarship can grow into waves of improvement for their whole life.'

Wishbone is expanding to offer students discounted tuition, free spots from programme providers and corporates. It also now lets donors give sponsorship cards as gifts to friends, who can then select the young person they want to support.

*Image 'Spring 2012 Student Hackathon Coding' courtesy of [hackNY.org](http://hackNY.org)*

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