

Pat Romero Pearson Teacher Fellow Class of 2006-2008



Patrick Romero has served 4 terms of service with Jumpstart, beginning in 2002. He has worked as a Corps member and a team leader at Tufts University.

In the summer of 2006, Patrick joined the Pearson Teacher Fellowship.

My first year in Jumpstart, my partner child's name was Kahmal. Kahmal's four year old face would light up with excitement when he was squeezing glitter glue out of a bottle, or playing with water in the sink. But he took little interest in reading or learning to write. His teacher and his mother were concerned about his progress.

Taking his cue from the glitter glue and water, I started presenting reading and writing skills as amazing adventures by expressing awe and amazement at things like reading books and writing letters. Gradually, he caught on. We shared in wonder at the turn of every page to find out what could possibly happen next. By the end of the school year, Kahmal would read to me his favorite book, *The Big Hungry Bear*. For me, the real wonder was that Kahmal had developed all the skills and confidence he needed to go to kindergarten the next fall. What's more, he was looking forward to it. It would be his next great adventure and would certainly be more exciting than glitter glue!

At the close of that first year, I was accepted into the Jumpstart Summer program where one of our students, Irvan, was coping with a very stressful and scary family situation. I panicked. I was scared. But despite everything he was going through, Irvan came in with a smile on his face everyday - humming and singing songs. Our lead teacher, Jen, responded by teaching the children "Get Up, Stand Up" by Bob Marley to empower them, and she read *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop* to present a positive and musical role model for Irvan. At the end of the year, Jen told me how important I was in serving as a positive male role model for this young boy.

I returned to Jumpstart in the fall specifically to continue to work with Irvan as a strong male role model. That year, we read books like *Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles: Think of That!* to build on his love of music.

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He would say "Rap a Tap Tap" for every page. And he made up songs and would perform them for the rest of the class. He would assemble the blocks into a stage and grab the longest block to use as a guitar. We also built his literacy skills by writing letters to his family and friends to tell them how much he loved them all. And Irvan and I had a special communication of our own - we learned a secret sign that meant we loved each other, even if we couldn't say it out loud...even if we were across the room from one another. At the end of the year Irvan gave me a gift, a clock he made,

whose face was a picture of us hugging inscribed "Thank you Pat for being my friend; I will miss you!" What I didn't realize then was how much **I would miss him.**

What sets Jumpstart apart for me is the continued support and reflection the organization and your fellow Corps members provide. Through team planning sessions and Team Leader trainings I've learned how to run a classroom and how to build the expertise of other college students; and I've learned a lot about what drives me.

My work with Jumpstart inspired me to apply for the Pearson Teacher Fellowship - a two year teaching fellowship sponsored by Pearson. I was accepted and will be teaching at one of the Horizons for Homeless Children's preschools in Boston. The Fellowship continues the great Jumpstart tradition of community and support, and I am comforted to know that I will have this full support system as I set out to become a preschool teacher serving in a low income community of Boston for two years.

What I'm most looking forward to as a preschool teacher is having a whole classroom of Kahmal's to introduce to the amazing powers of glitter glue-and a whole classroom of Irvan's who will learn to sing "Get Up, Stand Up" and dance to *Mr. Bojangles*.