



**ASPIRE**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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

## **College for Certain Newsletter May 2015**

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe our school year is almost over. We stand weeks away from the close of our 16th school year. It's been an amazing year and we look forward to the work that continues ahead for Aspire.

Just last week, we celebrated our students and their pathways to college at our annual College for Certain Dinner. It was a wonderful event in San Francisco. We heard from two of our alumni, Xavier Taylor and Bianka Mariscal, and honored our nine Shining Star seniors, representing each of our secondary schools. We also launched our College for Certain Fund and raised over \$500,000 in support of our mission to prepare each student to earn a college degree.

We've recapped part of the evening for you below. We also share some of the stories of our Shining Star seniors, who graduate in June. Almost all our seniors have made final decisions on where they will attend college in the fall, which is a milestone for so many who will be the first in their families to attend college.

We continue to work to make College for Certain a reality for our students and we are very appreciative of all who supported us at the dinner. Thank you for



Contact Us

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

Help our students  
achieve college  
readiness



your continued support!

Together we can!

James Willcox  
Chief Executive Officer

## Aspire College for Certain Dinner

Aspire Public Schools celebrated our students' Pathways to College for Certain with our annual College for Certain Dinner held on Wednesday, May 20 at the Bently Reserve in San Francisco.

Over 160 Aspire supporters helped raise more than \$500,000 to support our work preparing our students for college. Today, Aspire serves more than 14,600 students in 38 schools in two states. This year, we will have over 500 seniors graduating from our schools, prepared to enter college.



Xavier Taylor

The evening included a welcome from alumni Xavier Taylor, who spoke about how Aspire was different than other school systems he knew of and how he was appreciative of the investment Aspire made in him.

*"Aspire is unlike any other school system. It is unlike any other nonprofit organization. Aspire has done something I aspire to do in the near future - change the status quo of education."*

Current Aspire teacher, Aspire alumni and Aspire Teacher Residency graduate Bianka Mariscal spoke about Aspire like home and how she wanted to be a voice of hope for her students like her Aspire teachers were for her.

*"I wanted to be that person I looked up to when I was a student. I wanted to be the person who understood why and how life can be filled with struggles but also hope. I wanted to be the idea of home for these students. I wanted to become the source in which my students could come to for support, for strength, for nurturing words of encouragement. I wanted to become a teacher, and the Aspire Teacher Residency program trained me to get there."*



Bianka Mariscal

Lastly the evening paid tribute to Aspire's CEO, James Willcox, who will be leaving his role later this year. Aspire board chair Beth Hunkapiller praised James for his many accomplishments during his eight years at Aspire. James spoke about the many teams he has been a part of and the power of the Aspire team.

*"At Aspire, I've had the gift of being part of a team that operates like a family. And we need the entire team, the entire family, to do all of our work. These words aren't an accident. This is who Aspire truly is...a team that's a family. And all of you in this room, and many, many others... are part of it."*



*James Willcox*

Lastly James spoke about an important call to action, *"when something isn't working you ACT. You DO SOMETHING to fix it."*

Aspire exists because of our team working to change the education equation for low income students. He called on all the attendees to consider their role by saying, *"tonight, you too have the opportunity to ACT...to CHANGE things that must be changed."*

There is still time to ACT...to CHANGE things with and investment in our [College for Certain Fund](#).

To see more from our College for Certain Event, visit our [events page](#).

## View our College for Certain Video



College for Certain



## Aspire College for Certain 2015 Video

## Shining Star Stories

### Cristian Jimenez

**School:** Aspire East Palo Alto Phoenix Academy, East Palo Alto

**College:** Sonoma State University, University of California, Santa Cruz or Sierra College



Cristian Jimenez sees college as a "way to overcome the barriers that make up the glass ceiling keeping students of color in poverty." His parents began talking about the importance of earning a degree when Cristian was very young - particularly because of the sacrifices the family made to give him the opportunity of college. [Read Cristians' story >](#)

### Bree Saldevar

**School:** Aspire Benjamin Holt College Preparatory Academy, Stockton

**College:** San Joaquin Delta College

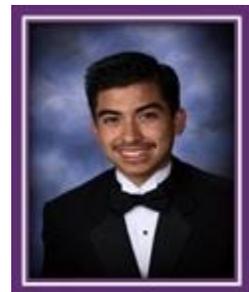


Bree Saldevar started Aspire Benjamin Holt College Prep as an introverted student only comfortable around those with whom she already had a relationship. Today, she has become senior class president with a better understanding of the tough responsibilities that come with being a leader. The transition took time and a lot of support from others - like chemistry teacher Ms. Chi. [Read Bree's story>](#)

### Alex Lopez

**School:** Aspire California College Preparatory Academy, Berkeley

**College:** University of California, Berkeley



College isn't just important dream to Alex Lopez. Earning a degree will be the culmination of years of struggle for his family, who has survived civil war and financial hardship before immigrating to the United States in search of the American Dream. [Read Alex's story >](#)

[Read more](#) about our Shining Stars.

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**Join the College for Certain Fund!**

If you have not already made a gift, **it's not too late!** Please consider making a gift to our College for Certain Fund **before July 1** so that we can continue to provide our students with the highest quality education every child deserves.

Donate to the  
College for Certain Fund



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.

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