



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **ASPIRE CEO JAMES WILLCOX TO STEP DOWN**

*Long-time leader will remain at the school system through October*

**Oakland, Calif.** – Today, [Aspire Public Schools](#) announced that CEO James Willcox will step down from his role at the end of October. Willcox, who first joined Aspire in 2007, will step down after over eight years to spend more time with his family. The Aspire Board of Directors will immediately begin a nationwide search for his successor.

“At Aspire, I’ve had the privilege of working with an incredible team that works tirelessly every day for students,” Willcox said. “School systems are only as good as the people within them. The quality of our team and the depth of their commitment make certain that Aspire will continue its national impact for years to come. Until this transition is complete, I will continue to be completely engaged in moving our *College for Certain* mission forward.”

Willcox joined Aspire as its chief operating officer in 2007. In 2009, he assumed leadership of Aspire, from founder Don Shalvey. During his tenure at Aspire, the school system has grown dramatically and raised student achievement to new heights, while expanding Aspire’s impact nationally. Willcox has overseen the opening of 21 additional schools. Aspire now operates 38 schools across California and in Memphis, Tenn., and has expanded student enrollment from 5,900 students to over 14,600 students.

“James has been and will remain a tireless advocate for Aspire. James’ passion for ensuring equitable opportunities for all students has led not only to the growth of new Aspire schools, but also to the creation of significant national models to support teachers and effective teaching,” said Board President Beth Hunkapiller. “While the board wishes James could remain indefinitely as our CEO, we support his decision to spend time with his family and are grateful for the eight years he’s spent with Aspire. It is our hope that James will continue to stay involved with Aspire and our mission in some capacity for years to come.”

Aspire has had several notable programmatic accomplishments during Willcox’s tenure. Aspire successfully launched and expanded the Aspire Teacher Residency program, recently featured in [The New York Times](#) as a ground breaking new model for preparing teachers for the classroom. In addition to training new teachers, Aspire has been a national leader in refining teacher support systems, career pathways and compensation, receiving [a \\$28 million competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Education](#) to create an innovative teacher compensation system tied to deep supports for teachers in the classroom.

Willcox also led Aspire’s most far-reaching effort to share successful practices and proven tools with other school systems across the country – most notably with the launch of [Schoolzilla](#) in 2013. Initially developed at Aspire, Schoolzilla is a comprehensive data warehousing and visualization platform that connects and optimizes data from a multitude of disparate data sources, and transforms it into timely, accurate, and easily accessible dashboards for educators and administrators. Schoolzilla now helps more than 50 school systems increase student achievement for over 1 million students, nationwide. Willcox sits on the Schoolzilla Board of Directors.

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### **About Aspire Public Schools**

Aspire Public Schools is a national K-12 school system focused on improving public education by preparing underserved students for college, training highly effective teachers and sharing innovative best practices. Aspire serves more than 14,600 students in 38 open-enrollment public schools in underserved communities across California and Memphis, Tenn. Founded in 1998, Aspire delivers a rigorous *College for Certain* education which has led to 100 percent of graduating Aspire seniors being accepted to four-year colleges or universities over the last five years. Visit Aspire Public Schools at [www.aspirepublicschools.org](http://www.aspirepublicschools.org).