

2025-2026 PROGRAM RESULTS

Aspire's 2025-26 program/fiscal year challenged us and inspired us. Federal funding cuts to AmeriCorps in April 2025 created a 30% gap in our budget, but thanks to our strong community partnerships, robust fundraising efforts, excellent financial management, and a deep commitment to our values, we pivoted quickly. We served a record number of students in our 2025 summer learning camp. While the funding cuts meant we had to start the school year off with one empty classroom, we raised funds to re-open the classroom in January 2026, restoring our student reach to 144. This year also saw the launch of a new five-year strategic roadmap and we have already made strong progress, though we still face uncertainty. We know that Aspire's programming is more important now than ever, and we will continue to serve our community with dignity, respect, and care.

"When I was in first grade, I didn't know how to read first grade books. But then I learned and then I got better and then my homework started being correct. My Aspire teacher encouraged me to not give up, and she told me that I was a good reader. Then I started liking reading and reading a bunch of books."

– Aspire Student



YEAR-END RESULTS SUMMARY

67%

of students improved their reading

67%

of students improved their math

74%

of returning students improved their reading

88%

of students felt safe after school most/all of the time

217

unique students served

144

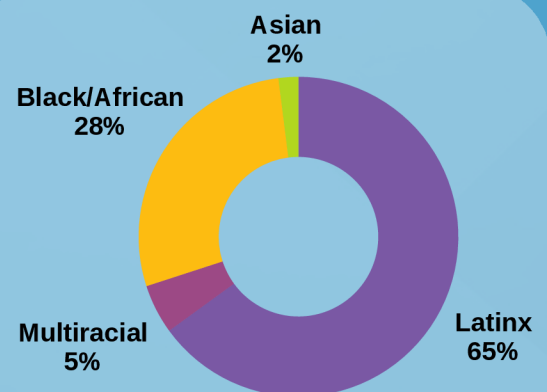
students served after school

303+

parents attended a program

343

visits to our new food pantry



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Aspire is proud to bring together a diverse group of students. Our student community this year included 100% students of color, 97% from low income households, and 74% speaking a language other than English at home.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



New Makerspace and Expanded STEM Program

Aspire opened our new STEM Makerspace, providing deeper opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning and interactive programming, while offering a safe and flexible space for parent and community gatherings. Our new Makerspace is allowing us to expand STEM programming and partnerships, exposing Aspire students and the community to subjects like robotics, digital literacy, and ecology. And we're seeing great results! This year **67% of students improved their math level**, up from 56% just last year. Wow!

Deeper Support for Families

After hearing from parents and families that they wanted more support, we transitioned our Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator into a full-time staff position. Between her work and expanded community partnerships, we've provided deeper support for families at a time of increased need. We opened a small food pantry, hosted workshops on computer literacy and family cooking classes, held a back to school resource fair night, and worked 1:1 to ensure families were connected with the resources that they needed. And families responded: we saw a **122% increase** in attendance of our family engagement programming this year!



Piloted New Social-Emotional Curriculum

Aspire has incorporated daily social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into programming for years. Based on positive feedback and increased need, **we expanded the curriculum this year**. We partnered with Teach Peace of Mind to implement a new curriculum to help students develop mindfulness, resolve conflicts, and engage with social justice. Highlights include lessons on mindful breathing exercises, developing visualization skills to calm down, relating physical feelings to emotions, and more.

Plans for a New Staffing Model

As Aspire creates a new permanent staffing model after the AmeriCorps funding cuts, we are focused on creating career pipelines for young people in South Arlington. In Fall 2026, with support from a generous donor, we will launch a **youth apprenticeship program**, partnering with Arlington Thrive and nationally acclaimed apprenticeship expert FHI 360. Apprentices will plan lessons and work directly in the classroom with students, ensuring Aspire can continue providing the same level of highly personalized and engaging instruction for our students. They will also participate in robust training and build skills in the youth development and education fields, setting them up for successful careers.

