



**ASPIRE**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## **College for Certain Newsletter March 2015**

Dear Friends,

It's officially spring! At the start of the month, it was cold and wintery in Memphis when Aspire's 38 principals and senior leaders kicked off our quarterly "Home Week", a time when Aspire leaders meet in one of our regional hubs. We held our first-ever Memphis Home Week at the National Civil Rights Museum, a powerful setting as we continue our ongoing Leading for Equity development.

Aspire's Memphis Executive Director, Allison Leslie sums up some of the themes and highlights of Memphis Home Week in the Living our Mission section below. We remain committed to developing our leaders and supporting our core value of collaboration. Our student-focused story this month is from Aspire

## About Us

Aspire Public Schools operates 38 high-performing public charter schools serving over 14,600 students in under-served communities across California and Memphis, TN.



510-434-5516

[www.aspirepublicschools.org](http://www.aspirepublicschools.org)

Help our students  
achieve college  
readiness



Triumph Technology Academy, one of our K-5 schools Oakland. There, two teachers have developed a technology program designed to develop students' unique skills as 21st Century learners.

Lastly our College for Certain Dinner is approaching on May 20 in San Francisco. This will be my last College for Certain Dinner as CEO of Aspire, and I hope you will join me as we honor our students and alumni and their Pathways to *College for Certain*. The night will support Aspire's work to ensure all of our students are prepared to earn a college degree. We recently selected a senior from each of our graduating classes to be the first winners of our new Shining Star program. Applicants were recommended by their school site based on a variety of criteria. These students are simply amazing and have overcome tremendous odds to get to where they are. They exemplify the Pathway to *College for Certain* and I hope you'll be able to attend the event to speak with them more. One of these students, Laura Garcia from Los Angeles is highlighted below with just a small look into her experience at Aspire. Ticket information for the event is below as well and we look forward to seeing you.

Enjoy this issue and thank you for your continued support.

Together we can!

James Willcox  
Chief Executive Officer

## Living Our Mission: The Power of Collaborative Leaders

By Allison Leslie, Memphis Executive Director

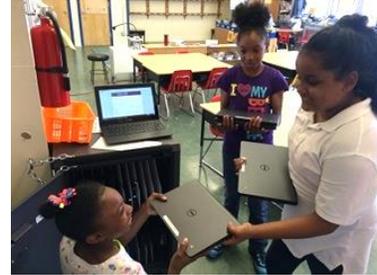


Aspire Public School leaders were fortunate to spend the first week of March in Memphis living one of our core values: Collaboration. Each quarter our school leaders spend time in each other's regions for "Home Week" to provide each other with feedback on the teaching and learning observed in schools, grow and develop through the professional development that is provided and advance our work with equity.

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## Student Tech Squad at Aspire Triumph

At Aspire Triumph Technology Academy in Oakland, 4th and 5th graders are rolling up their sleeves and digging into technology in a brand new way. As part of the new Tiger Tech Ops team, students are providing technology support in the classroom to younger students and teachers and, as a result, are building confidence and valuable professional skills.



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## Aspire Seniors Recognized as Shining Stars

When an Aspire student starts Kindergarten, they begin to learn about their pathway to *College for Certain* from day one. It's evident on their classroom door which proudly displays their year of college graduation. It's evident in the name of their class (each one is named after a college) and in the college cheer each scholar proudly learns as part of that class community. At Aspire college is not just a hope, it's for certain with 100% of our graduating seniors being accepted to four year colleges for the last five years. Our mission has been to create a pathway for our students which will provide them with life opportunities.

This year, in conjunction with our College for Certain Dinner, Aspire launched the Shining Star program to recognize outstanding seniors at each of our nine high schools across CA. They were recommended by school staff through an application process and were selected as the winner from their school by a panel of Aspire staff. Each one exemplifies why *College for Certain* is making a difference for our students and their families. In the coming weeks, we will be highlighting some of the winners.



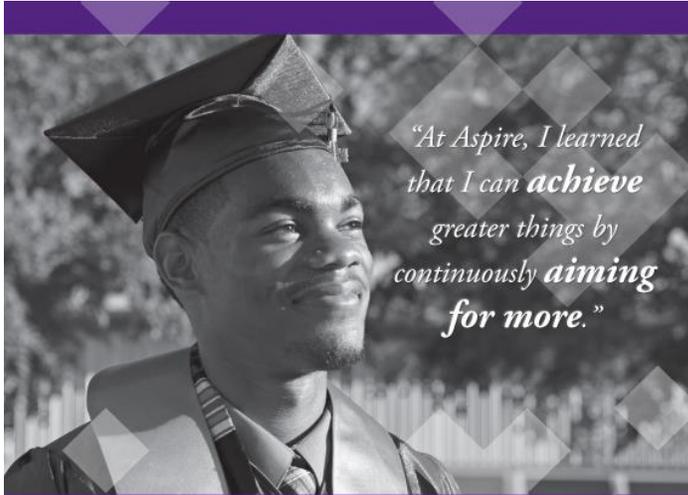
**Meet Laura Garcia, Aspire Shining Star**  
Aspire Pacific Academy, Los Angeles

*"If I did not grow up attending Aspire Public Schools, I would not be the passionate, driven individual I am today. Aspire schools have taught me so much in the nine years I have attended them. With Aspire's mission being "College for Certain" I have had the opportunity to receive an education like no other. Unlike regular public schools, Aspire pushes its students to be the best in whatever they do. It was not until my first school wide town-hall meeting where*

*we all chanted "dream it, believe it, achieve it!" that I realized how fortunate I was to attend a school that infinitely believed in all their students. Aspire has been successful at encouraging me to pursue my dreams and a higher form of education since my first day of school."*

## **Aspire to Honor Outgoing CEO, Alumni at Annual Event**

Aspire will be holding its annual College for Certain dinner on May 20 at the Bently Reserve in San Francisco. This year our program will consist of a keynote video address from Bill and Melinda Gates as well alumni presentations from two outstanding Aspire graduates, one who returned to Aspire through our teacher residency program and now teaches 1st grade. As a special part of the evening, we will honor our CEO, James Willcox who will be leaving Aspire later this year, after more than eight years of service to Aspire. Each year, Aspire holds an annual event to pay tribute to our *College for Certain* work, recognizing students, alumni and supporters. Tickets and sponsorships opportunities are available [here](#). Proceeds from the evening benefit our *College for Certain* work. For more information, visit our [webpage](#).



*“At Aspire, I learned  
that I can **achieve**  
greater things by  
continuously **aiming**  
for more.”*

Please join us for an evening celebrating  
**Pathways to College for Certain**

Wednesday, May 20, 2015  
Bently Reserve, 301 Battery Street, San Francisco

**6:30pm Cocktail Reception**  
**7:00pm Dinner and Program**

**Student Alumni Speakers:** *Xavier Taylor & Bianka Mariscal*

**Keynote Video Address:** *Bill and Melinda Gates*

**Recognition for Service:** *James Willcox,*  
Chief Executive Officer, Aspire Public Schools



For more information, please contact  
[catherine.foster@aspirepublicschools.org](mailto:catherine.foster@aspirepublicschools.org), 510-434-5516 or  
visit our website, [www.aspirepublicschools.org/events](http://www.aspirepublicschools.org/events)



College for Certain

Founded in 1998, 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.

**Contact Us:**

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