



SUPPORTING BRIGHT **FUTURES**



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2026

FINAL REPORT



Organization Name:

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Reporting Period:

FY26: July 1, 2025 - June 30,
2026

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Fynboh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Paula Fynboh, Chief Executive
Officer

A Year of Challenges, Resilience, Joy, and New Beginnings

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 and continued most programming as planned. 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 during the school year.



We continue to deepen partnerships with schools and other nonprofits to support our families and other Arlington residents and respond to needs as they arise. Furthermore, Aspire's staff, Board, and students have served on panels, presented at conferences, and used their voices to ensure that our community understands the challenges that many of their neighbors face and how we can all support each other.

In September 2025, we launched a new five-year strategic roadmap, which we developed in partnership with our students, families, staff, board members, and community partners. The ambitious plan focuses on four priorities: increasing student achievement, expanding our holistic programming, strengthening strategic partnerships, and building a sustainable staffing model. We've also left room for flexibility to respond to new and changing needs over the next five years. Just one year in, we have already made strong progress: we expanded STEM programming, piloted a new social-emotional curriculum, started developing a new logic curriculum focused on critical thinking and problem solving, launched new resources for students' parents/caregivers, and created a plan for a new staffing model to fill the AmeriCorps gap and create employment pathways for local youth.

We still face a lot of uncertainty. Although we filled the AmeriCorps gap in the short term, we are exploring long-term sustainable funding sources to fill the gap moving forward. 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. **Thank you for being part of this important mission.**

Student Spotlight: *"Being able to come to Aspire afterschool and during the summer makes me feel grateful because other kids don't have a chance to go to afterschool things and do activities."*



Summer Program (June 2025-August 2025)

Program Highlights

Our camp theme “Mythical Realms” encouraged students to explore new ideas and dream big, which was particularly important given the challenges facing the world and their families. Students also received academic support to reinforce skills and prevent summer learning loss. Activities included:

- Listening to a read-aloud about fairies and reading independently, then writing their own fairy tales that featured fairies who saved small animals from foxes, a fairy who plucked a star from the sky to make her magical wand, and more.
- Building model castles that could withstand a dragon attack using recycled materials. They worked in teams to design their castle, build models, and test stability.
- Creating underwater deities related to their cultures. These included an Egyptian goddess of water and rain, and a Brazilian goddess of lakes, rivers, and fish.
- Receiving a lesson from the Skullduggery Crew, a local group of historically inspired pirates, on what it was like to be a real pirate.



Results from 2025 Summer Program:

- We served **141** students for six weeks (7 hours per day) of educational summer learning camp (111 students in 3rd through 5th grades and 30 middle school students).
- Students had an average attendance rate of **72%**.
- Among students who participated in all six weeks of summer camp and had testing data from the spring of 2025 and the fall of 2025:
 - 83% maintained or improved their reading level over the summer break (nationwide, students lose an average of 15% of their school year growth in reading over the summer, according to a 2022 study from the University of Colorado Boulder).
 - 84% maintained or improved their math level over the summer break (nationwide, students lose an average of 35% of their school year growth in math over the summer).
- 46 high school students volunteered 1,000+ hours to support Aspire's summer camp (15% were former Aspire students who returned to mentor the younger children).

Student Spotlight: *“I like going to the pool and the field trips and sticker store and having summer friends and summer memories. I love summer memories!”*

Learning ROCKS Afterschool Program (September 2025 - June 2026)

Program Highlights

Over the course of the school year, **Aspire reached 144 students**, providing one-on-one homework help, tutoring, social-emotional learning, and academic support aligned with each student's unique needs. Other program highlights included:

- **We expanded our middle school programming by opening an additional classroom.** Since our middle school pilot first began, we've had more interest than we've been able to meet. As the majority of our elementary school students want to continue with Aspire in middle school, we're now able to continue supporting more of them during a critical transitional period.
- **We saw especially strong results among returning students**, demonstrating the value and impact of Aspire over time. The first year of the program is often an adjustment for students, with many entering Aspire testing 2+ grade levels behind and having internalized the false idea that they are not as smart or talented as their peers. The first year they're at Aspire is largely focused on building their confidence and developing trusted relationships, and by the next year, they're truly able to grow.
- **Students participated in project-based learning activities** to help them make connections across subject areas, put their learning into action, and apply their learnings to real-world situations. Projects included learning about light, creating a pinhole camera, and developing film; designing a mini golf course, pitching their ideas to "funders" (Aspire staff), and constructing the course based on their blueprints; writing their own comic books and learning about different parts of a story (plot, rising action, climax, etc.); and more.
- **Our science fair went digital this year.** Students presented their findings via an online slideshow instead of a trifold board. They learned how to use a computer and digital tools responsibly and practiced their typing. Guest judges from our corporate partner HDR graded each project. The winner was a project investigating which cleaning product is most effective at removing stains.

Among afterschool program students, 105 were elementary schoolers (50 at Arlington Mill, 30 at Randolph Elementary School, and 25 at Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School) and 39 were middle schoolers. **39%** of all students were returning students, and **70%** of middle schoolers were returning.



Literacy

Aspire focuses on literacy because of the impacts that literacy has on students' academic opportunity, lifetime earnings, and ability to navigate the world. As technology and AI grow, it's important for students to have a strong grounding in literacy. In Arlington, students face significant inequalities, with economically disadvantaged Black and Hispanic students in Arlington Public Schools scoring 14% and 30%, respectively, below the average Standards of Learning reading score (Arlington County, 2025).

At Aspire, students receive at least 30 minutes of daily literacy programming. Programming varies to ensure students stay engaged, and includes read-alouds, literacy games, group activities, and independent reading, which helps students connect with characters, make inferences, improve comprehension, and learn vocabulary. Since implementing our research-based Structured Literacy Curriculum, we have seen strong growth in key areas like phonics, and we continue to hone this curriculum so that we are building off of the school-day curriculum and reinforcing key skills.

Impact and Outcomes:

- At the beginning of the year, **91%** of students were 1+ grade levels behind in reading, and **66%** were 2+ grade levels behind.
- By the end of the year, **67%** **improved their reading level or tested on/above grade level.**
- Among returning students, **74%** improved their reading level/tested on grade level. In fact, among students who have been with Aspire for 3+ years, **79%** improved/tested on grade level, demonstrating the year-over-year impacts of Aspire's programming.

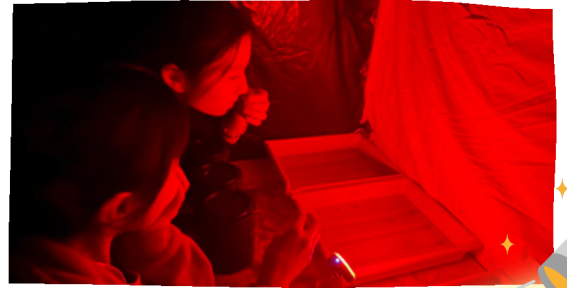


Student Spotlight: *"When I was in first grade, I didn't know how to read first grade books. But then I learned and then I got better and then my homework started being correct. My Aspire teacher encouraged me to not give up, and she told me that I was a good reader. Then I started liking reading and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

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)

We opened our new STEM Makerspace this fall. It has provided students with more opportunities for hands-on activities. They experimented with air pressure on everything from hardboiled eggs to soda cans and hot plates (when they saw a soda can implode in less than a second, they couldn't believe their eyes). They also learned about oil spills and explored which method was most effective in cleaning them up, designed "wildlife crossing" bridges for animals, participated in digital literacy lessons about online research, and much more. They are thrilled to have a dedicated space where they can really explore.

Furthermore, our ongoing math tutoring and instruction reinforces the school curriculum. Based on student testing data and input from school teachers, we have focused especially on multiplication tables, standard units of measurement, estimation, and negative numbers this year. We make sure students have a solid foundation in math that they can build on when they learn complex math in higher grades.



Impact and Outcomes:

Student Spotlight: "My favorite part of Aspire is learning math and seeing my teachers!"

- At the beginning of the year, **91%** of students were 1+ grade levels behind in math, and **56%** were 2+ grade levels behind.
- By the end of the year, **67% improved their reading level or tested on/above grade level.**
 - Compared to last year, when **56%** of students improved/tested on grade level, this is a big jump! **Our newly expanded STEM curriculum is showing strong results.**
- Among returning students, **74%** improved/tested on grade level in math. For students who have been with Aspire for 2 years, **77%** improved/tested on grade level, again showing the positive cumulative effect of participating in Aspire's programming year over year.
- For students with an IEP or WIDA (students with learning disabilities or multilingual learners), **82%** improved/tested on grade level.
- **63%** of students said they felt confident using a computer to research unknown questions and **55%** said they felt confident in using a computer for things other than social media.
 - While there is room for improvement as we refine our technology/digital lessons, students have already expressed more confidence in navigating the internet and interest in activities like coding, digital editing, and photography.

Social-Emotional Development

Aspire has incorporated daily social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into programming for years. This programming helps students be more receptive to learning new things, accept that failing is part of learning, build resiliency, and develop positive relationships with their peers and trusted adults. As young people face a rapidly shifting environment and need to adapt quickly, these skills are very important.

Based on positive feedback from students, families, and school partners, as well as 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, understand brain science, resolve conflicts, and engage with social justice. Highlights include lessons on practicing mindful breathing exercises, developing visualization skills to calm down and focus, relating physical feelings to emotions, and more.

Impact and Outcomes:

- **88%** of all students reported feeling safe after school most/all of the time.
- **75%** of elementary school students and **81%** of middle school students said that Aspire helps them feel ready for school and helps them explore new interests.
- **78%** of elementary school students and **75%** of middle school students reported finishing their homework on time most/all of the time.
- **94%** of middle school students said that they feel that there is an adult available when they need help most/all of the time.
- **69%** of middle school students reported that their parents were never/rarely able to help them with their schoolwork and homework, because their parents work multiple jobs and/or have language/education barriers of their own.



Student Spotlight: *"I like being in Aspire because people make me happy. Sometimes people make me sad, but a teacher or a friend at Aspire can calm me down. People here at Aspire make me process all the things and make me feel better and then I get happy and I can do my homework."*

Other Holistic Year-Round Support

Health and Wellness

Aspire provides a hot meal for students every day after school and in the summer (we also offer an afternoon snack in the summer). We know that students can't learn on an empty stomach. This year, we also piloted a new small food pantry and cooking/nutrition classes (these classes are possible because we have the space and equipment in our new Makerspace). This expanded programming is in response to families sharing that they are experiencing increased financial and emotional stress, and that they feel very safe at Aspire. We designed the food pantry so that when families come to pick up their students, they can quickly and easily pick up food from the pantry without having to make additional stops. Our middle school students are helping with the food pantry by taking inventory, which is an empowering opportunity for them to learn new skills. Based on strong positive results from this pilot year, we are working to secure new reliable sources for food for the pantry and potentially expand our reach.

Impact and Outcomes:

- We hosted 12 parent nutrition, food safety resource workshops, and parent/child cooking classes this year. The parent/child cooking classes were in partnership with the Healthy Community Action Team (HCAT), reaching 37 parents and 44 children.
- Since opening in mid-November, our food pantry has had 343 visits by approximately 156 unique individuals. We also distributed 100 groceries and grocery gift cards at our winter holiday party.
- A cooking guild, a six-week special interest club where students can explore new activities, was led by an Aspire alum, who shared that one of her favorite memories of Aspire was the cooking guild she participated in. *"After [cooking guild], I was able to make snacks and meals at home, without needing help. I could even make pancakes for my parents!"*



Family Spotlight: *"This food is not only Thanksgiving food, it is a food for a week because I don't have a job and I need to feed my three kids, thank you Aspire."*

Family Programming

In July 2025, Aspire transitioned our Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator into a full-time staff position. Because of this and community partnerships, we have provided deeper support for families at a time of increased need. For example, we held a back to school resource fair night where we provided free backpacks, shared information about other direct service providers, and offered assistance with the ParentVue site (Arlington Public Schools' online portal for parents). We also hosted financial literacy workshops, cooking classes, and information sessions on the resources available in the community for rent assistance, library programming, and more. Additionally, we reached 60 parents through computer literacy sessions in partnership with Computer CORE. Everyone who completed a six-week session received a free laptop from Computer CORE. Once the first six-week session ended, parents used their newly-honed digital skills to create a petition for more sessions! Parents have told us that they were particularly grateful for how the sessions helped them become more confident helping their children with school assignments.

Impact and Outcomes:

- We reached **303+** parents across all of our parent engagement programming.
 - That's more than double the number of parents we reached last year, demonstrating the increased demand for programming and support.
- ✨ We hosted **25** parent engagement programs/events.



Family Spotlight: *"Aspire is a strong place of community full of virtues, dedication, pure love, service, and care."*

Our Commitment to Understanding our Impact

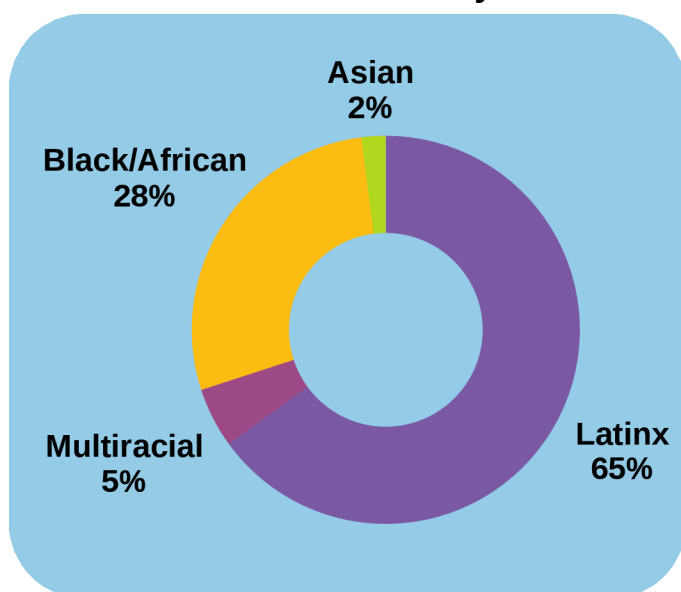
Our curriculum and approach are informed by our 30+ years of experience, partnerships with school teachers, and evidence-based best practices. Aspire uses the iReady diagnostic tool to test students in reading and math at the beginning and end of the school year. This provides breakdowns of each student's progress over time and areas for improvement. We use this information to personalize our programming, determine areas of focus, and measure the impact of our program overall. To ensure we take into account students' holistic progress, we also survey students at the beginning and end of the year, survey parents to measure their perception of students' progress and Aspire's services, and conduct semesterly classroom observations. While we do not test students during our summer camp, due to the shorter timeframe, we track attendance rates and use end/beginning of school year data for returning students to measure summer learning for campers.

Student Demographics

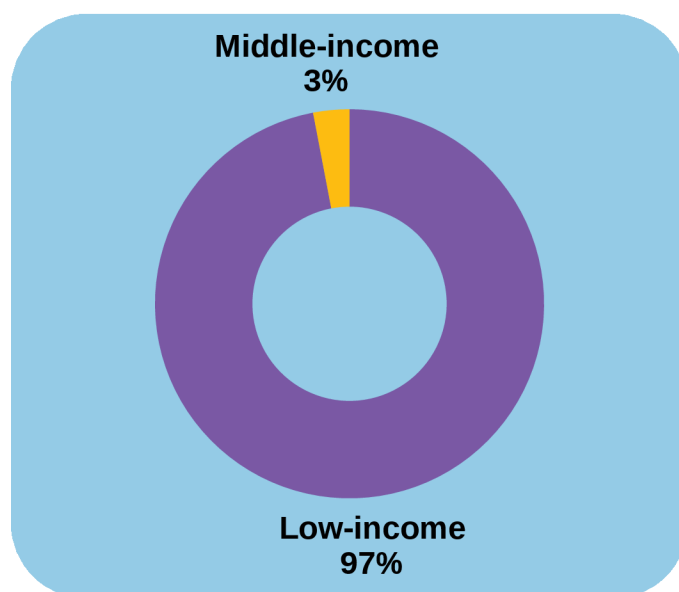
Aspire is proud to bring together a diverse group of students. Our student community this year included:

- 217 unduplicated students across summer and afterschool programming.
- 100% students of color (65% Hispanic, 28% Black/African, 2% Asian, 5% Multiracial/Other).
- 97% live in low-income households (determined by qualification for free/reduced lunch). At least 95% are from extremely/very low-income households (based on families' self-reported data).
- 74% speak a language other than English at home (our students collectively speak 11 languages).
- 19% are learning English as a second language in school and 28% have specific learning needs/accomodations at school.

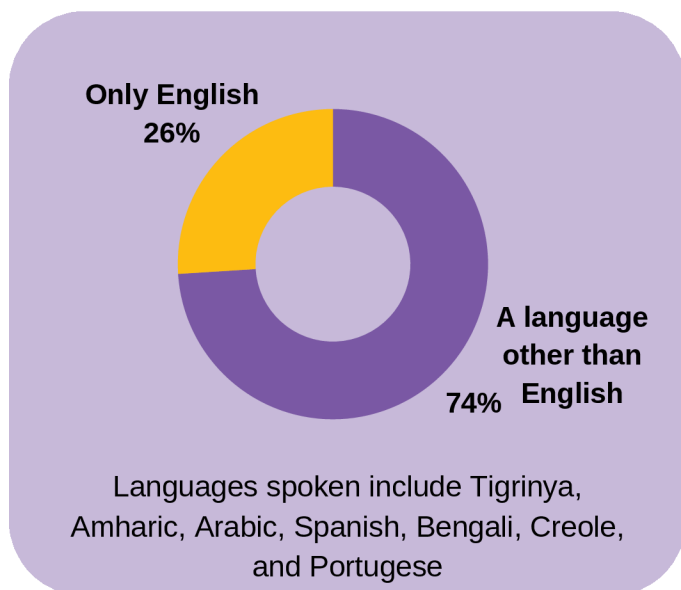
Race & Ethnicity



Low-Income Households



Languages Spoken at Home



Our Community

Student Stories

Aspire's students face systemic challenges that make it harder for them to navigate the educational system. They work hard to learn and grow, and while we can only spotlight a few of them, they've all made progress in building their confidence, strengthening their skills, and improving their academics.

For example, one of our seventh grade students this year started Aspire in fifth grade, when her family arrived in the US. She didn't speak a lot of English and tested at a kindergarten level. After three years at Aspire, she is now testing on grade level in both reading and math. She recently applied to George Mason University's Early Identification Program (where students can earn guaranteed admission and a full scholarship by maintaining a 3.2 GPA throughout high school) with an essay about her journey of learning English, and was accepted! Her teacher shared, *"She is so motivated and such a hard worker."*

Another one of our students has made great strides at taking on the challenges of school. One of our instructors shared, *"One of my first memories at Aspire is [this student] just staring at the cover page of the Big Nate book for the whole 30-minute reading period. He now willingly pulls out his homework and is so on top of everything."* In addition to his academic progress, he also displayed great leadership and spoke on behalf of Aspire to the Arlington County Board this past spring!

Student Spotlight: *"I like Homework Help because we play games and it makes learning fun. We read together and I get help with reading. My favorite book is 'A Wolf Called Fire'. I've improved my reading at Aspire and I know many more vocabulary words... Because I have been able to go to Aspire, when I grow up, I want to be a lawyer."*



Volunteers, Partners, and Community Events

During FY26, 143 volunteers donated 1,950+ hours of their time to Aspire. These include weekly volunteers who build relationships with students over the school year, community event volunteers who provide personalized support to students, and 84 high school volunteers who serve as a near-peer mentor for younger students while taking on leadership roles in their community (12% of our annual high school volunteers are former Aspire students who want to continue being part of Aspire even after they age out of our program). We also launched a new volunteer software that makes it easier to sign up for shifts.

We worked with a record number of partners to host events and lessons, enhance our support, and meet the increased needs in our community.

Programmatic partnerships included:

Affordable Homes and Communities (AHC); Arlington Community Federal Credit Union; the Arlington Department of Human Services; Arlington Food Assistance Center; Arlington Public Libraries; Arlington Public Schools; Arlington Schools Hispanic Parents Association; Boolean Girl; Cake4Kids; Capital Area Food Bank; Computer CORE; Corazon de America; Dominion Guild; Doorways; George Mason University; Healthy Community Action Team; the Little Free Art Gallery; KidsGiving; Kitchen of Purpose; Marymount University; Morgan Stanley; Our Lady Queen of Peace; Phoenix Bikes; the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City; Read Early and Daily (R.E.A.D.); Rock Spring UCC; and Transwestern.



These partnerships allowed us to do more for our students and families, including distributing gifts and grocery gift cards to make the holiday season special, providing computer literacy classes, creating pathways for students to qualify for guaranteed college admission and a full scholarship, and creating art that was displayed in the community. **We are grateful for the volunteers and partners who make our students feel seen, expose them to new opportunities, and expand their imaginations.**

Student Spotlight: *"I like being able to work with a volunteer, and all of the volunteers help me grow my strengths and learn better!"*

Our Team

After AmeriCorps funding cuts, we shifted our staffing model to maintain financial sustainability and keep the low student to teacher ratios that ensure high-quality support. Thanks to a robust fundraising plan and strong community support, we shifted to a working model for the 2025-26 school year while building a long-term staffing model for future years. Our 26 person team includes 21 program staff members (18 permanent, 3 summer), 76% of whom are former Aspire AmeriCorps members. Several former AmeriCorps members are working in new staff positions, such as STEM Program Coordinator, Math Program Coordinator, Arts Program Coordinator, and more. They split their time between planning lessons/projects within their expertise area during the morning and leading classrooms after school.

We also formed a new partnership with Arlington Public Schools' Work-Based Learning to host high school interns, similar to our existing partnership with Urban Alliance. Furthermore, we plan to launch a new youth apprenticeship program in the fall, which will create career pipelines for young people in our community and ensure greater sustainability in our staffing model.



Board and Staff Demographics

Aspire's team reflects the identities, cultures, races, and life experiences of students and families. For example: as of June 30th, 58% of our staff represent BIPOC communities, 62% are former AmeriCorps members, and 100% of our senior program staff are bilingual in English and at least one other language. We know how relational education is, and it is important that our staff stay year over year to build relationships with students. Even after funding cuts, we have emphasized pay equity and retention for staff. We prioritized hiring back AmeriCorps members and hiring directly from the community we serve.

Our Board of Directors brings a variety of experiences, perspectives, and identities. For example, 61% of our FY26 board identify as BIPOC, 50% have lived experience with the educational opportunity gap, and 61% identify as women. Among board leadership, 60% identify as Black and 60% identify as women. In addition to designing programming to help students overcome systemic barriers, Aspire's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) extends to other organization-wide efforts such as having a diverse staff, involving our students and community in strategic planning, and committing to pay equity.

Staff Spotlight: *"Aspire is a safe space, a form of community that I haven't seen before. [The students] really do love being here. They have as much passion for this place as everybody else who works here."* - Erica Andrade, Media Program Coordinator

Awards and Recognition

Media coverage from this year (available at www.aspireafterschool.org/media-coverage/) includes **Good Morning America**, **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**, **CNN**, and more. Recent awards and recognition include:

- **2026 Afterschool Ambassador (National Afterschool Association).** Aspire's CEO, Paula Fynboh, was selected to be one of just 16 Afterschool Ambassadors from across the country to continue raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs.
- **Powerful Partner Award (Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth).** Aspire was recognized for empowering youth to make healthy choices, our partnership with the Arlington Healthy Community Action Team, and our commitment to working together on community problems.
- **Semi-Finalist for the Board Leadership Award (Center for Nonprofit Advancement).** This award process distinguishes Boards that go above and beyond to bring new levels of leadership to their role, resulting in positive changes and notable successes for their organizations.
- **Honored Citizen Award (Arlington Public Schools).** The parent of an Aspire student and advocate for Aspire, Geovanna Sejas, was recognized as one of five community members who have gone above and beyond in supporting our students and schools over many years.
- **Woman of Vision Award, Nonprofit Honoree (Arlington County Commission on the Status of Women).** Aspire's CEO, Paula Fynboh, was recognized for her accomplishments and contributions to improving the lives, opportunities, and roles in the community of Arlington women.
- **Spirit of Community Award (Arlington Community Foundation).** Aspire's Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator, Claudia Ramirez Cuéllar, was recognized for her community leadership and tireless commitment to improving the quality of life in Arlington.
- **Out-of-School Time Champion Award (Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time).** Aspire's Program Director, Anna Faulkner, was recognized for her dedication and achievement in the field.
- **Youth Mental Health Corps Participant & Fellow (Serve Virginia).** Aspire was selected as one of eight programs in Virginia's inaugural Youth Mental Health Corps (YMHC), and our YMHC Fellow, Dakota Yoon, was chosen to speak at the ServeVA Youth Mental Health Corps Launch.
- **Mentor of the Year Award (Urban Alliance).** One of our program team members was recognized for their leadership and passion for supporting the growth of our Urban Alliance interns.

Aspire's Recent Media Coverage Includes:

The Chronicle of
Philanthropy



The Washington Post

Finances

We continue to navigate the loss of AmeriCorps funding, which was previously a consistent and reliable source of funding that covered 30% of our budget. Thanks to strong fundraising and partnerships, effective financial management, and strategic programming and operations efforts, Aspire was able to end FY26 with a favorable variance. These funds will be allocated two ways: (1) they will help us build our reserves, to ensure that we are prepared for future uncertainty and changes, and (2) they will be reinvested in our programming for FY27, in alignment with our values and our commitment to meeting the increased needs we're seeing from students and families.

Our ability to reinvest a favorable variance in FY26 to FY27 is important. For example, we received a one-time grant from Arlington County to re-open a middle school classroom and bring us back up to pre-federal funding cut enrollment numbers, but that grant ends in Spring 2027. While we have made every effort to reduce costs and increase efficiency ahead of potential future revenue challenges, we do not want to reduce costs so much that we negatively impact program quality or impact. We aim to continue serving the same number of students, maintain low student-teacher ratios, continue offering programming at no cost to families, grow our curriculum and services to respond to student/family needs, and pay staff fair wages. In FY27, we will also make initial investments to re-build our staffing model, which will incur upfront costs but set us up for longer term sustainability. Therefore, we are working hard to secure new funding partners, increase funding from current partners, and explore multi-year funding opportunities that ensure greater sustainability moving forward.



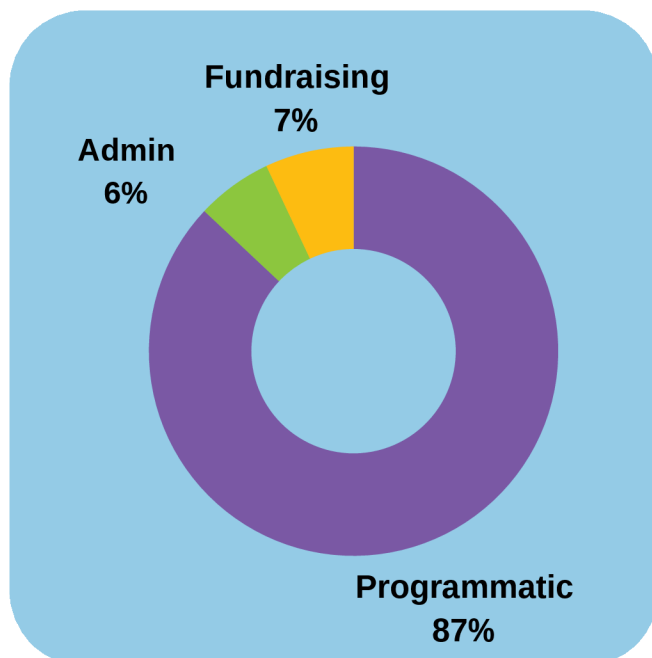
We are grateful for our supporters at all levels who collectively make Aspire's work possible, and we also rely on in-kind donations, partner resources, and volunteers to offset costs and bring more services to students.

The following corporate and foundation funders contributed \$25,000 or more to Aspire this year: Amazon, the Greater Washington Community Foundation, the Hattie M. Strong Foundation, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the New York Life Foundation, the Philip L. Graham Fund, the RSM US Foundation, and the Washington Forrest Foundation.

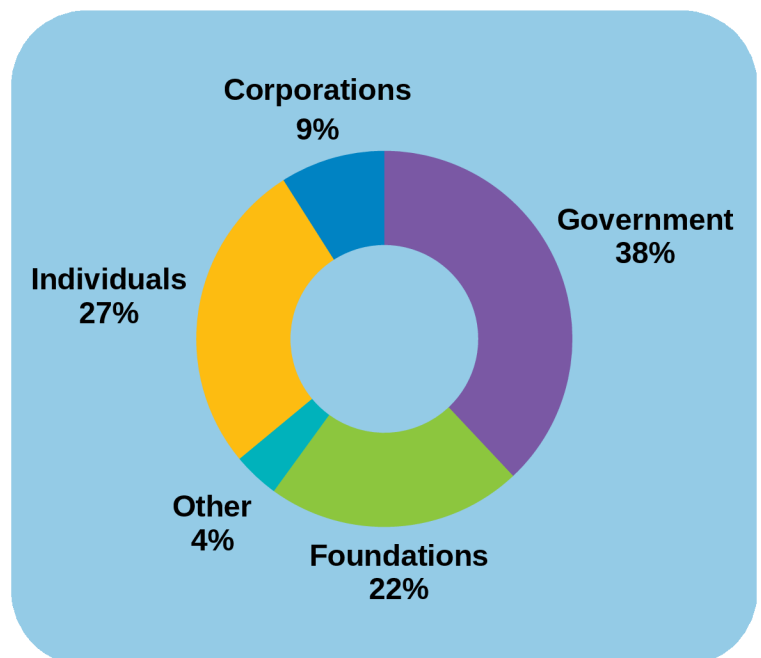
By the Numbers:

- Total revenue: \$1,858,917; total expenses: \$1,610,224. Favorable variance: \$248,693.
- This difference is attributed to the generosity of our community, and our robust fundraising efforts as outlined in our new strategic roadmap, which include intentional partnerships, exploration of new funding opportunities, and deeper engagement with current donors/funders.
- This revenue includes a record-breaking fall fundraising gala and year-end fundraising campaign, helping us surpass our individual giving goals by \$178,692 (155%), as well as higher than expected revenue among foundations, government, and community partners.
- We also received \$31,816.74 of settlement funds from the lawsuit Aspire joined against the termination of our AmeriCorps grant - 24% of the total lost funding from our previous fiscal year.
- 100% of our Board contributed financially to Aspire, as well as 100% of our Board Emeritus.
- We brought in 13 new funding opportunities during the year and were awarded several highly selective grants, including the Arlington County Afterschool Grant (in partnership with Phoenix Bikes) to expand our middle school programming.

Expenses



Revenue



Looking Ahead

As we plan for 2026-27, we are excited to build on our momentum and launch two pilot programs that will impact our students and support Aspire's long-term sustainability.

New Initiatives

- **Launching a logic curriculum.** As students navigate a changing educational and technological environment, our team, families, and school partners have noticed that students need support to develop critical thinking skills, practice observation and problem solving, and nurture their curiosity. Lessons will focus on topics like making inferences, identifying patterns, asking good questions, fact vs opinion, decision making, and more. Once formalized, this curriculum will ensure that students can identify misinformation, use reliable sources to form their own ideas and opinions, and safely navigate the technology that is deeply ingrained in their daily lives.
- **Launching a new staffing model that will deepen our partnerships and create career pipelines for young people in South Arlington.** We will launch a youth apprenticeship program in Fall 2026, partnering with Arlington Thrive and nationally acclaimed apprenticeship expert FHI 360. Apprentices will plan lessons and work directly in the classroom with students, helping to ensure 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, which will set them up for successful careers.

We would be happy to discuss these plans in more detail as we launch the programming and search for new partners to help us make this work impactful and sustainable.

Aspire's work is not possible without the partnership of community members, partners, and financial supporters who come together to create a network of care and community. Thank you for believing that Aspire's work matters and our students' futures are bright!

