

**aspire!**  
Afterschool Learning



# Building THRIVING FUTURES



Supporting our students beyond recovery through Aspire!'s next three-year strategic framework.





# INVESTING IN A FUTURE WHERE STUDENTS GROW AND THRIVE!

Paula Fynboh, Executive Director

Aspire!'s mission and work have always centered on the needs of our students and families. This was evident in our unprecedented response during the critical first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, doubling the hours we serve our students in person and pivoting to address family needs while schools were closed. However, while students have returned to the classroom, the lingering impacts of missed learning remain. The pandemic has only widened the opportunity gap. Pandemic-related missed learning impacts all students, but has a disproportionate impact on historically underserved students. As a result, Aspire! students are now entering our program much further behind previous cohorts.

We will not give up on our students. We will not abandon our expectations of who can catch up, learn, or exceed. Adopted in May 2022, Aspire!'s next three-year strategic framework is a bold vision for growth rooted in our core values, and builds upon our long history of proven results in the community we serve.

### We know that for our students to have thriving futures:

- 1) Recovery is not enough. Our students need every opportunity to not only make up for lost learning, but to have access to the learning support that will help them reach their full potential.
- 2) Historically underserved students need access to the same opportunities that challenge their more affluent peers' imagination, open doors to emerging fields, and develop a lifelong love of learning. Aspire!'s afterschool and summer programs provide access to robust literacy and math interventions and hands-on learning experiences that accelerate learning.
- 3) More students need access to Aspire!'s award-winning program and at NO COST to their families, as demonstrated by record enrollment in Aspire!'s 2022 summer and fall programs (and more students on a waiting list).

## We believe in:

<b>GROWTH</b>	We Aspire! to support our students and to empower them to reach their goals.
<b>CONNECTION</b>	We Aspire! to bring our community together to create a sense of belonging for our students and their families.
<b>EQUITY &amp; ACCESS</b>	We Aspire! to provide access to students most impacted by the educational opportunity gap and treat Aspire! students and families with dignity, fairness, and respect.
<b>EXCELLENCE</b>	We Aspire! for excellence in our programs, from our students, and from our team.
<b>FUN &amp; CARING</b>	We Aspire! to approach every day with a nurturing spirit of playfulness and warmth.

# Key Priorities

Aspire! is embarking on an ambitious goal to nearly double the number of students we serve over the next three years, growing from 80 to 150 students served daily afterschool.

## GROWTH ALIGNED WITH EXCELLENCE

Aspire! continues to respond to the increased learning needs of our students accelerated by the pandemic and missed learning. We commit to reaching more students while maintaining our history of excellence through high-quality, holistic, and individualized support.

## GROWTH ALIGNED WITH ACCESS

Aspire! remains committed to serving students most impacted by the educational opportunity gap through increasing program access at our Arlington Mill location, increasing summer camp capacity, and keeping programs at NO COST for our families.

## ATTRACT AND RETAIN A DIVERSE AND TALENTED PROGRAM TEAM

Aspire! believes representation matters and students thrive when they build positive connections with staff, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers who reflect the rich cultural background of our students and families. Aspire! commits to furthering our equity and access values by developing, attracting, and retaining a diverse team and creating pathways for employment for former students and members of the communities we serve.

## STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND OUTCOMES

Aspire! believes a community approach to supporting historically underserved students and families works. We will grow our partnerships in order to execute our bold vision for growth.

**THE TIME TO INVEST IN OUR STUDENTS IS NOW! OUR COMMUNITIES THRIVE WHEN ALL KIDS THRIVE. WITHOUT SUPPORT, HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENTS COULD BE LEFT BEHIND.**



# OUR MISSION AND VISION

Aspire!'s mission is to expand learning opportunities that help historically underserved young people fulfill their potential through afterschool and summer learning programs that support and connect families, schools, and communities. Aspire! envisions an Arlington where all children have access to the support they need to succeed as learners, graduate high school, and grow as productive contributors.

There are few affordable or no-cost opportunities for low-income and historically underserved Arlington students to participate in daily, academically-focused afterschool and summer programs. This lack of high-quality afterschool enrichment contributes to a persistent opportunity gap – a gap made even wider by the pandemic. Aspire! currently operates three program sites in South Arlington along the Columbia Pike Corridor with partnerships through Arlington County and Affordable Housing (AHC and APAH).



## WHO WE SERVE

99% of students identify as students of color.

98% of students qualify for free and reduced fair lunch at Arlington Public Schools.

79% of students live in homes where English is not the only language spoken.

## ASPIRE!'S THEORY OF CHANGE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE RELEVANT: IMPROVING READING CHANGES LIVES

Reading proficiency in upper elementary is highly correlated with high school graduation.

When students read on grade level they are able to keep up with academic content and stay on track to graduate from high school.

Young adults have the opportunity to fulfill their full potential, lead productive lives, and become all they Aspire! to be.



Lost learning was highest among middle and upper elementary students who entered virtual learning at the crucial time when they were transitioning academically from learning to read, to reading to learn.

Aspire! provides 30 minutes of daily reading intervention and bolstered math and STEM support to address lost learning. Additionally, Aspire!'s new middle school program helps students most impacted by lost learning catch up and be on track for high school.

Aspire!'s holistic programs support the whole child, providing a safe, nurturing environment for students to grow and develop. Support includes daily social-emotional lessons, field trips to connect students with their community, a hot meal, career exploration, and hands-on STEAM learning opportunities.



Aspire! is deeply rooted in the South Arlington community it has been serving since 1994. In that time, we have honed a tried-and-true program model to successfully deliver real results each year. Aspire! connects the three main aspects of a student's life: school, afterschool/summer, and home/community. These pillars serve as the foundation of our strategic plan, which centers on the voice of our students and parents while also reflecting the voice of staff, volunteers, and partners at the school and county levels.

