Stepping Into Tomorrow

ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Gratitude Report

2024 - 2025

36 schools / 15,500 scholars



ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our Leadership

Dear Aspire Partner,

As we turn the page on the 2024-2025 school year, we invite you to turn the pages of your "composition book" to learn about the significant milestones accomplished at Aspire this year. We remain steadfast in our commitment to preparing our more than 15,500 scholars for success in college, career, and life. From expanding access to multiple post-secondary pathways to deepening our co-teaching practices to implementing new math curriculum, we are proud of the strides we've made.

We also know that continuing to amplify our impact requires confronting our challenges as well. We view it as essential to take a thoughtful assessment of our progress—just as we do with our scholars. The numbers, stories, and experiences shared in this report serve as indicators of where we are today and where we aspire to be. This work is only possible because of our dedicated team, partners, and supporters like you.

Organizationally, we are also making an important shift to operate more flexibly as regions—Aspire Bay Area, Aspire Central Valley, and Aspire Los Angeles—while ensuring our shared Aspire mission, vision, and values serve as our collective foundation. By empowering local leaders and expanding local resources, we uphold a long-standing Aspire value of making decisions closer to our scholars and being responsive to the highest impact opportunities of our communities.

As part of this evolution, I will be transitioning out of the CEO role at the end of this school year. In the year ahead, I will continue to support Aspire in an advisory role, ensuring a smooth transition. It has been the greatest honor of my career to lead this organization. I am filled with pride and optimism about where Aspire is headed and with gratitude for your support of our mission.

That future will be shaped by the thoughtful leadership of our four Executive Directors: Bess Kennedy (Aspire Home Office & Aspire Foundation), Javier Cabra Walteros (Aspire Bay Area), Tony Solina (Aspire Central Valley), and Dr. Chris Carr (Aspire Los Angeles). I have the utmost confidence in their visions and their collective commitment to Aspire's values. I know they will lead Aspire with the same belief in our scholars that has always guided our work.



Thank you for being a part of this journey. Together, we will continue to evolve, innovate, and in the words of our dear founder Don Shalvey, "dent the universe," one scholar at a time.

With gratitude,

Mala Batra
CEO, Aspire Public Schools

Meet Aspire's Executive Directors



Bess Kennedy
Executive Director,
Aspire Home Office and
Aspire Foundation



Javier Cabra Walteros
Executive Director,
Aspire Bay Area



Tony Solina
Executive Director,
Aspire Central Valley



Dr. Chris Carr
Executive Director,
Aspire Los Angeles

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Our Vision

Aspire scholars are prepared and empowered to build a fulfilling and liberated future for themselves and their communities.

Our Mission

Provide a rigorous, joyful academic experience that cultivates our scholars' skills, talents, and gifts, such that they may pursue and persist in college or any post-secondary pathway that is authentic to their identities.

Promote inclusivity and disrupt systems that have historically oppressed marginalized communities, including Black, Latino/a/x, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Nurture our scholars' pride in their abilities, identities, and communities.

Our Core Values & Commitment to Equity

- Bienestar (Well-being)
- Culture of Belonging
- Community Partnership
- Agency + Self-determination
- Joy

Our communities (predominantly Black and Latinx) persist in a system that fails to adequately educate all students. Aspire was founded to address these long-standing inequities and transform the disproportionate outcomes they cause. We believe these core values can guide us toward greater racial, social, and gender equity across our communities.



At Aspire, we...

- **Understand the significant difference between equity and equality.** Every student deserves to receive what they need to succeed (equity), not that every student receives the same amount of resources, instruction, attention, etc. (equality).
- **Develop school environments** where all students are actively and meaningfully engaged in rigorous instruction.
- **Interrupt the "school to prison pipeline"** – policies and practices that are directly and indirectly pushing the most at risk students out of school and on a pathway to the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- **Engage families as partners** in meaningful ways in our work.
- **Build the capacity of diverse teams** that are more reflective of our students.
- **Nurture an open, collaborative, and trusting environment** because the work is enormous, deeply personal, emotional and often difficult.

We must continually put the Equity Commitments into action and live by them. Every Aspire teammate is accountable for applying these commitments in every decision, use of resources, and management of talent. The power of our collective and individual dedication to these commitments is reason enough to be hopeful as we pursue our mission and create a more just and equitable world.





Bienestar (Well-being)

Learning, working, and playing require us to feel safe and well. Our spaces and interactions support physical, emotional, cultural, ethnic, academic, and social safety, allowing us to feel secure enough to bring our full selves each day.

Bay Area

- Increased support for nearly **100 housing-insecure and foster youth**
- **Created Special Populations role** to support scholars with disabilities, multilingual learners, homeless scholars, and scholars in foster care

Los Angeles

- Piloted a **Black Teammate Mentorship program supporting 20 teammates** to increase connection and retention
- **Redesigned a health education program** to focus more holistically on student wellness and provide personal hygiene kits

Central Valley

- **Aspire Summit Charter Academy and Aspire Alexander Twilight College Preparatory Academy** partnered with Kaboom!, CarMax, and Smile Generation to install **new playgrounds**



Across Aspire

- Implemented a pipeline for Aspire hourly teammates to become teachers through **professional development, tuition support from Rivet School**, and with **funding support from the Warriors Community Foundation**
- Supplied **whole-school wellness to 10 schools and regional teams** to reduce teacher burnout through the **Teaching Well**
- Incorporated **flexible seating in classrooms to better support neurodiverse scholars**
- Provided **"Know Your Rights"** trainings and resources related to immigrant rights

Areas for Growth & Continued Focus

- **Reducing chronic absenteeism** and working towards pre-pandemic levels of 10%; while **rates have improved from 39%** three years ago **to 23% this year,** continued efforts are needed to ensure all students attend school consistently for their academic success and well-being
- **Improving school facilities** as many buildings lack **green playground space** and require **renovations**
- **Strengthening efforts** on **retaining** and **supporting Black teammates, scholars,** and **families**

90% of teammates feel a sense of belonging at Aspire

92% of Aspire families feel welcomed at schools









Culture of Belonging

We seek to be known and seen at Aspire, where we can be our authentic selves and be comfortable sharing all aspects of our identities. We respect and celebrate each other's differences, and approach one another with empathy and understanding—no matter one's background or cultural history. Each person is valued and has a place in this community.

Strengths & Celebrations

Bay Area

- Implemented monthly **Communities of Practice for Pro-Black Coordinators and Special Education** teams



Los Angeles

- **Supported teacher growth and mentorship** focused on student outcomes through **TeachBoost**
- Consistent region-wide approach to **confronting racial harm with restorative practices**



Central Valley

- **Increased attendance rates by 4%** with funding support from the **Stronger Connections** grant

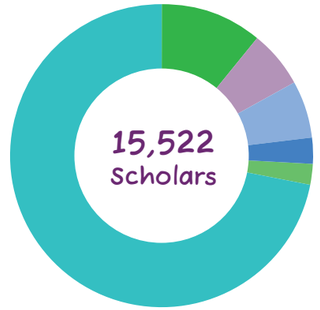
Across Aspire

- **Supplied classified teammates with a stipend** to work towards becoming teachers through the **Alder Teacher Residency**
- Established a **leadership pipeline** to support the growth of our teammates, from **pre-teacher programs** to **graduate-level teacher residencies** in partnership with the **Diverse Education Leader Pipeline Initiative Grant**

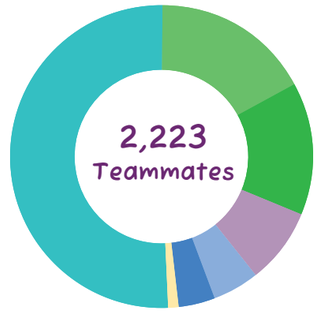
Areas for Growth & Continued Focus

- Enhancing **recruitment and support** for **special education teachers**
- Exploring ways to **increase teacher retention and sustainability**; our teacher retention **rate of 81% is on par with California's** overall rate, but we know we can do better for our scholars

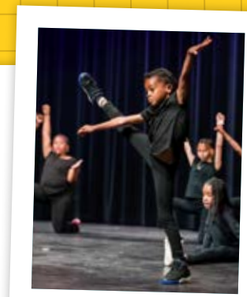
Our Teammates & Scholars



- Latinx 72%
- Black or African American 11%
- Asian 6%
- Other 6%
- Multi-racial 3%
- White 2%



- Latinx 51%
- White 17%
- Black or African American 14%
- Asian 8%
- Other 5%
- Multi-racial 4%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 1%





Serving All Scholars

14% Receive Special Education services

76% Qualify for free or reduced cost lunch

52% Speak a language other than English at home



Community Partnership

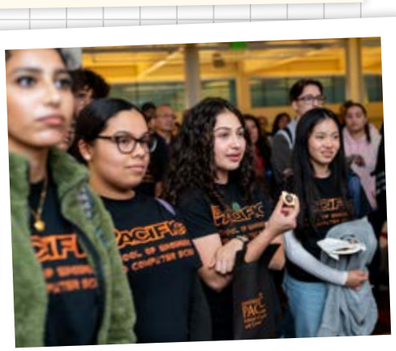
We are all connected and collectively responsible for the well-being of every member of our extended community. When one of us is let down, we are all let down. When one of us succeeds, we all succeed. Only in partnership and by listening deeply to one another can we create collective movement.

Bay Area

- **Created Diversity in Leadership initiative** to **support teammate development** and **growth**

Central Valley

- **Enduring partnerships** with the **University of the Pacific, Delta College, Modesto Junior College**, and **American River College** allowed high school students to take college courses





Los Angeles

- **Unified commitment** to supporting school culture through **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports** with funding from the **Community Schools Grant**
- **Increased dual enrollment opportunities** for high school students to explore **post-secondary pathways**

Areas for Growth & Continued Focus

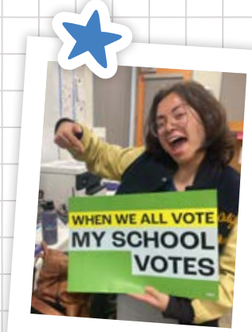
- **Increasing partnerships** that **provide scholars** with more **internships** and **real-world learning experiences**



Across Aspire

- **Increased partnerships with community organizations** through **Community Schools Grants** secured at **28 schools**
- **Advocated for a shift** in the current **funding formula** from **attendance to enrollment** through our "**Count Me In" campaign** with a goal of allocating resources based on the number of students a school is responsible for serving
- **Increased voter registration** in our communities by **6%** and supported more than **500 scholars** voting in local school board elections through the "**Get Out the Vote**" campaign
- **Explored how AI can advance equity in education** by building awareness, developing policies, and offered training through **partnership with the Alliance of AI for Equity**

COUNT ME IN
FAIR FUNDING. SUPPORTED STUDENTS.









Agency + Self-determination

Each person has unique dreams. At Aspire, we set a foundation for our scholars to gain knowledge, skills, and power to access and make choices for their families and post-secondary lives.

Strengths & Celebrations

Bay Area

- **Held first Aspire School Board Candidate Forum in Oakland** to allow Aspire families to hear directly from candidates



Los Angeles

- **Provided professional development** to ensure full inclusion of all **students with disabilities** into general education classrooms
- **Amplified scholar voices** through **Student Representatives** on the **Huntington Park City Hall Student Education Commission**

Across Aspire

- Awarded **$100,000** in **post-secondary scholarships** to deserving seniors



Central Valley

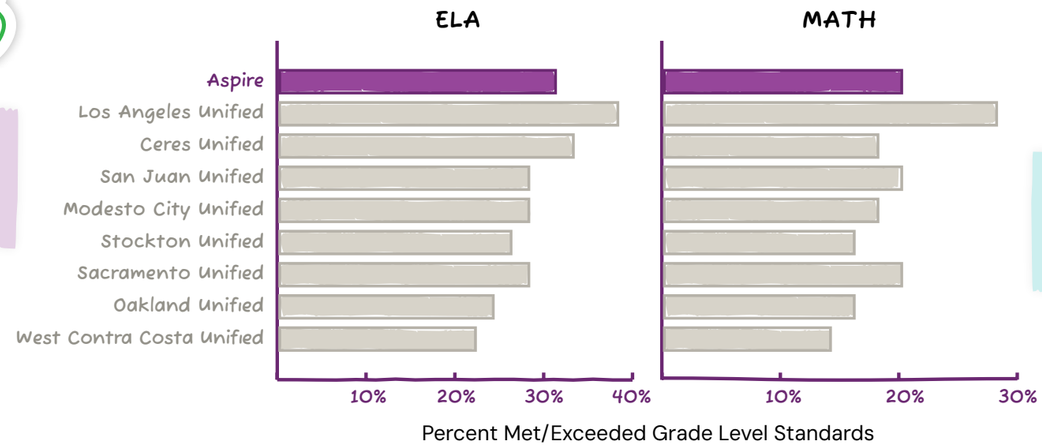
- **Reinvigorated student-led conferences** and **individual learning plans** where all students are setting goals and monitoring their progress
- **Expanded career pathways** and experiential learning through **San Joaquin A+** to offer employer **industry tours** and **summer internship opportunities**

Areas for Growth & Continued Focus

- Increase opportunities for mentorship, internships, and **career-focused field trips**
- **Expanding** resources to extend **special education** best practices across all schools

Academic Achievement

Aspire Proficiency Rates Compared to Similar School Districts



Percent Met/Exceeded Grade Level Standards

★ Aspire scholars outperform nearly all school districts with similar demographics



Joy

We strive to make Aspire and our communities a joyful place to learn, work, and be, together. Our work to shift outcomes is hard, yet we persist and have gratitude and pride in the journey. Joy makes it all possible!

Strengths & Celebrations

Bay Area

- More than **300 Aspire scholars and families** came together for basketball and cheerleading tournaments and carnival games at the **first annual Spring Jamboree**



Los Angeles

- **Increased cultural celebrations** including mariachi performances, Native American bird singers, and LGTBQIA presentations



Central Valley

- **Vision 2030 Summit** brought teammates from all schools to have a **shared sense of vision and direction**

Across Aspire

- **21 schools celebrated National Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day,** honoring the bravery and legacy of civil rights icon Ruby Bridges



Areas for Growth & Continued Focus

- **Increasing experiential learning opportunities** for every scholar to enrich and complement their curriculum
- Securing funding to **strengthen positive behavior intervention** supports

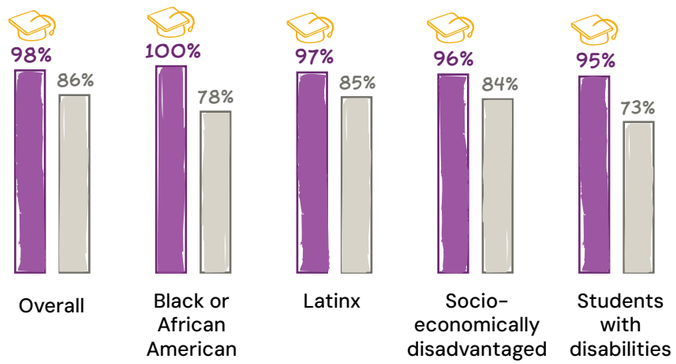
Aspire Class of 2024 Celebrates:

- **713 Graduates**
- **98% Graduation Rate**
- **11 Seniors earned AA degrees**



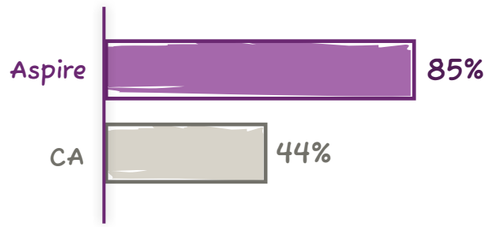
Our Graduation Rates

2024 Aspire vs. CA Graduation Rates





Our A-G Rates



To **attend a UC or CSU**, students are required to take **15 courses** in seven areas: **history, English, math, science, foreign language, arts, and an elective.** Each **category has its own letter, A-G,** which is where the requirements get their name. These courses overlap with **high school requirements,** but they are also **more rigorous.**



Our Appreciation

We are deeply grateful for the philanthropic partners who have supported us in the 2024-25 school year.

In 2024-2025, the Aspire Public Schools Foundation secured over **$16 million in competitive grants and philanthropic support** to fund 10 initiatives supporting scholars and schools.



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Join us as we Step Into Tomorrow!

We appreciate your partnership for the opportunities to **empower students, uplift communities**, and **drive meaningful change**. Our Annual Gratitude Report highlights the **incredible impact of your support—and the work still ahead**.

This year, we have the chance to:

- **Expand access to high-quality education for ALL scholars**
- **Enhance innovative learning experiences and multiple post-secondary pathways**
- **Strengthen support for our teammates**

Your support makes all the difference. Together, we can unlock the full potential of every scholar. **Thank you for being a part of this journey!**

Support Aspire Now

