



College for Certain Newsletter | September 2015

Dear Aspire Friends,

I've spent a wonderful three weeks getting to know Aspire, traveling to all four regions and visiting seventeen of our thirty-eight schools. I've spent time with our dynamic principals and teachers, visited classrooms and witnessed first-hand our vision in action: preparing our students to earn a college degree.

I recently met a former student who realized this vision and returned to Aspire to help other students do the same. Aspire Cal Prep alumna Stephanie Alejandre was the first in her family to graduate from college. This past spring, Stephanie graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz and entered the Aspire Teacher Residency program. She is now a resident with one of her former teachers at Aspire Richmond Cal Prep, and hopes to inspire her students to give back and make a similar change in their communities. We share Stephanie's story in this issue, along with highlights from our recent ribbon-cutting ceremony at Aspire Richmond California College Preparatory Academy and Aspire Richmond Technology Academy.

We also present a snapshot of our recent Smarter Balanced Assessment scores, which were released earlier this month. Overall, Aspire schools are still outperforming neighboring schools on this more rigorous assessment, but there is some room for improvement. We will continue to learn and grow with great urgency, using this data to help inform our instruction as we remain committed to the rigor of the new Common Core Standards.

Thank you for your kind welcome over the last few weeks and your enduring commitment to Aspire. Your support continues to help make *College for Certain* a reality for our students.

Best,

Carolyn Hack
Chief Executive Officer

Living our Mission: Aspire Alumni Commits to Giving Back to Community

By Stephanie Alejandre, an Aspire Teacher Resident, Graduate of UC Santa Cruz, and proud Aspire Cal Prep alumni of the first graduating class of 2011.



If you were to ask me eight years ago where I would be now, I would have never guessed that I would be where I am today. I was born and raised in Richmond, CA and lived there for ten years until I moved to Reno for five years.

My first two years of high school, I attended a highly-regarded Catholic high school in Reno. But during those first two years, not once did I feel like the teachers truly supported me, nor did they ever really instill in me the idea of pursuing a higher educational path after high school.

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New Aspire Richmond Campus Ribbon-Cutting

Saturday, September 26th was a day of celebration for Aspire students, staff, parents and the community as we officially marked the opening of our Aspire Richmond campus. Students from Aspire Richmond Technology Academy (RTA) and Aspire Richmond California College Preparatory Academy (Cal Prep) cut the purple ribbon together to celebrate this milestone.



Both schools occupy this new state-of-the-art 61,147 square foot building, which features large, bright classrooms and innovative learning spaces as well as digital media and computer labs. The new facility is part of a larger campus developed by The Chamberlin Foundation, which also houses a brand new shared gymnasium and grass play field.

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Aspire Outperforms Similar Size Districts on Smarter Balanced Assessments

This month the state released the results for the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) tests designed to measure results for the Common Core State Standards. These more rigorous tests are administered in grades 3-8 and 11 on the computer and assess how well students are meeting the higher expectations of the Common Core.



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Aspire in the News

[How to Kick Off Blended Learning](#)
EdSurge

[New Aspire CEO Tours Memphis Schools](#)
Chalkbeat Tennessee

[Teachers Wanted: Passion a Must, Patience Required, Pay Negligible](#)
The Atlantic



Founded in 1998, Aspire Public Schools is one of the nation's largest highest-performing, college-preparatory public school systems. Aspire delivers a rigorous K-12 *College for Certain* education to 15,000 students in 38 open-enrollment public schools in California and Memphis, Tenn. Currently in our 17th academic year, Aspire is one of the nation's first charter school systems.

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