

## BSU Continuous Improvement Report-2020 Renewal Application

### BSU Continuous Improvement Report

**Aspire Charter Academy**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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ENROLLMENT DIAGNOSTIC..... 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 4

STUDENT PERFORMANCE DIAGNOSTIC ..... 12

STAKEHOLDER DIAGNOSTIC ..... 20

ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL DIAGNOSTIC ..... 21

FINANCIAL DASHBOARD ..... 25

Attachment Summary ..... 26

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## BSU Continuous Improvement Report

### ENROLLMENT DIAGNOSTIC

Guidelines for Building an Enrollment Diagnostic

**Using the Enrollment Diagnostic:**

- a. Download the [Enrollment Diagnostic](#).
- b. Develop your institution's enrollment using the Enrollment Diagnostic Template.
- c. Upload your completed Enrollment Diagnostic in the attachment area below.
- d. You may enter an optional narrative about your Enrollment Diagnostic below. If you do not have an optional narrative, enter N/A.

N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS**

#### **Attachment Name**

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Aspire - Enrollment diagnostic attachment 2019

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### School and Community Overview

1. Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Aspire Charter Academy opened in the fall of 2008 to serve the city of Gary. Aspire is located at 4900 W. 15th Avenue in a building specifically constructed for the school. The founder, Mr. Richard J. Comer, and National Heritage Academies (NHA) designed the environment to focus on student learning. Aspire welcomes all students and has consistently enrolled to building capacity. Today we serve 625 students in grades K-8, of whom 93 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 12.6 percent qualify for special education services, and fewer than 1 percent of students are ELL. Students' demographic makeup has remained the same, with 93 percent identifying as Black or African American. School employees demographically generally reflect the student population, with 80 percent identifying as Black or African American. Gary has had the distinction of being one of the largest cities in Lake County, with manufacturing as its economic engine. At its peak, Gary's population had over 178,000 residents. From the late 1960s to present, the area has experienced long-term economic decline and a population loss of about 100,000 due to the steel companies shutting down or modernizing production. Gary's current population, of which 81 percent is Black or African American, has dropped to around 75,000. Its largest employer, US Steel, once an employer of over 32,000 people, now employs approximately 4,000 people. The economic decline has left 13,000 homes and buildings abandoned; over a third of all structures in Gary.

Unemployment and income losses can impact educational achievement by reducing families' abilities to provide a supportive learning environment, adequate health care, nutrition, and stable housing. Many Aspire families are affected by these challenges. Establishing strong parent responsibility, family engagement, student responsibility, and student achievement for many of the transient families is also challenging. Many students come to Aspire significantly below grade level. We typically face the challenge of quickly accelerating academic growth for these students so they can begin to perform at grade level. In fall 2017, 77 percent of newly enrolled students were below grade level in math, and 70 percent were below grade level in reading. In fall 2018, those percentages increased, with 85 and 76 percent of newly enrolled students below grade level in math and reading, respectively. This data verifies the need for high-quality school options for students in Gary. We readily accept these challenges, and we embrace the need to understand and accept these students without making excuses for academic results. Our founding Board members opened Aspire understanding the economic and social challenges facing Gary families and knowing that these challenges create or worsen classroom challenges. For this reason, it was critical to have a caring comprehensive learning environment for Aspire students and to engage parents on the importance of school safety, student attendance, and academic excellence. Mr. Richard J. Comer led our efforts to ensure that we achieved this end, from acquiring the land to consulting on the building of the school, to ensure a high-quality education while addressing high character standards to produce educated, productive citizens.

2. State the charter school's mission and describe the educational needs the school's founders were seeking to address in your community. Describe why this initiative is important to the community the school serves.

Our mission is to offer a high-quality education that emphasizes the learning of core academic knowledge and foundational character values. Parents, students, and staff work together to create a safe and caring environment where quality scholarship, punctuality, and good citizenship are developed. We also strive to nurture in our pupils the desire and capacity to be lifelong learners. Today, our mission serves as a rallying cry for the entire school community and guides our continuous improvement efforts. The mission is prominently displayed in the main entrance to the school, and it is regularly referenced in staff and Board meetings, school assemblies and parent communications. We reinforce it daily when students recite the school creed in unison: "We believe

we can. We are proud students of Aspire Charter Academy. We are exceptional because we work hard every day. We will successfully complete high school and college. We are dedicated, committed, and focused. We never fail because we never give up. We believe in ourselves. We believe in each other. We believe in Aspire. We believe."Before Aspire opened in 2008, steps had been taken to reform and improve the traditional education system in Gary. The founding Board believed that charter schools offered a chance to embrace reform by removing some political red tape to enable an education program focused on academics under an accountability structure. The Board partnered with National Heritage Academies, an education management organization, to build a school, design a program aligned to state standards, and to staff the school with high-quality leaders and teachers. Most important to the Board was student academic progress and ensuring all aspects of assisting students to reach their full potential. Therefore, the Board came together knowing Aspire could not be a one-size-fits-all school. The Board was, and remains, aware of the academic needs of the Gary children. We also know that it is a great responsibility to have a program that differentiates instruction by each student's learning style and level. One solution, one intervention program, is not going to meet every need. Additionally, to understand a student's academic needs, it is important that the Aspire staff understand where children are emotionally, socially, and behaviorally. Aspire leadership has recognized the importance of students being prepared for continual education, whether in college or through apprenticeships, to meet the competition in the world of work. Aspire focuses on preparing the students, and families, in acquiring the necessary skills to pursue a healthy quality of life through education. We prioritize expanding students' scope to encompass higher education, options in the workplace, and the importance of reading and math.

## School Design

1. Provide a brief summary of the school's key design elements and specific examples of how the school implements the key design elements. Key design elements support the implementation of the school's mission and make the school unique and distinct from any other school. Key design elements should all relate to the mission statement or the intentions set out in the school's original (or amended) charter.

Our school embodies our mission by focusing on four foundational pillars: academic excellence; student responsibility; character development; and parental partnerships:

- Academic excellence: We work intentionally to create a culture of academic excellence by giving students a challenging learning environment necessary to acquire knowledge and skills they will need to thrive in high school, college, and beyond. Aspire deans and teachers ensure this through weekly data-driven discussions about student learning.
- Student responsibility: Children thrive in an environment where they clearly understand what is expected of them, and after putting forth their best effort, they take pride in seeing the results. For example, our teachers conduct a student conference after fall assessments where teachers and students discuss individual growth goals and create a plan to achieve these goals. Data talks continue to take place throughout the year to track how students are progressing toward their goals.
- Character development: We continue to believe that great schools develop students' minds and hearts. Our character development curriculum builds on the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Through these lessons, students build and maintain strong personal character while also developing the qualities necessary to achieve academic success and become good citizens. Each month, students participate in a moral focus assembly in which staff and students discuss the monthly virtue.
- Parental partnerships: Aspire remains committed to fostering strong partnerships with parents. We actively engage parents in their children's learning, dedicate a Parent Room specifically to ongoing "anytime" interaction between parents and teachers. We consistently communicate with parents about their children's academic progress. We also hold literacy nights and parent workshops to strengthen parent partnerships and give parents the tools they need to support their student's academic success. In 2018-19, we implemented the "Power Plus Parent" initiative to offer parents opportunities and

incentives to attend school events. In addition, we invited parents to "side-by-side" days, when parents get a chance to sit with their child throughout the school day.

2. Does the school engage in a systematic, inclusive and comprehensive process to review, revise and communicate the school's mission and design? Please describe this process, and when it last occurred, or is planned.

We communicate our school mission and design to stakeholders in a variety of ways. The mission is prominently displayed in the main entrance to the school, and it is regularly referenced in staff and Board meetings, during school assemblies, in parent communications, and on the school website. Our scholars and staff are all able to recite the mission using our "ACA Creed" that we recite every morning and at every assembly. Classroom and building walk-throughs by leadership result in weekly discussions and follow-up activities to support teachers, whether it is improving transitions from one classroom to another, ensuring consistency in delivering the school's behavior model, or strengthening instructional skills and content by teacher or grade level. This advances Aspire's mission to emphasize the learning of core academic knowledge and foundational character values.

3. Describe any changes to the school's mission or substantial revisions to the educational program as described in the current charter that the school proposes to make for the next charter term. Discuss any associated challenges or risks.

Since opening in the fall of 2008, Aspire has remained dedicated to fulfilling our mission to offer a high-quality education that emphasizes the acquisition of core academic knowledge and foundational character values. Our mission remains the same, and our program has been strengthened to ensure consistent implementation. Much of the next school year will focus on enhancing the current program and building on momentum of improvements incorporated in 2018-19. Below are the ways Aspire is expanding academic improvements. Math stories, an approach to instruction that starts with a story with an embedded math problem, was effectively implemented in grades K-5, and we will continue to refine the use of this curricular tool. Aspire continues to expand its curricular tools to include Illustrative Math, to be implemented in grades 6-8. Illustrative Math is a research-based tool that uses problems to help students learn. Students learn by doing math, solving problems in mathematical and real-world contexts, and constructing arguments using precise language. In grade 8, we have added a focus on independent reading. Students choose books to read independently, and the teacher confers with each of them to give differentiated support based on individual ability. Teachers listen to each child read or talk about their reading, ending the session with a specific plan for the student as independent reading continues. CompassLearning, an online learning intervention program, will be implemented to help struggling students fill in learning gaps so that they can catch up to their grade level. CompassLearning integrates with the NWEA assessment to provide real-time goal-setting data. Each student will have a learning pad to work on activities aligned to personalized learning objectives. This tool gives teachers a dashboard to monitor progress and a student dashboard for academic goal-setting and tracking. We will continue striving to ensure that high-quality instruction occurs in each classroom, each day, so that student learning is accelerated. Student data will remain an important to inform instruction as we implement curricular tools and intervention strategies.

## Goals and Plans

1. State and provide an overview of the charter school's future goals. Summarize the plans for accomplishing these goals (e.g. academic benchmarks, organizational changes, facility improvements, financial stability).

Academic performance: In the next charter term, we will continue to focus on improving proficiency and growth rates. To track student progress, teachers and deans keep a data log with detailed information on assessment outcomes for each individual student and for the class as a whole.

Deans also maintain a "data wall" in their office that they update with weekly common assessment data from their wing. These data are then discussed during one-on-one meetings between deans and teachers. In addition, the staff lounge houses a data wall with all assessment data from grades 3-8. This wall helps everyone recognize trends that may be happening across multiple grades, and it provides the principal a summary, so she can identify how students are performing on critical standards. Aspire's one-year targets and progress for the 2019-20 school year are outlined below. Further details on the school's performance are provided in the 2019-20 One-Year Target Update attachment.

IN 1.1.g. At least 60 percent of students will achieve or exceed target growth in reading as measured by NWEA. Target 1: At least 55 percent of students achieve or exceed target growth in reading as measured by NWEA Fall-Winter growth from 2019 to 2020. Progress Update: Aspire surpassed its reading goal with 57% of students achieving their target growth goals, an increase of five percentage points from 2018-19. In grades 2-8, Aspire's reading median rate of growth was 125%.

IN 1.1.h. At least 60 percent of students will achieve or exceed target growth in math as measured by NWEA. Target 2: At least 50 percent of students will achieve or exceed target growth in math as measured by NWEA fall-to-winter growth from 2019 to 2020. Progress Update: Aspire surpassed its math goal with 53% of students achieving their target growth goals, an increase of four percentage points from 2018-19.

QI 1.2.a. Improve proficiency on state assessments in ELA. Target 3: Using the school's current ELA interim assessment program, increase the percentage of proficient students by at least 7 percent in ELA from the first to second testing period. Proficiency is defined as scoring 2.5 or above on a system-designed interim assessment. Progress Update: Aspire did not meet their reading goal of 73%. Aspire's Interim 2 proficiency rate is 62%, down four percentage points from Interim 1.

QI 1.2.b. Improve proficiency on state assessments in math. Target 4: Using the school's current math interim assessment program, increase the percentage of proficient students by at least 3 percent in math from the first to second testing period. Proficiency is defined as scoring 2.5 or above on a system-designed interim assessment. Progress Update: Aspire surpassed its math goal with 46% of students achieving proficiency on the Interim 2 math assessment, an increase of 15 percentage points from Interim 1.

School Improvement Planning: Target 5: Aspire will review math and ELA interim assessments, which are administered three times per year, to analyze student performance levels, identify critical standards to guide instruction, and provide enrichment opportunities. After each interim assessment, Aspire will provide Ball State University's Office of Charter Schools a summary report on these findings and plans. Based on the analysis of Interim 1 and Interim 2 math and ELA assessments, the school has identified areas to address prior to Interim 3 and outlined them in the 2019-20 One-Year Target Update attachment.

QI 1.2.i. At least 75 percent of students will achieve proficiency on the IREAD-3 spring assessment. Target 6: Review and update, if necessary, the school's third grade reading plan as provided in the charter contract. Progress update: The school's third grade reading plan has been reviewed and updated as an attachment to the Continuous Improvement Plan. We have seen positive progress based on NWEA and AIMSweb assessments. •Our third graders have shown significant growth this year. The fall to winter NWEA median rate of growth was 136%, an increase of 12 percentage points compared to last year and significantly greater than the national average. •From the fall-to-winter AIMSweb benchmark assessment, Aspire decreased the percentage of third-graders scoring in the bottom percentile by eight percentage points.

IN 1.5.b. Aspire will develop, implement, and continually review a plan to reduce chronic absenteeism. Target 7: Develop, implement, and continually review a plan to reduce chronic absenteeism setting targets and establishing clear strategies to increase the percentage of students who meet the state's model attendee criteria. Progress update: The school formed a team to review the strategies the school has been using to manage chronic absenteeism. This team developed and implemented a plan that outlines clear strategies with the target to reduce chronic absenteeism over the school year. The Student Absenteeism Plan is submitted as an attachment. As of January 31, 2020, Aspire has improved attendance with 84.2 percent of students being below the chronic absenteeism threshold. Compared to the same point in time last

year, the school's chronic absenteeism has decreased by 1.8 percentage points. The attendance team is still focusing its efforts to improve absenteeism through the tactics outlined in its strategic plan. Operational improvement: One of Aspire's focus areas in 2018-19 was to improve parental engagement. To increase parent participation, we implemented the "Power Plus Parent" initiative, under which parents were recognized for participation in school events. This wasn't as effective as we had hoped in increasing parent involvement and was discontinued in the 2019-20 school year. Instead, Aspire surveyed parents to request feedback on parent and family events. Based on this feedback, we have implemented a number of events, such as, a math learning night. As a result, parent involvement has increased six percentage points this year compared to end of the 2018-19 school year. We are pleased with this progress and will continue to offer events tailored to our parents' interests. Aspire will continue to annually request feedback from parents through a satisfaction survey. Based on survey results, we believe that parents are satisfied with the communication related to their student's academics. However, feedback from parents in surveys and through interactions indicates that there is an opportunity to better explain why changes were made to operational procedures, such as student pick-up and drop-off procedures. We are confident that the procedures we changed provide a safe and caring learning environment, and we welcome parent feedback that gives our school an opportunity to grow as a community. Financial stability: This Board's partnership with NHA ensures Aspire's financial stability. Our agreement with NHA guarantees that Aspire will have the resources needed to operate the school and fulfill the school's academic plan, including the improvements outlined below, to aggressively accelerate student growth on school and state assessments.

## 2. Summarize plans for addressing any past academic, organizational, or financial deficits.

Although Aspire has experienced progress under the leadership of ReNae Robinson, who was hired as principal in 2018-19, Principal Robinson and the Board know that more progress is needed to meet the performance expectations of our students and families, the city of Gary, and the state. Our approach to continuous improvement is outlined below. Academic intervention. To quickly accelerate student attainment, we determined that we needed more time with students to focus on their individual learning gaps. In 2018-19, we added additional time to our intervention block. As a result of this additional time, Aspire is performing better than a majority of its closest schools and continues to outperform Gary Community Schools. To meet our goal of improving our report card letter grade and to do so our academic improvement plan, which is detailed below, will target proficiency and growth for all grades in ELA and math. We began implementing a new approach to ELA instruction called balanced literacy throughout the school last year, and this effort will continue in 2019-20. This initiative makes Reading Mastery, a curricular tool that has successfully supported intervention, our primary driver of reading instruction in grades K-2. For grades 3-8, we are using a separate tool, Comprehension and Decoding. In grade 8, we will add independent reading and conferring. Our ELA classes have 150-165 minutes of instruction, with students rotating among three 40-minute small-group blocks. Each student rotates among a phonics block (led by an interventionist), a comprehension block (led by the classroom teacher), and an independent work block with computers and text-based exercises (overseen by the teacher and an interventionist). An interventionist is present at each ELA block so all students can receive intervention-level support. In 2018-19, Aspire expanded to grades 3-5 its commitment to the "math stories" approach to instruction because we had successfully implemented this approach in grades K-2. This approach begins math instruction with a story with an embedded math problem. Students work alone to develop a problem-solving strategy and discuss their ideas with other students. Students must then explain their approach aloud. Only then does the teacher reinforce the skills and facts students discovered and used to solve the problem. Aspire is expanding its math initiatives to include Illustrative Math for grades 6-8. Illustrative Math, which is built on research-based principles, is a problem-based curricular tool. Students learn by doing math, solving problems in mathematical and real-world contexts, and building arguments using precise

language. Teachers facilitate student learning to guide learners to understand and make connections between concepts and procedures. In grades 6-8, an intervention block is structured to give students more time to master objectives in small groups. In 2019-20, we will implement a new intervention tool, CompassLearning. CompassLearning is an online interactive program that reinforces reading, writing, and math skills. Each student will have a learning pad to access the CompassLearning activities. Each activity is aligned to learning objectives. This tool will provide a teacher dashboard and a student dashboard to help teachers and students set academic goals and track progress reaching them. In addition, Aspire will increase its use of the "playbook," an instructional tool designed by NHA and aligned with state standards. It has been an effective resource, particularly for new teachers who can rely heavily on it for lesson planning, instructional pacing, uses of curricular tools, and best practices for instruction. Aspire has typically served a high percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. To better understand the challenges that our FRL-eligible students face and to implement interventions appropriately, we have taken a building-wide approach to understanding behaviors and mindsets by attending a training session called "A Framework for Understanding Poverty," by Dr. Ruby Payne. This session addresses topics such as instructional strategies, developing relationships, family structures, the role of language, and the impact of students' economic backgrounds on learning. Teacher and dean quality. Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers who are certified in the appropriate grade and subject remains a challenge. Aspire has employed teachers with alternative certification and supported them through program completion. Our leadership team invests time coaching teachers in instructional strategies, behavior management, and data analysis. As part of our succession plan, we have given leadership opportunities to a number of our teachers. This benefited Aspire when we recently experienced turnover at the dean level and were able to promote teachers who were already recognized as leaders by their peers and the leadership team. Heading into the 2019-20 school year, Aspire's leaders are striving to develop and maintain the best possible school culture and staying focused on the school's academic goals. Each morning, leaders huddle to recap what happened the day before and what is on the horizon for the upcoming day. During the school day, leaders consistently deliver a shared message of what needs to be accomplished that day to continue progress towards this shared vision. Community partners. Aspire students face daily social and economic challenges that impact student achievement. Aspire currently partners with: •Regional Health – which disseminates information to parents on behavioral health; •Purdue University NW – which provides healthy eating education for families; •Moses Eyecare – which provides free yearly eye exams for students; •Smile Mobile Dentist – which provides free dental cleaning and exams every six months for our students; •Methodist Hospital – which provides free scoliosis exams for students; •Crisis Center, Inc. – which provides free counseling for families; and •Gary Common Counsel – which leads discussions at parent meetings on enhancing family bonds. •St. John Baptist Church and Kellie's Soul Food – which provides food baskets for our families. •New Friendship Missionary Baptist Church – which provides a safe shelter for reunification of families. •Calumet College of St. Joseph and Teach for America – both of which partner with Aspire to recruit teachers. •St. Timothy Community Church – which provides after-school tutoring for K-8 students. •Project Rebuild Foundation – which offers parenting classes, tutoring, mentoring, college and career readiness programs, employment assistance, and therapy services. In addition, Aspire is partnering with two organizations to coordinate wraparound services. These organizations use proven strategies and resources to address the socioeconomic indicators impacting many of Aspire's families. Communities in Schools (CIS) promotes students' academic success by coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement. CIS has a breadth of experience, serving 1.56 million students in 25 states. Their supports include academics, student behavior, family relationships, and attendance. CIS typically begins its work with an assessment to identify what families need. Aspire will have a site coordinator located at the school to provide integrated services. The site coordinator will connect students and their families to basic and critical

community resources, tailored to Aspire students' specific needs. The second organization, Work Driven Strategies (WDS), is located locally in Gary and is knowledgeable on the challenges for families in our community. WDS provides healthy living workshops for parents and students to facilitate better choices in caring for the mental health, physical health, and wellness of the individual and family unit. For example, WDS offers prevention training for suicide prevention, substance abuse, antiviolence, and mental health awareness. The Board is committed to ensuring that wraparound services are implemented that meet the needs of Aspire students and will continue to evaluate and explore local opportunities for community engagement.

**Student absenteeism.** In the 2018-19 school year, Aspire experienced 19 percent chronic absenteeism and implemented a number of restorative practices to improve student attendance. We now give students both encouragement and incentives for good attendance. We have focused on the importance of attendance in parent communications and worked with parents to develop plans to improve attendance. Aspire's chronic absenteeism declined slightly to 17-18 percent in the second half of 2018-19, which is a small but important step in the right direction. In the 2019-20 school year, Aspire created a committee to review current strategies for effectiveness, and to develop and implement a plan to further reduce chronic student absenteeism. That plan is an attachment to the Continuous Improvement Plan. As of January 31, 2020, Aspire's chronic absenteeism had decreased by 1.8 percentage points compared to the same time last year. The school will continue to drive the strategies outlined in its Student Absenteeism Plan to promote student attendance.

**Data driven instruction.** Aspire holds weekly data meetings at which deans lead a review of results from the previous week's assessments. This planning helps teachers use data to modify instructional plans, plan small-group instruction, and differentiate instruction agilely and early. The principal and deans conduct walk-throughs to observe instruction and conduct in-depth classroom observations at regular intervals. Student assessment data and observations are used to provide coaching to teachers during bi-weekly one-on-one meetings and to identify individual and/or building-wide professional development priorities.

**Parent engagement.** Parental involvement, which is critical to student achievement, has been a challenge for Aspire. The school has responded by creating a family involvement committee. Parents were surveyed to help the committee understand what families want and need. The committee has developed an incentive program to encourage involvement, incorporated fun with learning activities, and implemented a "Parent University." Parent University brings in community partners to talk on topics such as behavioral health, healthy eating, finances, and career path assistance. Time slots for parent conferences were added to the school's schedule to accommodate working parents. This team started small and set a goal to increase parent involvement at school events by 5 percent. We are pleased that the goal was met last year. In the beginning of the 2019-20 school, the committee came together again to set a new goal and discuss new initiatives for the coming school year. We're pleased that, as of January 31, 2020, Aspire has experienced an increase of six percentage points in parent involvement compared to last year as tracked by our family involvement committee.

3. (OPTIONAL) Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

The Aspire Board has persisted in holding NHA accountable for Aspire's academic outcomes. We believe this has helped not only improve academic outcomes but also strengthen school leadership, nurture positive program changes, and enrich the Board's relationship and collaboration with NHA. For example, last year, the Board directed NHA to improve Aspire's academic standing with a sound improvement plan and leadership. NHA recruited high-level leaders to serve as principal and director of school quality for Aspire. These leaders meet regularly with the Board president to review all matters of quality, academic instruction, and student development. These leaders also address Board members on all events, recommendations, and internal developments. The strengthening of this united leadership and accountability has been the

turning point for Aspire, and we are optimistic that we have identified a solid plan to continue to improve on the academic progress made.

#### Attachment Executive Summary

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

N/A

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Attachment Name**

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Aspire - Reading Plan 2019



Aspire - Student Absenteeism Plan 2019



Aspire 2019-2020 Target Update

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE DIAGNOSTIC

### Continuous Improvement Practices

1. Describe the school's assessment system and how it is used to improve instructional decision-making, support student learning and implement professional development.

Aspire uses a variety of assessments to measure student progress. Interim assessments, unit tests, quizzes, and exit tickets strive for the closest possible alignment with state standards. As a result, data from those assessments offers valuable insights. •State assessments: Yearlong planning starts with data from the prior year's state assessments. Teachers use this data to identify problem areas and respond by modifying instructional plans and schedules throughout the school year as needed. •Interim assessments: Data from interim assessments offers predictive value on likely outcomes on state assessments in June. These data give us opportunities to modify instructional strategies if the data show that such changes are needed. •Quizzes: Aligned weekly quizzes give teachers a snapshot of learning on standards covered that week. Teachers analyze quiz data to decide how to modify instruction, often modifying instruction within a day of quizzes by re-teaching material the next day, changing workshop groupings to support struggling learners, and so on. •Exit tickets: On any day, teachers may give an exit-ticket test based on standards in that day's lessons. Because state standards drive daily lesson plans, a simple roomful of thumbs up or down can give teachers valuable, aligned, and actionable feedback. Aspire also administers and values the nationally normed NWEA assessment because it benchmarks student growth and gives valid comparisons to national norms, but we do not use data from this assessment for insights on state standards. Data analysis focuses on individual students, on entire grade levels, and on the entire school. School leaders use aggregate data to evaluate school-wide and classroom performance and to direct school-wide improvement. Deans and teachers collaborate during staff meetings and grade-level meetings to analyze assessment data to pinpoint learning gaps, set improvement goals, and clarify professional development needs. Teachers receive many different professional development opportunities that help them implement various instructional methods and our curriculum. For example, in 2018-19, staff received professional development on Cognitive Guided Instruction, math stories, data analysis, and pedagogical strategies. Teachers also receive differentiated professional development, teacher-led trainings, and one-on-one coaching based on their individual professional needs.

2. Describe how the school uses other data (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program.

Our system of assessment enables us to collect and analyze data to assess our academic program and make school-wide decisions. To facilitate the review of our program, we implement a collaborative, comprehensive, and systemic school improvement process (SIP). Through this process, we gather data and informally evaluate it throughout each year. We also conduct a formal needs assessment each spring. During this formal needs assessment, we collect and analyze data on student achievement, school programs and processes, perceptions, and demographics.

Examples of reviewed data includes student achievement on the state assessment and other assessments, discipline data, attendance rates, and engagement surveys conducted with our stakeholders. In addition to assessment data, Principal Robinson and the deans use school-wide and classroom frameworks to monitor the effectiveness of the school's educational program.

•School-wide framework: We follow a school-wide framework for excellence that includes five specific elements. 1. Establish a professional culture of excellence. 2. Systematize collaborative improvement. 3. Lead instructional excellence. 4. Implement systematic intervention. 5. Cultivate meaningful parent partnerships. •Classroom framework: To complement the school-wide framework, we also implement a classroom framework of instructional competencies, which are structured to improve academic results for individual students and the school as a whole. There are four key instructional competencies in this classroom framework: Classroom culture, planning, teaching, and assessing.

3. Describe how the school leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving student learning.

Aspire's continuous improvement process to improve student learning is embedded in our formal School Improvement Process, as described in our response to the previous question. The SIP process provides the framework for the upcoming academic year. It is important that Aspire uses the SIP and academic goals as a road map of where we are going, but we must also remain agile in the daily implementation of the educational program. Throughout the year, review of weekly assessment data and educators' insights on it support our ongoing and responsive improvement efforts.

4. Describe how leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes have resulted in improved professional practice and student success.

A key component of school assessment is rigorous, ongoing, and accountability-driven teacher evaluations. We believe this effort is an important example of our commitment to accountability as a core value at Aspire as it is in the entire charter school movement. We have always believed that student learning is an adult responsibility, and that students' long-term results are directly connected to efforts to ensure that students benefit from a good teacher in every classroom, every day. That is an ideal we pursue through many initiatives, including our commitments to teacher evaluation and improved professional practices. NHA's evaluation system is based on six competencies: classroom culture; planning; teaching; assessing; professional accountabilities; and quality of student learning. Aspire determines competencies in classroom management, instruction, and professional practices through multiple observations, feedback, and coaching. This system enables a fluid discussion on performance and informs professional development goals and opportunities for our teachers. To measure quality of student learning, NHA uses available data from state assessments for grades 3-8. NHA uses student performance and growth in oral reading fluency from the fall-to-spring benchmark assessments, if available, for K-2. If no data is available for a teacher, a subjective rating will be provided on the indicator of Positive Impact on Student Learning. Each teacher is evaluated annually by the assigned dean. A mid-year progress report addresses classroom culture, planning, teaching, and assessing. All teachers receive an individualized development plan within the interactive classroom framework (ICF). The plan is created based on professional development goals that are set by the leader and the teacher. Goals are clearly marked in the ICF, and action steps and progress toward goals are documented within the tool. Teachers are evaluated using a four-level scale of exemplary, effective, developing, and ineffective. Information from the evaluation system contributes to decisions regarding compensation, retention, promotion, and termination.

## Needs of Learners

1. Describe the systems in place to monitor the progress of individual students and facilitate communication between interventionists, classroom teachers and parents regarding the needs of individual students.

Aspire's staff uses data from diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to plan instruction, monitor progress, and adjust to meet students' identified needs. Assessment data helps teachers identify their students' strengths and weaknesses and differentiate instruction accordingly. More specifically, teachers use assessment data in three stages: •Before instruction: We administer an assessment in the fall to create a baseline knowledge of academic performance and to help teachers plan for instruction. In addition, diagnostic and classroom assessments are administered before instruction and allow teachers to discover the needs, interests, previous experience, and background knowledge of their students in terms of the identified curricular objectives. Teachers use data from these assessments to illuminate what students already know and can do. This information also helps teachers determine a particular instructional approach or strategy for new learning. Examples of assessments that teachers may administer before

instruction include teacher-led discussion and questions, observation, student evaluation of sample work products using a scoring rubric, and assessments. •During instruction (formative assessment): Assessments given during instruction serve as checkpoints to determine students' understanding and progress. They help teachers identify successes or difficulties in learning and effectively adjust instruction. Teachers may administer various assessments, each of which can be used formatively to guide further instruction. These tests include mid-unit quizzes, coursework, discussions, observations, questioning strategies, learning logs, or graphic organizers. •After instruction (summative assessment): Assessments administered after instruction help teachers determine what students have learned and the quality of that learning. This information helps teachers gauge the effectiveness of their instruction and adjusts their teaching methods to best meet the needs of students. Examples of assessments that teachers may give after instruction to assess student understanding include tests, student presentations, self-assessments, peer assessments, projects and papers. In addition, teachers administer interim common assessments, which are aligned to state standards, throughout the school year. The results are used to make timely instructional adjustments, address gaps in mastery of objectives, and form small-group instruction. Interventionists who work with diverse learners closely monitor student progress using progress-monitoring tools such as classroom assessments and curricular program assessments. However, the primary tool used to monitor progress is aimswebPlus, which provides information on student progress immediately after students complete an assessment. Teachers and interventionists can access reports that track student performance on recently taught material through the myNHA dashboard and the aimswebPlus website. This information enables staff to closely monitor progress, adapt instruction, and close learning gaps right away. Deans meet with each grade level on a weekly basis and with all instructors on their wing monthly. In addition, lead teachers hold meet weekly with all classroom teachers of that grade level as well as interventionists. During these meetings, teachers and interventionists review assessment results, discuss student progress, and plan instruction.

## 2. Explain how the school supports for diverse learners.

We believe that student achievement gaps (which are often reflect a student's economic status) can and will be closed when teachers consistently and aggressively provide targeted instruction and monitor student academic progress. Aspire has a comprehensive process that ensures that educators consistently identify, serve, and monitor students who need intervention. Our systematic intervention, or response to intervention, program is designed to stimulate early action that helps prevent academic failure and maximize the effectiveness of grade level instruction. This process is based on a framework of six key practices: •Schedule intentionally. A strategic, complete schedule is set for the delivery of all needed services to each identified student. Scheduling also ensures that we can dedicate the most skilled interventionists to the students with the highest needs. •Create collaborative teams. Intervention staff and classroom teachers meet frequently to discuss student assessment data, monitor progress, and update intervention plans. This monitoring also includes students recently exited from intervention services. •Identify students and allocate resources appropriately. Our school trained all staff to understand the process of reviewing student performance data and of the thresholds established to qualify students for intervention services. School leaders work to ensure that funds are allocated in ways that will address all identified student needs, monitor progress, provide intervention tools, and fund qualified staff to deliver services. •Develop intervention plans. Aspire uses internal diagnostic assessments to determine student needs, with data supporting decisions to offer intervention services. Teachers develop a written plan that details the interventions that will meet student needs. We update this "living document" regularly and use it to make decisions on the student's learning. A team of interventionists, including an at-risk teacher, paraprofessionals, and staff from the after-school tutoring program, implements the plan. •Monitor progress. We use classroom assessments, norm-referenced assessments, and curricular program assessments to closely monitor identified

students' progress. •Provide professional development. One-on-one meetings between the dean of academic intervention, who manages Aspire's intervention program, and the intervention staff are scheduled regularly with sessions focused on individual student data and strategies to meet student needs. Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities receive instruction tailored for their individual educational needs. We provide services and educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as determined by the student's individual education program (IEP). Students receive resource room services and consultant teaching services from a certified special education teacher. Additional services may include speech and language therapy, occupational and physical therapy, and counseling. Aspire employs and/or contracts certified professionals to provide services to meet IEP requirements. Individual student progress toward IEP goals and/or objectives is tracked and reviewed throughout the school year. Progress monitoring data is used to complete student IEP progress reports, which are distributed to parents at least four times a year. We give parents the opportunity to discuss these reports in detail with the special education and general education teachers during two scheduled parent-teacher conferences throughout the year and again after each quarterly report card is distributed. Beyond a student progress report, parents are encouraged to contact special education providers at any point in the school year to discuss students' progress toward meeting individualized IEP goals. English language learners: We embrace a set of "guiding principles" when working with English learner (EL) students, as recommended by the Center for Equity and Excellence in Education at George Washington University. Principles of effective practice for ELs include: •ELs are held to the same high expectations of learning established for all students. •EL students develop full proficiencies in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consistent with expectations for all students. •EL students are taught challenging content to help them meet performance standards in all content areas, including reading and language arts, math, social studies, science, the fine arts, health, and physical education, consistent with standards for all students. •EL students receive instruction that builds on their previous education and cognitive abilities and that reflects their language proficiency levels. •EL students are evaluated with appropriate, valid assessments aligned to state and local standards that consider students' language acquisition stages and cultural background. •Educators, family, and the community share responsibility for ELs' academic success. All students are given a home language questionnaire (HLQ) upon acceptance to Aspire. The HLQ contains questions about the primary language of the student, the parents, and the household. If the student identifies a language other than English, the student is assessed with an initial assessment as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. This initial assessment will provide a preliminary level of proficiency in English and will be used to place the student in the instructional program that best suits his or her needs. If a student is initially identified as proficient in English, no further action is taken. A student who does not show proficiency in English will participate in the school's alternative language program. All students identified as ELs participate in a sheltered English instruction (SEI) program for core classroom instruction. A SEI program is one in which all instruction is delivered in English with scaffolding and sheltering, so all EL students can access the academic content regardless of their potential lack of proficiency in English. Students who score below specified thresholds are identified as high-need and participate in the English Language Development program (ELD). This program uses a push-in and pull-out model to deliver intensive language support in and out of core classes. To be exited from EL services, kindergarten students must test at least 4.5 in writing and 5.0 or greater in the listening, reading, and speaking domains and earn a minimal composite proficiency level (CPL) of 5.0 on the annual WIDA ACCESS assessment. Students in grades 1-8 must test at or above 4.3 CPL on the WIDA ACCESS. We also consider additional exit criteria to ensure that students are ready to exit EL services. Students are monitored for four years after their exit to ensure continued success. This monitoring includes both consultations with teachers and monitoring of grades. If a monitored student is not succeeding, quick and timely interventions must be made. If the student continues to struggle, and language is believed to be the primary factor, the student will be

reassessed with the initial assessment. If the score is below proficient, the student may be re-classified as an EL and provided services until proficiency is once again attained. Re-classification as an EL can be emotionally disturbing to students, so we implement stringent exit requirements and a robust monitoring system. Advanced learners: Our curriculum offers opportunities to challenge advanced learners with higher-order thinking skills and project-based learning. For example, classroom teachers offer accelerated students differentiated instruction and extended opportunities, including: enrichment; differentiation in content, process, products, and/or learning environment; infusion of higher-order thinking skills; and individualized learning opportunities.

## Areas of Notable Achievement and Areas for Improvement

### 1. Which area(s) are above and below the expected levels of performance?

In 2018-19, the Indiana Department of Education changed its state assessment to the ILEARN from the ISTEP. Across the state, Indiana experienced a significant decline across all grades and subjects, especially in ELA. The state has not released accountability data or report card data. Year-to-year comparisons are not available due to implementation of the new test; however, we have detailed areas of achievement and improvement based on the data available. The narrative below is supplemented with data charts in the Student Performance Diagnostic attachment. Each data chart is indicated as an exhibit. An update on the progress of Aspire's one-year academic targets is provide in the 2019-20 One-Year Target Update attachment. Areas above expected levels: Actual vs. expected reading and math proficiency. Historically, researchers have found a significant correlation between the percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students and absolute proficiency on the state assessment for all schools in Indiana. To control for this effect, a linear-regression analysis was performed using (1) the percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students at each school in Indiana and (2) their overall math and reading proficiency by grade on the 2018-19 state assessment. This analysis yields an effect size by grade and subject, which corresponds to the difference between the actual and expected proficiency rates. The effect size is then averaged and translated to a percentile for comparison purposes. The table in Exhibit 1 compares Aspire's risk-adjusted proficiency with Ball State University's charter schools. In 2018-19, Aspire scored at the 80th percentile, which means its actual proficiency rate is far above expected for schools with similar free or reduced-price lunch populations. Aspire is among the top schools in risk-adjusted proficiency in Gary Community Schools and charter schools authorized by Ball State University. IREAD-3 proficiency (Exhibit 2). Aspire students have demonstrated high performance on the IREAD-3 assessment. Our students have performed near or above the state average and have outperformed Gary Community Schools. We achieved this performance while serving a much higher percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students (94 percent) than the state (49 percent). Strong reading scores for third grade students (Exhibit 3). In addition to achieving high passing rates on the IREAD-3 assessment, our third-grade students' NWEA growth exceeded the national average. Since 2013-14, the median fall-to-spring NWEA MAP growth for third-grade students has been at or above the national average. In 2017-18, third-grade reading growth was 22 percentage points greater than the national average. In 2018-19, third-grade reading growth was 144 percent, a 22-percentage point improvement from 2017-18 and well above the national average. Areas below expected levels: Proficiency for tenured students (Exhibit 4). In 2018-19, students enrolled for three or more years outperformed their peers by 4 percentage points in math but did not outperform their peers in other subjects. Historically, Aspire's students enrolled for three or more years have outperformed their peers. Improving these students' proficiency rates are a focus in 2019-20. With more time spent on teacher and dean development outlined in our improvement plan (see "Goals and Plans", Question 2), we plan to improve proficiency rates for new and tenured students. Additionally, third-grade students enrolled for three years or more outperform their peers on the IREAD-3 assessment. In 2017-18, these students surpassed their peers by 10 percentage points. In 2018-19, these students outperformed their peers by 7 percentage points. Last year we implemented a new approach to ELA/reading

instruction with balanced literacy. As outlined in our improvement plan (see “Goals and Plans”, Question 2) we are continuing this effort in 2019-20. We believe this is the right program and, with more time invested in coaching our teachers on effective use of balanced literacy and the curricular tools, we can improve reading proficiency for new and tenured students.

2. Describe the area(s) that show a positive and negative trend in performance.

**Positive Trend:** Proficiency compared to closest schools (Exhibit 5). In 2018-19, Aspire outperformed a majority of its closest schools in ELA and math; and outperformed all of its closest schools with similar FRL percentages. Proficiency compared to closest charter schools (Exhibit 6). In 2018-19, Aspire outperformed all of the closest charter schools in both ELA and math. Proficiency compared to the local district (Exhibit 7). Aspire has outperformed its local district for the last three years. In 2016-17 Aspire outperformed Gary by 8 percentage points overall. In 2017-18, Aspire outperformed the local district by 12 percentage points., Aspire outperformed every Gary Community school in both ELA and math in 2018-19. Overall, Aspire outperformed Gary by 15 percentage points in 2018-19. Proficiency compared to the state of Indiana (Exhibit 8). Because a year-to-year comparison is not available due to the change in state assessment, we have compared year-over-year changes. •Aspire gained ground against the state of Indiana in all grades in both ELA and math. Aspire was not exempt from declines due to the change in assessment. However, Aspire’s declines were significantly less than Indiana’s declines. •Notably, Aspire gained 25 proficiency points against the state in sixth grade ELA, 17 proficiency points against the state in eighth grade ELA, and 16 proficiency points against the state in sixth grade math. In all grades and subjects, Aspire gained 7 percentage points against the state. While a new state assessment makes evaluating a school’s improvement more difficult, we believe that these gains against the state demonstrate Aspire’s significant improvement over the 2018-19 school year. •In addition to the ground gained against the state, sixth grade proficiency rates increased in both ELA and math. •Aspire's year-over-year proficiency outcomes also improved in eighth grade ELA (4 percentage points) and third grade math (7 percentage points). •Lastly, science proficiency results declined slightly in fourth grade (4 percentage points) and sixth grade (1 percentage point). However, Aspire gained ground against the state for both grades. NWEA growth for bottom-quartile students (Exhibit 9). Students scoring in the bottom quartile in the fall are achieving NWEA growth above the national average for all bottom-quartile students. The fall-to-spring NWEA median rate-of-growth for bottom-quartile students was 119 percent in 2016-17, 114 percent in 2017-18, and 115 percent in 2018-19, all of which exceeded the national average (100 percent). NWEA growth percentiles for the entire school were at or above the national average in the majority of grade and subjects tested for the past three years. In 2018-19, median fall-spring rates of growth were above the national average (100 percent) in both math (117 percent) and reading (105 percent). **Negative Trend:** Proficiency: With a new state test bringing proficiency decreases across the state, Aspire will need to improve proficiency rates for the years ahead. Exhibit 8 shows that Aspire’s ELA declines were the largest this year. As described in our improvement plan (see “Goals and Plans”, Question 2), Aspire is continuing to strengthen ELA outcomes through dedicated intervention blocks, balanced literacy, Reading Mastery, Comprehension and Decoding, and independent reading. Aspire will be seeking to improve its their letter grade by improving its growth results and increasing proficiency rates in 2019-20.

3. Between which subgroups is the achievement gap closing and between which is the gap widening? Please support with data.

**Achievement gap closing:** Proficiency for Black and Hispanic students (Exhibit 10). In 2018-19, Aspire served a predominantly Black student population (93 percent) and most students qualified for free-or-reduced price lunch (94 percent). Aspire’s Black and Hispanic subgroups outperformed the state in ELA. In math, Aspire’s Black students achieved a higher proficiency rate than the state’s Black students. Based on 2018-19 state test scores, Black students at Aspire are closing

the gap against the state in both math (4.7 percentage points) and ELA (6.9 percentage points). Achievement gap widening: Math proficiency for Hispanic students (Exhibit 10). In 2018-19, the gap between Hispanic students at Aspire and the statewide Hispanic population increased by 15.8 percentage points. Our improvement plan, described in "Goals and Plans", Question 2, is designed to support all students, including student subgroups. The tools and intervention strategies outlined provide us with the opportunity to grow students based on their progress and individual needs.

4. Which subgroup(s) show a trend toward increasing performance, and which toward decreasing performance? Please support with data.

Increasing in performance: Subgroup making the most gains against the state (Exhibit 10). With a new state test, all subgroups saw a proficiency decline in 2018-19. However, compared to the state, Aspire's Black students made gains in both ELA (6.9 percent) and math (4.7 percent). Decreasing in performance: Math Proficiency for Hispanic Students (Exhibit 10). In 2018-19, the math proficiency rate for Aspire's Hispanic students declined by 26.9 percentage points, from 41 percent to 14 percent. As mentioned above, our improvement plan is designed to support all students, including student subgroups. The tools and intervention strategies outlined provide us with the opportunity to grow students based on their progress and individual needs. Students with an IEP (Exhibit 11). In 2018-19, 13 percent of students at Aspire qualified for an IEP. Math and ELA proficiency rates for our students with IEPs have been relatively flat. In 2018-19, the proficiency rates for IEP students decreased, as these rates declined for the rest of the state's IEP students. Aspire experienced turnover of special education staff in 2018-19, which had an impact on the proficiency scores of IEP students. Five percent of IEP students were proficient in ELA; two percent were proficient in math. We are not satisfied with these proficiency rates for our IEP students. We are working with these students in 2019-20 to ensure consistent increases in the years ahead. Math Proficiency for Non-FRL Students (Exhibit 11). Only about four percent of students at Aspire do not qualify for FRL. The math proficiency rate for non-FRL students decreased from 48 percent in 2017-18 to 42 percent in 2018-19.

5. Discuss areas of academic concern, and changes made to address any deficiencies.

Based on 2018-19 results, Aspire will focus on increasing proficiency rates across the school. Aspire is optimistic about the gains against the state and even improved year-over-year proficiency rates in four grades and subject combinations. Nonetheless, these proficiency rates are not where Aspire wants to remain. Improving Aspire's report card results will require improvement in both growth and proficiency. As mentioned earlier in this application, ELA proficiency is a special area of focus in 2019-20. We have outlined our improvement plan in "Goals and Plans", Question 2 which includes our efforts for: •intervention blocks, •ELA and math programs, •curricular tools, •staff development, •community partnerships to support our students, •student absenteeism, •data driven instruction, and •parent engagement. We plan to reassess Aspire's needs throughout the year to adjust strategies based on student needs and leadership observation.

6. If academic performance has resulted in a rating of 'Falls Far Below' on any Quality indicator in the BSU Academic Framework during the charter term, please provide the school's assessment of those results and describe what has been done, and is planned to improve academic performance.

We used available data to identify the Quality indicators on which Aspire has a rating of 'Falls Far Below.' These indicators are listed below. Aspire has detailed in "Goals and Plans", Question 2 a school-wide improvement plan to address these areas.

1.2 Student Achievement (proficiency) Quality Indicator 1.2a: Are students in grades 3-8 achieving proficiency on state assessments in ELA? •Falls Far Below Standard: Based on 2018-19 proficiency results, 35 percent of students were proficient in ELA. Quality Indicator 1.2b: Are students in grades 3-8 achieving proficiency on state assessments in Math? •Falls Far Below Standard: Based on 2018-19 proficiency results, 25 percent of students were proficient in math. Quality Indicator 1.2k: Are

students in grades 3-8, who have been enrolled at the school for at least 3 years, achieving proficiency on state assessments in both math and ELA?•Falls Far Below Standard: Based on 2018-19 results, 18 percent of students enrolled for a least three years were proficient in both ELA and math. Aspire is working towards a long-term goal of 80 percent proficiency for students who have been enrolled for three or more years, but this will require a significant increase from Aspire's current standing.1.3 State AccountabilityQuality Indicator 1.3a: Is the school meeting acceptable standards according to the A-F Accountability Label?•TBD; we are currently waiting for the state to release data.After assessing our results, we believe that our recent changes to ELA instruction, expansions to our math-stories based approach, and the addition of an additional intervention block in middle school will help us improve our results on the indicators listed above. As mentioned previously, Aspire has detailed in "Goals and Plans", Question 2 a school-wide improvement plan to address these areas.

#### Attachment Student Performance Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

The Student Performance Diagnostic attachment is an accompaniment to questions in "Goal and Plans." Each exhibit is indicated with a number on the Student Performance Diagnostic attachment and within the body of each applicable question in the Continuous Improvement Plan.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

#### **Attachment Name**



Aspire - Student Performance Diagnostic Data 2019

## STAKEHOLDER DIAGNOSTIC

Recommended surveys to complete this diagnostic: Climate and Culture Surveys for Students and Parents, with option of customized questions

1. Which area(s) indicate the overall highest and lowest levels of satisfaction?

Each spring, Aspire parents are asked to take a satisfaction survey, "Voice of the Parent." On the spring 2019 survey, 78 percent of parents expressed satisfaction with Aspire. Parents expressed the highest satisfaction in three key areas: 94 percent said that the school is providing a safe environment; 90 percent said they are satisfied with their child's academic progress, and 86 percent are satisfied with the updates they receive about their child's progress. Parents indicated that they would like to see improvement with changing teachers during the school year and changing policies such as student drop-off and pick-up procedures.

2. Which of the above reported findings are consistent with findings from other sources (e.g. surveys, observations, anecdotal, third party reviews), please explain.

The findings above are somewhat consistent with our annual employee engagement survey. On the spring 2019 survey, 78 percent of respondents reported satisfaction with receiving timely feedback on their performance. Aspire's communication frequency is meeting the needs of both parents and employees. However, 60 percent of employees believe their opinions seem to count. This correlates to parent comments suggesting that leaders could do more to explain why changes are beginning made and to acknowledge the input of both sets of stakeholders. Notably, parent and staff respondents indicated satisfaction with many areas of school operations, for example, in affirming that the school provides a safe environment.

3. What are the implications and/or challenges related to any negative stakeholder perceptions?

Aspire was not surprised by the 2018 decline in parent satisfaction and employee engagement. The change in leadership in 2018-19 brought necessary change. Families not wanting to adhere to requirements related to safety, procedures, and timelines had critical conversations with school leadership. Educators not professionally prepared to move forward began looking for other employment options. On the 2019 surveys, results are going up slightly. In the long term, Aspire is confident that academics and school culture are on a positive path.

4. How will survey findings inform school improvement plans? What actionable steps will be taken based on survey results?

Aspire believes the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents are important and relevant. Stakeholder feedback is used to drive the improvement efforts. Upon receiving survey results, we take time to identify and prioritize goals. Once goals are in place, we track progress both formally, future survey results, and informally, with one-on-one meetings and observations.

Attachment Stakeholder Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

N/A

## ATTACHMENTS

### Attachment Name



Aspire - Parent Survey - Spring 2019

## ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL DIAGNOSTIC

### Organizational

1. Provide a reflection of the school's governance and organizational performance over the past charter term. Describe any anticipated changes to the governance and management of the school, including but not limited to board composition, board member roles, member recruitment, committee structure, and/or amendments to by-laws.

Throughout the term of the charter, Aspire has benefited from strong, stable governance. Of the six original founding Board members for Aspire, three remain. Our president is one of those three founding members, and she is the daughter of our founding president, Richard Comer. Our full Board remains unchanged from last year and includes the following members: •Denise Comer Dillard – president •Sherylin Freeland-McCrady – vice president •LaCrecia Lott – treasurer •Rachael Wright – secretary •JoAnn White – director Our Board of Directors' experience in business, education, health care, and social services provides the basis for a strong, competent governance structure and positions us to fulfill the school's mission for the families we serve. We continue to recruit new members to fill vacancies. The school's Board maintains a relationship with independent legal counsel, Ice Miller LLP, to ensure that we remain in compliance with all laws, regulations, rules, and policies. Counsel takes part in Board meetings, reviews documents and contracts, and discusses Aspire concerns with NHA's corporate counsel. We have complied with applicable state and federal laws and regulations during the charter term. We also effectively manage our relationship with NHA and hold it accountable for deliverables needed for a successful school. The Board reviews student performance, operations, financials, and capital expenditures, through reporting and discussions with school leaders. The NHA liaison, Mr. Andrew Gayle, is engaged, informative, and professionally prepared. We are pleased to report that during the term of our charter, we have also demonstrated compliance with Ball State's Organizational Performance Framework, including requirements related to the following components: educational program, financial management and oversight, governance and reporting, students and employees, and school environment.

2. Please specify whether the board intends to contract or terminate a contract with an education service provider (ESP), educational management organization (EMO), or charter management organization (CMO).

☐ Yes

☒ **No**

2a. (OPTIONAL) If Yes, please describe evidence illustrating an effective working relationship with an ESP, and describe the ESP's roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's management and governing board; describe how the governing board holds the operator accountable for specific academic, operational or financial outcomes from the agreed upon contract.

The Aspire Board intends to continue contracting with NHA. Our services agreement with NHA requires it to accept all responsibilities and risks associated with building, launching, and operating the school. To make this possible, NHA receives, in return for its services, all governmental funding for the school (minus a \$35,000 allocation for discretionary Board uses). This model allows the Board to focus on oversight and governance, not fund-raising. In this case, NHA views itself as staff of the Aspire Board with all operational responsibility. Specifically, NHA invests in: •The school building: NHA buys land and builds (or renovates) a building at no added cost to the local taxpayers. NHA made these investments for Aspire. •Professional team: NHA recruits and hires the principal (with Board input) as well as deans, teachers, and staff. This team operates under a distinctive academic model with at least three deans who provide supervision, mentoring, and coaching to teachers. •Infrastructure: NHA provides all school equipment, including books, curricular materials, desks, and instructional technology. •Contributions: NHA invests additional funds as needed to balance the school's budget and enhance academic performance as needed.

These investments are contributions, not loans; repayment is not expected or required. •Back office support: NHA's Service Center provides many services, including talent recruitment and other HR services, IT support, parent relations services, and professional development offerings for teachers, deans, principals, and Board members. NHA bears all the costs and risks of investments in a school. These risks are significant and unique to our services agreement and/or all charter school projects: •NHA schools are single-use buildings that cannot easily be repurposed. •NHA typically invests in struggling communities with limited development potential – as it has in the Gary neighborhood that Aspire serves. •Charter schools that fail can be closed with as little as a year's notice. •Partner Boards can terminate services agreements without cause. Our Board continues to dialogue with NHA on ways to improve academic performance at the school. We believe that our partnership provides the systems, personnel, and processes needed for improvement, and we will hold NHA accountable to do so.

2b. (OPTIONAL) If Yes, please describe any anticipated changes to service contract or provider over the next charter term, including, but not limited to, intentions to terminate your contractual relationship with your management organization. If terminating, describe in detail the plans for carrying out the primary operational and educational activities for which the service provider had been responsible.

We plan to continue the relationship with our education management partner, NHA, for school operations. The Board has taken a strong look at the school's performance and demanded greater accountability from NHA in its efforts to improve academic outcomes; specifically, the Board has asked for more reports related to academics. In addition, the Board has addressed with NHA the need for strong local community engagement. In discussions with our legal counsel and NHA's legal counsel, these requests can be met under the current terms in the services agreement. We remain confident in our relationship with NHA in part because we know that NHA and the Board are on the same page in their determination to help the students we serve achieve essential improvements in academic outcomes. The Board further reserves the right to revisit the services agreement with NHA should it be necessary to ensure that the school is progressing academically.

3. Describe the current condition of the school's facility, and its capacity to serve students. Discuss any anticipated changes in facilities needs and/or location, which includes any changes to lease terms and/or building plan. If the facility is leased, how does the board oversee the terms of the lease agreement?

The Board leases from NHA a building that was newly constructed in 2008 that is designed to focus on student learning. The building, which is in excellent condition, is 47,000 square feet and has 28 traditional classrooms. In addition, space is allocated for art, technology, music classrooms and two dedicated special education classrooms. The school offers: a full-sized gymnasium; a playground and play field. Aspire utilizes two modular classrooms for art and technology. By moving these classes to modular classrooms, Aspire was able to create two classrooms for our special education student population. The Board reviews building usage and/or the lease when any changes, such as enrollment changes, may affect how the building is used.

4. If any organizational deficiencies or findings were noted in any of the annual independent audits, prior notices of deficiencies, onsite reviews, or prior renewal letter, please note such deficiencies and how they were remedied.

In 2018, Aspire received findings as a result of the annual independent audit and all findings have been resolved. The findings and resolutions are as follows: Finding: The Academy does not use the prescribed forms required for receipting funds. Resolution: The Academy typically uses electronic forms for the majority of its receipting process in place of paper forms. However, forms were ordered to be kept at the school in the circumstance that funds are received outside the electronic system. Finding: The Academy is not in compliance with minimum control standards by ensuring individuals have required training. Resolution: The Academy has ensured that all

appropriate personnel have received the Internal Control Training and that the school will be in compliance going forward.

5. (OPTIONAL) Describe the plan for providing transportation to students to attend the school, including transportation to extra-curricular activities, if applicable.

We work diligently to ensure that our school is accessible to all students and that transportation needs are not a barrier to any child attending Aspire. We do not provide bus transportation to the general student population. However, our student-family liaison collaborates with parents, guardians, and daycare providers to provide any resources and support to coordinate their transportation needs. We recognize that this transportation strategy may not be a viable option for every family. Before the first day of school, during an orientation program for families, we work with parents to address and coordinate their transportation needs to ensure that these needs are not a barrier to any child wishing to attend Aspire. In addition, Aspire's student-family liaison works to identify and plan the use of public transportation options, and if needed, to make arrangements with private carriers. The budget includes funds to cover costs of such needs, which also may include transportation for students experiencing homelessness or students with special needs who have transportation requirements in their IEPs.

## Financial

1. In what ways does the board assure that financial resources provide adequate support for the school's overall program and to improve student achievement? Please reflect on the allocation, challenges, trends and any shifts in resources directed toward Student Academic Achievement, Student Instructional Support, Overhead and Operational, and Nonoperational (See Form 9).

Aspire has partnered with NHA since 2008 to manage the day-to-day operations. NHA's compensation for its services is all revenue that Aspire receives from all sources. In return, NHA has met its obligation to bring significant resources to the school to fund facilities, real estate, and start-up and ongoing operating funds, as needed. These start-up funds and added investments in operating funds, it should be noted, are contributions, not loans, to our school. Because of this model and our relationship with NHA, our Board is relieved entirely of burdens of fundraising, real estate, construction, or other aspects of school operations. In past years, the Board has not needed to be involved in additional matters related to real estate, construction, or other aspects of capitalized expenses and operations. Our Form 9 submissions have documented a strong investment in costs that drive academic progress over this charter term. We have allocated resources based on all our student needs and will continue to work with NHA to do so. NHA willingly accepts all financial risks associated with launching and operating our charter school. Some charter schools' partnerships with charter school operators expose the schools to the risk of debt. Our agreement with NHA leaves Aspire with no such exposure. Our services agreement confirms that NHA neither requests nor expects repayment for the contributions (described above) that are consistent with the approved operating budget. Aspire has finished each year with a positive cash balance, has received an unqualified independent audit every year except in 2018 as detailed in "Organizational", Question 4, and has no debt. We believe this demonstrates our long-term fiscal strength and financial health.

2. If any financial deficiencies or findings were noted in any of the annual independent audits, prior notices of deficiencies, onsite reviews, or prior renewal letter, please note such deficiencies and how they were remedied.

No financial deficiencies have been noted in Aspire's annual independent audits in this charter term. We noted above in "Organizational", Question 4, how we resolved minor procedural findings from a 2018 annual independent audit.

Attachment Organizational and Financial Diagnostic

Please list any comments for this section below with attachments, if applicable.

N/A

## FINANCIAL DASHBOARD

Guidelines for Completing the Financial Dashboard

**Using the Financial Dashboard:**

- a. Download the [Financial Dashboard](#).
- b. Complete your institution's financial framework indicators using the Financial Dashboard.
- c. Upload your completed Financial Dashboard in the attachment area below.
- d. You may enter an optional narrative about your Financial Dashboard below. If you do not have an optional narrative, enter N/A.

N/A

## ATTACHMENTS

### Attachment Name

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Aspire - Financial Dashboard 2019

## Attachment Summary

| Attachment Name                                                                                                                                    | Description                                                                                                                        | Associated Item(s) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Enrollment diagnostic attachment 2019</a>    | Aspire's student enrollment over the charter term, including demographics and populations.                                         | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Financial Dashboard 2019</a>                 |                                                                                                                                    | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Parent Survey - Spring 2019</a>              | Aspire's parent satisfaction results from Spring 2019.                                                                             | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Reading Plan 2019</a>                        | Aspire's revised Reading Plan for 2019-20.                                                                                         | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Student Absenteeism Plan 2019</a>            | Aspire's plan to reduce chronic student absenteeism.                                                                               | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Student Performance Diagnostic Data 2019</a> | Aspire's student performance data exhibits to accompany the narrative related to student performance.                              | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire 2019-2020 Target Update</a>                    | This attachment provides an update on Aspire's one-year targets for the 2019-2020 school year. This update is as of February 2020. | •                  |

## Attachment Summary

| Attachment Name                                                                                                                                    | Description                                                                                           | Associated Item(s) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Enrollment diagnostic attachment 2019</a>    | Aspire's student enrollment over the charter term, including demographics and populations.            | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Financial Dashboard 2019</a>                 |                                                                                                       | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Parent Survey - Spring 2019</a>              | Aspire's parent satisfaction results from Spring 2019.                                                | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Reading Plan 2019</a>                        | Aspire's revised Reading Plan for 2019-20.                                                            | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Student Absenteeism Plan 2019</a>            | Aspire's plan to reduce chronic student absenteeism.                                                  | •                  |
|  <a href="#">Aspire - Student Performance Diagnostic Data 2019</a> | Aspire's student performance data exhibits to accompany the narrative related to student performance. | •                  |

**Aspire Academy**  
**Continuous Improvement Plan**

**I. Enrollment Diagnostic**

*Provide the enrollment and demographic information for the current school year.*

| 2019-20 ENROLLMENT & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION |     |      |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|------|
|                                              | #   | %    |
| Total Enrollment                             | 628 |      |
| # of Students on Waiting List                | 0   |      |
| Gender                                       |     |      |
| Male                                         | 321 | 51.1 |
| Female                                       | 307 | 48.9 |
| Ethnicity/Race                               |     |      |
| White                                        | 5   | .8   |
| Black                                        | 584 | 93   |
| Hispanic                                     | 34  | 5.4  |
| Asian                                        | 0   | 0    |
| Native American                              | 4   | .6   |
| Other                                        | 1   | .2   |
| Special Populations                          |     |      |
| Students with IEPs                           | 79  | 12.6 |
| English Language Learners                    | 3   | .5   |
| Homeless Students                            | 0   | 0    |
| Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch          | 577 | 91.9 |

Note: Data is as of 10/1/19; special populations may fluctuate as forms are collected and students are assessed for services.

*Provide enrollment information for length of current charter contract (ADM count).*

|                                 | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2018-19</b> | <b>2019-20</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Total Student Enrollment</b> | 704            | 701            | 695            | 692            | 694            | 625            |

*Provide the student attendance information for the length of the charter contract.*

|                   | <b>Year 1</b>  | <b>Year 2</b>  | <b>Year 2</b>  | <b>Year 4</b>  | <b>Year 5</b>  | <b>Year 6</b>  |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Grade</b>      | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2018-19</b> | <b>2019-20</b> |
| <b>K</b>          | 82             | 85             | 77             | 86             | 84             | 81             |
| <b>1</b>          | 78             | 83             | 80             | 78             | 77             | 71             |
| <b>2</b>          | 81             | 79             | 82             | 81             | 73             | 72             |
| <b>3</b>          | 81             | 76             | 83             | 79             | 79             | 63             |
| <b>4</b>          | 78             | 83             | 74             | 81             | 75             | 76             |
| <b>5</b>          | 80             | 78             | 80             | 79             | 81             | 68             |
| <b>6</b>          | 74             | 78             | 79             | 71             | 81             | 76             |
| <b>7</b>          | 76             | 74             | 77             | 79             | 74             | 67             |
| <b>8</b>          | 71             | 65             | 75             | 62             | 70             | 54             |
| <b>9</b>          | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            |
| <b>10</b>         | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            |
| <b>11</b>         | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            |
| <b>12</b>         | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            | N/A            |
| <b>All Grades</b> | 701            | 701            | 707            | 696            | 694            | 628            |

*Provide the number and percentage of students eligible for special education by eligibility category for the length of the current charter contract based on each school year's December 1 count.*

| Eligibility Category                | Year 1  |     | Year 2  |     | Year 3  |     | Year 4  |    | Year 5  |      |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|----|---------|------|
|                                     | 2014-15 |     | 2015-16 |     | 2016-17 |     | 2017-18 |    | 2018-19 |      |
|                                     | #       | %   | #       | %   | #       | %   | #       | %  | #       | %    |
| Autism Spectrum Disorder            | 9       | 1%  | 12      | 2%  | 9       | 1%  | 9       | 1% | 11      | 1.6% |
| Blind of Low Vision                 | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Cognitive Disability                | 15      | 2%  | 11      | 2%  | 12      | 2%  | 15      | 2% | 18      | 2.6% |
| Deaf of Hard of Hearing             | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Deaf-Blind                          | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Development Delay (early childhood) | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Emotional Disability                | 3       | <1% | 3       | <1% | 2       | <1% | 6       | 1% | 9       | 1.3% |
| Language or Speech Impairment       | 18      | 3%  | 16      | 2%  | 9       | 1%  | 6       | 1% | 9       | 1.3% |
| Multiple Disabilities               | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Orthopedic Impairment               | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |
| Specific Learning Disability        | 23      | 3%  | 27      | 4%  | 30      | 4%  | 20      | 3% | 27      | 3.9% |
| Traumatic Brain Injury              | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0%  | 0       | 0% | 0       | 0%   |

*Provide the number and percentage of ELL students for length of the current charter contract.*

| ELL STUDENT POPULATION CHART |    |         |    |         |    |         |    |         |    |         |     |
|------------------------------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|-----|
| Year 1                       |    | Year 2  |    | Year 3  |    | Year 4  |    | Year 5  |    | Year 6  |     |
| 2014-15                      |    | 2015-16 |    | 2016-17 |    | 2017-18 |    | 2018-19 |    | 2019-20 |     |
| #                            | %  | #       | %  | #       | %  | #       | %  | #       | %  | #       | %   |
| 7                            | 1% | 7       | 1% | 6       | 1% | 9       | 1% | 9       | 1% | 3       | <1% |

*Provide the number and percentage of homeless students for length of current charter contract.*

| HOMELESS STUDENT POPULATION |    |         |    |         |     |         |   |         |   |         |   |
|-----------------------------|----|---------|----|---------|-----|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| Year 1                      |    | Year 2  |    | Year 3  |     | Year 4  |   | Year 5  |   | Year 6  |   |
| 2014-15                     |    | 2015-16 |    | 2016-17 |     | 2017-18 |   | 2018-19 |   | 2019-20 |   |
| #                           | %  | #       | %  | #       | %   | #       | % | #       | % | #       | % |
| 0                           | 0% | 17      | 2% | 2       | <1% | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 |

*Provide the number and percentage of High Ability students for length of current charter contract.*

| HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS |   |         |   |         |   |         |   |         |   |         |   |
|-----------------------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| Year 1                |   | Year 2  |   | Year 3  |   | Year 4  |   | Year 5  |   | Year 6  |   |
| 2014-15               |   | 2015-16 |   | 2016-17 |   | 2017-18 |   | 2018-19 |   | 2019-20 |   |
| #                     | % | #       | % | #       | % | #       | % | #       | % | #       | % |
| 0                     | 0 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 |

## Aspire Charter Academy

### Reading Plan 2019-20

Aspire has designed a reading plan to provide support to students who are not reading at grade level. This reading plan includes a dedicated reading block, an additional reading intervention block, reading programs, professional development plans, and progress monitoring.

#### Reading Block Minutes (Tier 1)

**Core Program:** Reading Street 2013

| Grade        | Minutes |
|--------------|---------|
| Kindergarten | 130     |
| First        | 130     |
| Second       | 130     |
| Third        | 105     |
| Fourth       | 105     |
| Fifth        | 105     |
| Six          | 90      |
| Seventh      | 90      |
| Eighth       | 90      |

#### Intervention Outside the 90-minute Reading Block

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades</b>                   | 3-8                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Intervention Type</b>        | Corrective Reading                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Tiers</b>                    | Tier 2, Tier 3                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Duration</b>                 | 45 minutes/day                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Group Meeting Frequency</b>  | Daily                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Intervention Description</b> | Research-based supplemental reading program intended to build students foundational reading skills in fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling. |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades</b>                   | K-4                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Intervention Type</b>        | Reading Mastery                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Tiers</b>                    | Tier 2, Tier 3                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Duration</b>                 | 45 minutes/day                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Group Meeting Frequency</b>  | Daily                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Intervention Description</b> | Research-based supplemental reading program intended to build students foundational reading skills in fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling. |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades</b>                   | All grades                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Intervention Type</b>        | Compass Learning                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Tiers</b>                    | Tier 2, Tier 3                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Duration</b>                 | 45 minutes/day                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Group Meeting Frequency</b>  | Daily                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Intervention Description</b> | Blended learning instructional tool used to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students based on reading assessments. |

### Assessment Plans and Goals

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades</b>                    | K                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Previous Year Goal Met</b>    | Yes (Grades K, 1, 4, 5, 6)<br>No (Grades 2, 3)<br>N/A (Grade 7, 8) - added to the plan in 2019-20                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Formative Assessments</b>     | NWEA, aimswebPlus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Progress Monitoring</b>       | aimswebPlus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Summative Assessments</b>     | NWEA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Grade Level Mid-Year Goal</b> | 55% of all students will achieve their mid-year growth targets in reading on the NWEA PGA                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Grade Level End-Year Goal</b> | 55% of all students will achieve their end-year growth targets in reading on the NWEA PGA                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Diagnostic Tools</b>          | Diagnostic tools will be used to identify student needs. In addition, frequent progress monitoring will be implemented with Tier 2 and Tier 3 students to ensure growth and make instructional adjustments when needed to better meet student needs. |

### Professional Development

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Core Reading Program</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Teacher Summit</li> <li>• New Dean Summit</li> <li>• Leadership Training</li> <li>• School-based professional development</li> </ul> |
| <b>Reading Intervention</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McGraw Hill training Reading mastery and Corrective Reading</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| <b>Reading Assessment</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aimswebPlus Training</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |

### **Remediation Structure**

|                    |                                                      |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Instruction</b> | Provided by classroom teacher and intervention staff |
| <b>Format</b>      | Push-in intervention support                         |
| <b>Frequency</b>   | Daily                                                |
| <b>Days</b>        | 183                                                  |
| <b>Duration</b>    | 45 minutes/group                                     |
| <b>Curriculum</b>  | Corrective Reading and Reading Mastery               |

### **Parent/Guardian Communication**

Aspire reviews the Title I Parent Involvement Policy at the Title I Parent meeting and at parent teacher conferences. Parent teacher conferences give teachers another opportunity to discuss student progress in the reading program. Parent workshops regarding reading interventions and assessments will take place.

**Aspire Charter Academy**  
**Continuous Improvement Plan**

**Student Absenteeism Plan 2019-2020**

**Purpose Statement:** The Indiana Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism to equate to missing ten percent of the school year or approximately 18 school days for any reason.

**Goal:** Aspire Charter Academy will reduce chronic absenteeism rate of 19% during the 2019-20 school year.

**Strategy: Form an Attendance Committee: principal, teachers, paraprofessionals, achievement behavioral support specialist (ABSS), registrar and parent liaison**

| Action Step(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Owner(s)                                                               | Deadline           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Conduct a School Practice Self-Assessment within the team to assist with the development of the plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Attendance Committee                                                   | September 30, 2019 |
| 2. Routinely unpack, analyze and utilize data to inform action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Attendance Committee (monthly),<br>Principal & parent Liaison (weekly) | Ongoing            |
| 3. Organize a systemic schoolwide response and policy/practice improvement. (Resource: ACAP plan) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is chronic absence a problem? Is it getting worse or better?</li><li>• Is chronic absence concentrated among particular students?</li><li>• Is it higher or lower among particular grades?</li><li>• Are tardies an issue?</li><li>• Are early dismissals an issue?</li><li>• What are other barriers?</li></ul> | Attendance Committee                                                   | Quarterly          |
| 4. Promote shared accountability and continuous improvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home Visits</li><li>• Parent communication at 3, 5, 7 &amp; 10 days of absences</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Attendance Committee, ABSS,<br>parent liaison                          | Ongoing            |

**Strategy: Create a school climate that encourages students to come to school every day.**

| Action Step(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Owner(s)                                        | Deadline                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Meetings with parents to discuss the attendance policy per NHA and encourage good attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back to School Night</li> <li>• Open House</li> <li>• Title I Meeting</li> <li>• Parent/ Teacher Conference Days</li> <li>• School Messenger</li> </ul> | Leadership team, teachers, parent liaison, ABSS | Ongoing                  |
| 2. Offer before school, after school, and weekend programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Principal, club sponsors                        | Ongoing                  |
| 3. Create bulletin boards, banners, and posters that reflect attendance messaging and pictures of students who attend school at least 96% of the school year.                                                                                                                                     | Attendance Committee                            | Quarterly                |
| 4. Call students when they miss school and welcome them back when they return.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Teachers, parent liaison                        | After 3 consecutive days |
| 5. Create friendly competition among classrooms, offer raffles, parties, dress down days, and other incentives.                                                                                                                                                                                   | Attendance Committee                            | Monthly                  |
| 6. Recognize students and parents at assemblies for good attendance and in our school newsletter.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Attendance Committee                            | Quarterly                |
| 7. Engage neighborhood businesses in promoting good attendance through donations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Attendance Committee, PBIS Committee            | Quarterly                |

**Strategy: Community Partnership with Project Rebuild**

| Action Step(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Owner(s)                  | Deadline           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Attend Project Rebuild Meeting at Gary Public Library & Cultural Center, 220 W. 5 <sup>th</sup> Ave., Gary, IN 46402                                                                                                                                | Principal, parent liaison | September 13, 2019 |
| 2. Coordinate School and Interagency Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with Parent Education</li> <li>• Mental health/counseling</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Community Service Opportunities</li> </ul> | Principal                 | Ongoing            |
| 3. Legal Intervention (last resort)                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Principal                 | Ongoing            |

## Aspire Charter Academy Continuous Improvement Plan

### Student Performance Diagnostic - Data Exhibits

**Overview:** Below are data sets to support the narrative in the charter renewal application.

#### Exhibit 1. Risk adjusted proficiency comparison to BSU charter schools.

| School                             | Risk Adjusted Proficiency Percentile |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Dr Robert H Faulkner Academy       | 93                                   |
| East Chicago Urban Enterprise Acad | 89                                   |
| The Bloomington Project School     | 85                                   |
| Canaan Community Academy           | 84                                   |
| <b>Aspire Charter Academy</b>      | <b>80</b>                            |
| East Chicago Lighthouse            | 79                                   |
| Rural Community Academy            | 69                                   |
| Rock Creek Community Academy       | 53                                   |
| Hoosier Academy - Indianapolis     | 48                                   |
| Discovery Charter School           | 40                                   |
| Renaissance Academy Charter School | 38                                   |
| Inspire Academy - A Sch of Inquiry | 32                                   |
| Mays Community Academy             | 27                                   |
| 21st Century Charter Sch of Gary   | 22                                   |
| Indiana Connections Academy        | 20                                   |
| Anderson Preparatory Academy       | 19                                   |
| Geist Montessori Academy           | 3                                    |
| Community Montessori               | 1                                    |
| Options Charter School Noblesville | 0.1                                  |

#### Exhibit 2. IREAD-3 proficiency rates.

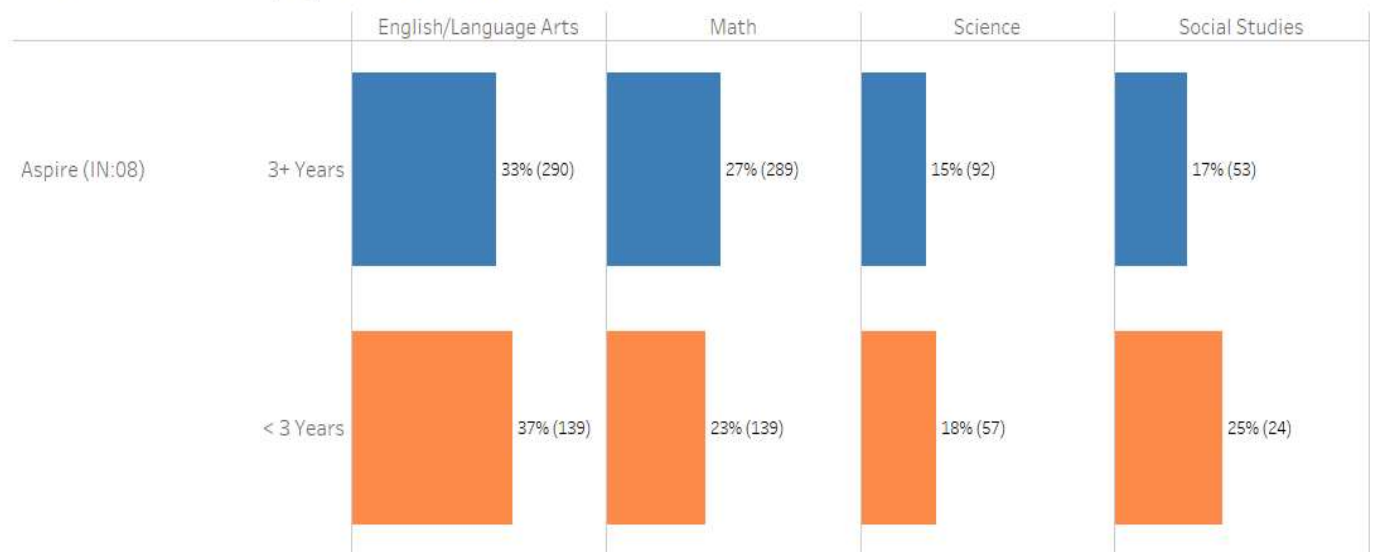
|                      | 2016-17    | 2017-18    | 2018-19    |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Aspire</b>        | <b>88%</b> | <b>82%</b> | <b>82%</b> |
| <b>Gary</b>          | 74%        | 61%        | 56%        |
| <b>State Average</b> | 90%        | 88%        | 87%        |

**Exhibit 3. Grade 3 Reading NWEA Median Rate of Growth Fall to Spring.**

| Year    | Rate of Growth |
|---------|----------------|
| 2013-14 | 121%           |
| 2014-15 | 100%           |
| 2015-16 | 125%           |
| 2016-17 | 150%           |
| 2017-18 | 122%           |
| 2018-19 | 144%           |

**Exhibit 4. Proficiency for tenured students**

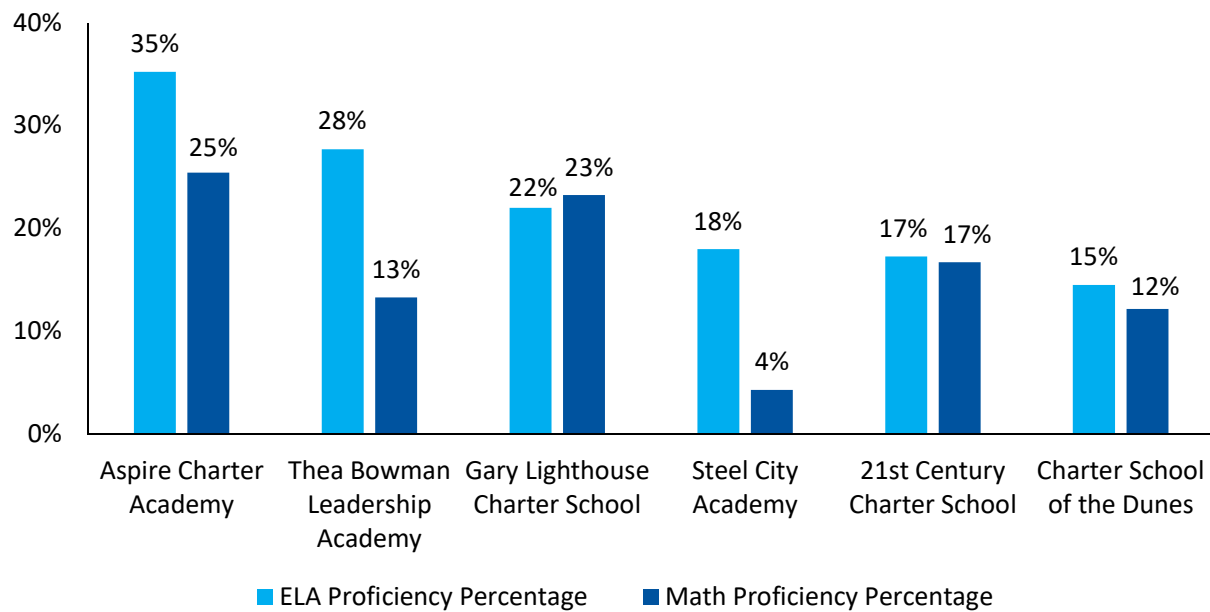
2018-2019 Proficiency by Student Tenure



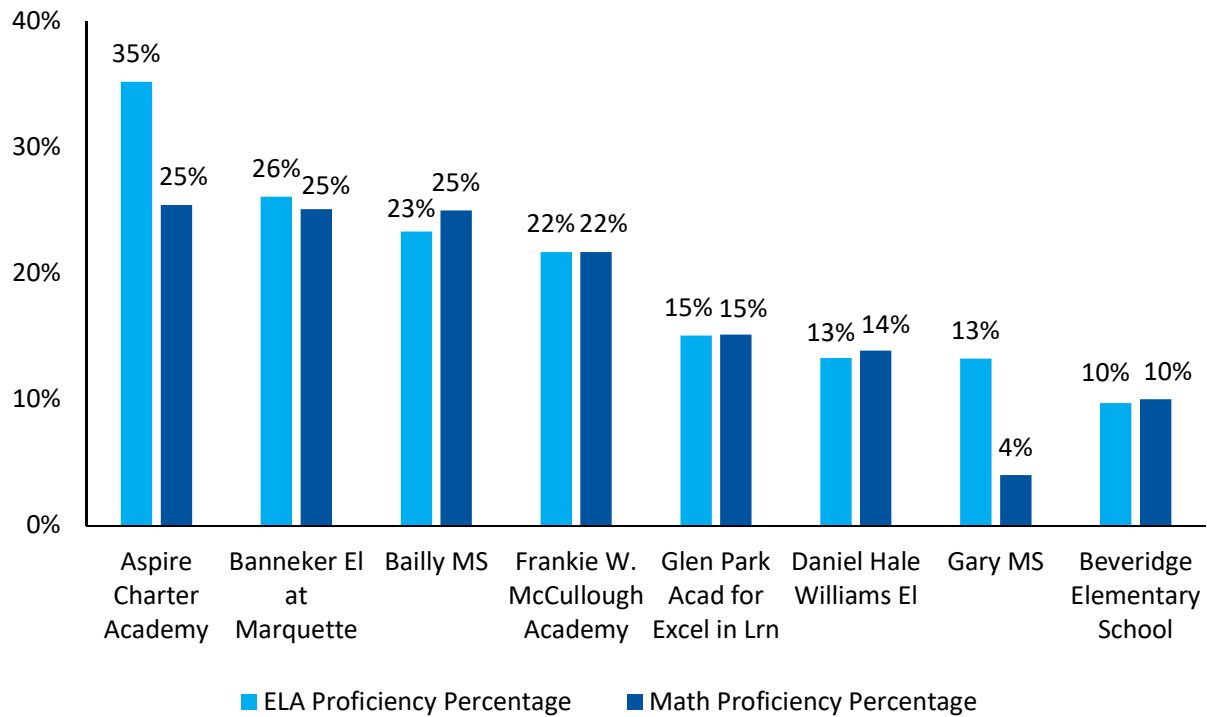
**Exhibit 5. Proficiency comparison to closest schools (ELA and math).**

| School                       | Tested Grades | 2018-19 FRL % | 2016-17    |            |              | 2017-18    |            |              | 2018-19    |            |              |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
|                              |               |               | ELA        | Math       | Letter Grade | ELA        | Math       | Letter Grade | ELA        | Math       | Letter Grade |
| <b>Aspire</b>                | <b>3-8</b>    | <b>94%</b>    | <b>42%</b> | <b>31%</b> | <b>F</b>     | <b>45%</b> | <b>30%</b> | <b>D</b>     | <b>35%</b> | <b>25%</b> | <b>TBD</b>   |
| Beveridge Elem School        | 3-6           | 100%          | 10%        | 6%         | F            | 11%        | 6%         | F            | 10%        | 10%        | TBD          |
| Charles N Scott MS           | 6-8           | 77%           | 52%        | 34%        | D            | 49%        | 29%        | D            | 36%        | 21%        | TBD          |
| Joseph Hess Elem School      | 3-5           | 78%           | 59%        | 51%        | C            | 53%        | 48%        | C            | 37%        | 39%        | TBD          |
| Frankie W McCullough Academy | 3-8           | 100%          | 49%        | 59%        | N/A          | 36%        | 17%        | F            | 22%        | 22%        | TBD          |
| Thea Bowman Leader Acad      | 3-8           | 99%           | 43%        | 27%        | D            | 43%        | 25%        | D            | 28%        | 13%        | TBD          |

**Exhibit 6. Proficiency comparison to closest charter schools.**



**Exhibit 7. Comparison to Gary Community Schools (ELA and math).**



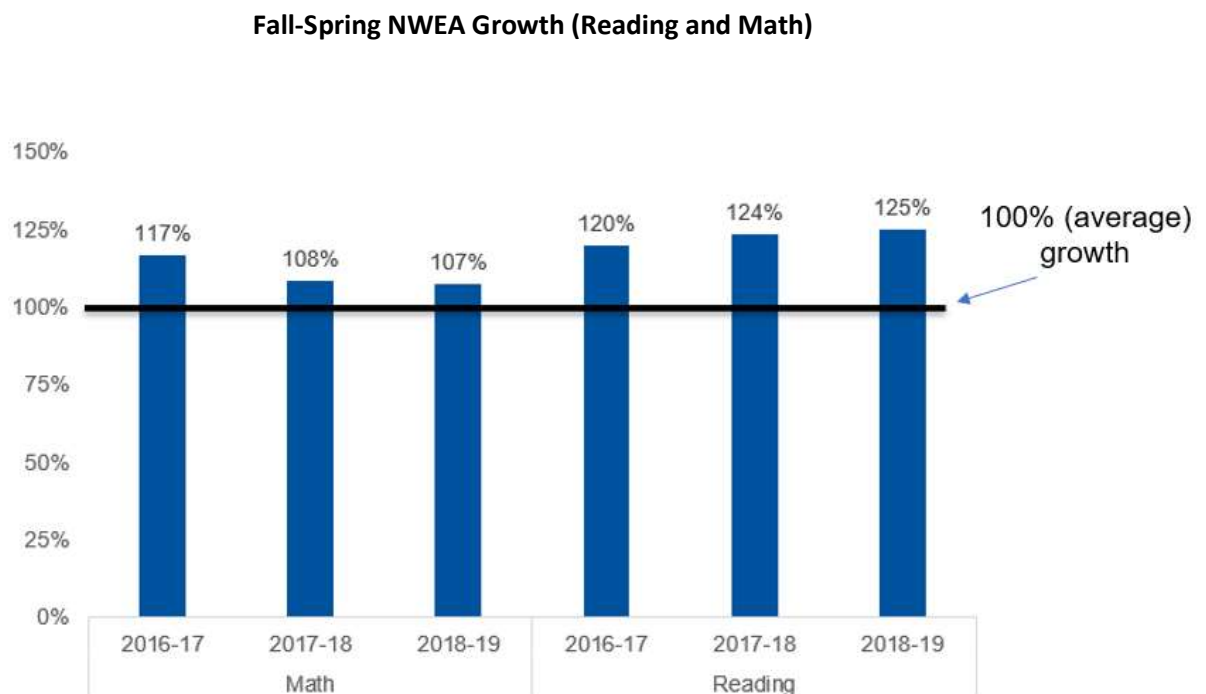
**Exhibit 8. Proficiency comparison to the state of Indiana**

| State of Indiana Proficiency Rates |       |         |         |            |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|------------|
| Subject                            | Grade | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | YoY Change |
| ELA                                | 3     | 67%     | 46%     | -21%       |
|                                    | 4     | 64%     | 46%     | -18%       |
|                                    | 5     | 60%     | 47%     | -13%       |
|                                    | 6     | 65%     | 48%     | -17%       |
|                                    | 7     | 64%     | 50%     | -15%       |
|                                    | 8     | 64%     | 51%     | -13%       |
| Math                               | 3     | 59%     | 59%     | -1%        |
|                                    | 4     | 61%     | 54%     | -7%        |
|                                    | 5     | 66%     | 48%     | -18%       |
|                                    | 6     | 58%     | 46%     | -11%       |
|                                    | 7     | 50%     | 42%     | -8%        |
|                                    | 8     | 56%     | 38%     | -18%       |
| Science                            | 4     | 58%     | 46%     | -11%       |
|                                    | 6     | 58%     | 49%     | -10%       |
| Social Studies                     | 5     | 56%     | 46%     | -10%       |

**Exhibit 8. Proficiency comparison to the state of Indiana (continued)**

| 2018-19 Ground Gained Between Aspire and Indiana State |            |                    |               |                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Subject                                                | Grade      | State of IN Change | Aspire Change | Ground Gained Against IN State |
| ELA                                                    | 3          | -21%               | -22%          | -1%                            |
|                                                        | 4          | -18%               | -18%          | 0%                             |
|                                                        | 5          | -13%               | -10%          | 3%                             |
|                                                        | 6          | -17%               | 7%            | 25%                            |
|                                                        | 7          | -15%               | -16%          | -2%                            |
|                                                        | 8          | -13%               | 4%            | 17%                            |
| Math                                                   | 3          | -1%                | 8%            | 9%                             |
|                                                        | 4          | -7%                | -14%          | -7%                            |
|                                                        | 5          | -18%               | -5%           | 13%                            |
|                                                        | 6          | -11%               | 4%            | 16%                            |
|                                                        | 7          | -8%                | -12%          | -3%                            |
|                                                        | 8          | -18%               | -10%          | 8%                             |
| Science                                                | 4          | -11%               | -4%           | 8%                             |
|                                                        | 6          | -10%               | -1%           | 9%                             |
| Social Studies                                         | 5          | -10%               | -9%           | 1%                             |
| <b>All</b>                                             | <b>All</b> | <b>-13%</b>        | <b>-6%</b>    | <b>7%</b>                      |

**Exhibit 9. Fall-Spring NWEA Rates of Growth for Bottom Quartile Students.**



**Exhibit 9. Fall-Spring NWEA Rates of Growth for Bottom Quartile Students (continued).**

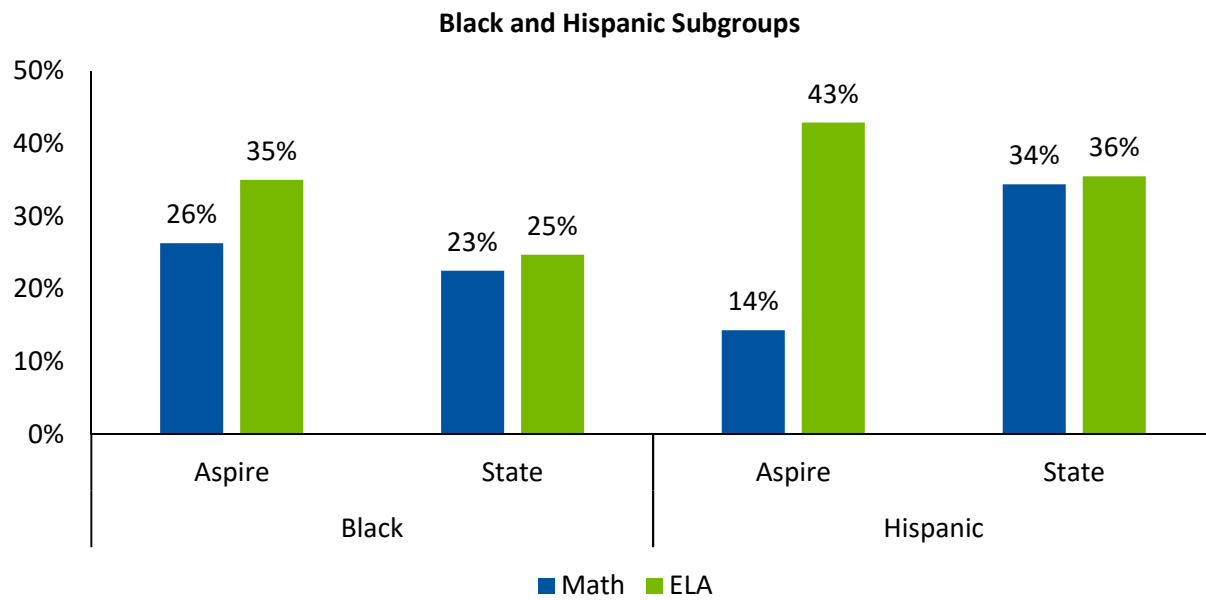
**Percent of Grade & Subject Combinations Growth Percentiles At or Above the 50th percentile**

| 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | Grand Total |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 94%       | 61%       | 67%       | 74%         |

**2018-19 Fall-Spring Median Rate of Growth**

| Grade      | Reading | Math |
|------------|---------|------|
| K          | 124%    | 155% |
| 1          | 83%     | 106% |
| 2          | 100%    | 107% |
| 3          | 144%    | 123% |
| 4          | 100%    | 73%  |
| 5          | 150%    | 110% |
| 6          | 134%    | 75%  |
| 7          | 93%     | 92%  |
| 8          | 127%    | 60%  |
| All Grades | 105%    | 117% |

**Exhibit 10. Subgroups proficiency scores.**

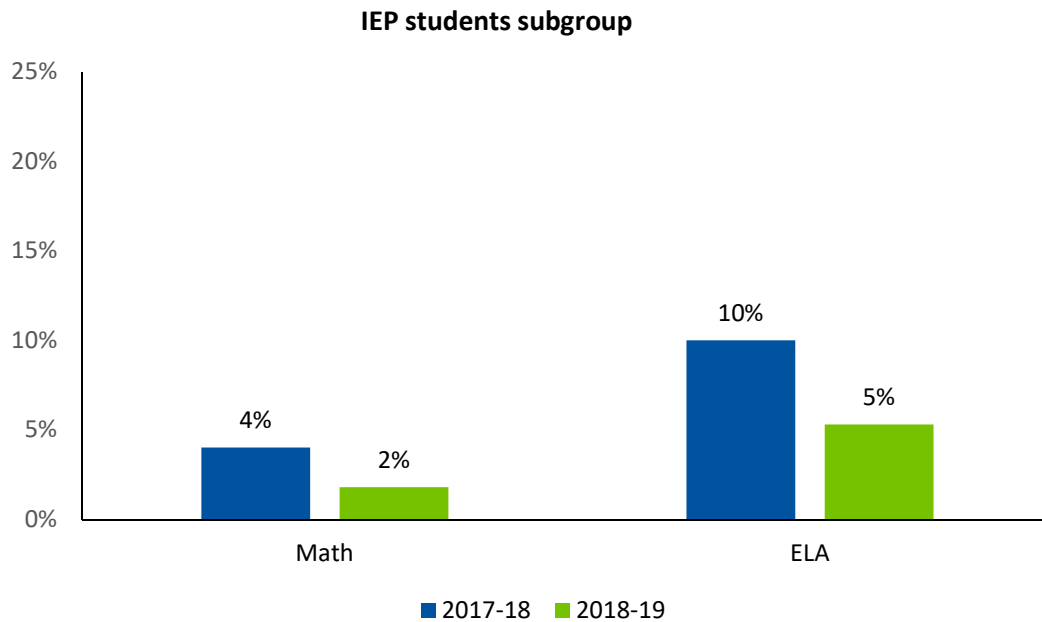


### Black Subgroup Closing the Gap

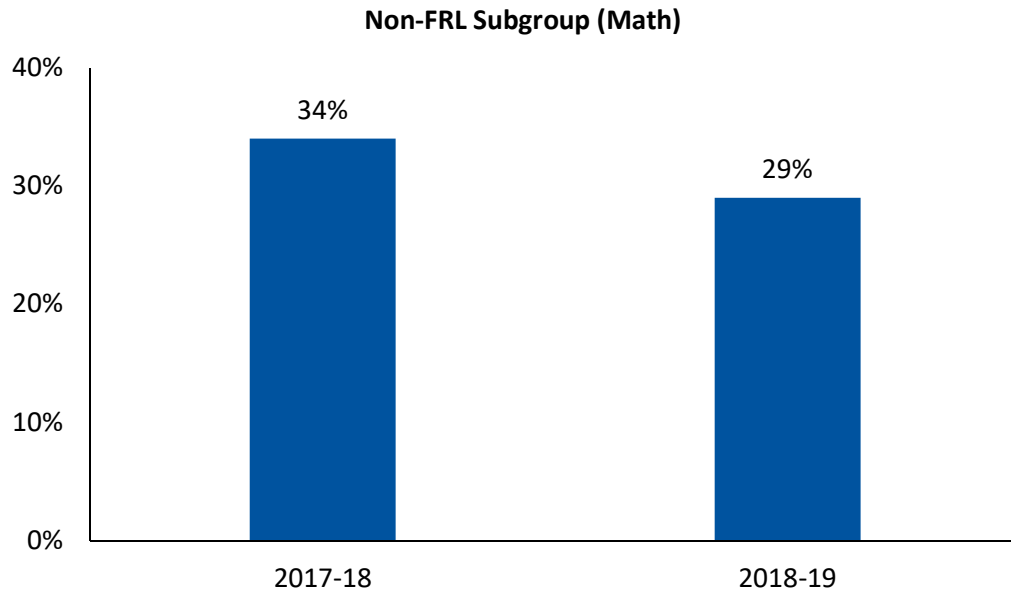
| Math    |                         |                  |                              |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Year    | Aspire's Black Subgroup | State of Indiana | Gain<br>Against the<br>State |
| 2017-18 | 30.3%                   | 31.2%            |                              |
| 2018-19 | 26.3%                   | 22.5%            |                              |
| YoY     | <b>-4.0%</b>            | <b>-8.7%</b>     | <b>4.7%</b>                  |

| ELA     |                         |                  |                              |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Year    | Aspire's Black Subgroup | State of Indiana | Gain<br>Against the<br>State |
| 2017-18 | 44.6%                   | 41.2%            |                              |
| 2018-19 | 35.0%                   | 24.7%            |                              |
| YoY     | <b>-9.6%</b>            | <b>-16.5%</b>    | <b>6.9%</b>                  |

Exhibit 11. Subgroups proficiency decreases.



**Exhibit 11. Subgroups proficiency decreases (continued).**



**Aspire Charter Academy**

| NHA Voice of the Parent Survey                                                |             | Spring 2019          |               |             |                  |                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------------|
|                                                                               | Spring 2018 | 5 - Highly Satisfied | 4 - Satisfied | 3 - Neither | 2 - Dissatisfied | 1 - Highly Dissatisfied |
| <b>Loyalty</b>                                                                |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| Overall Satisfaction                                                          | 30          | 32                   | 46            | 13          | 6                | 3                       |
| Likelihood to recommend                                                       | 44          | 40                   | 24            | 24          | 3                | 8                       |
| <b>Academics</b>                                                              |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| Satisfaction with child's academic progress this year                         | 64          | 56                   | 34            | 5           | 2                | 3                       |
| <b>Schoolwide Behavior System</b>                                             |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| The discipline policies at this school effective                              | 49          | 56                   | 25            | 11          | 6                | 3                       |
| I am confident that this school is providing a safe environment for my child  | 68          | 70                   | 24            | 2           | 3                | 1                       |
| Bullying is handled effectively at this school.                               | 51          | 55                   | 23            | 16          | 4                | 2                       |
| <b>Moral guidance</b>                                                         |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| This school delivers on its promise of moral guidance.                        | 60          | 61                   | 27            | 9           | 2                | 2                       |
| <b>Communication</b>                                                          |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| I am satisfied with the updates I receive about my child's academic progress. | 60          | 65                   | 21            | 6           | 3                | 6                       |
| School communication is effective and timely.                                 | 52          | 63                   | 17            | 6           | 8                | 7                       |
| I feel welcome at this school.                                                | 62          | 59                   | 26            | 10          | 2                | 3                       |
| This school values parent feedback.                                           | 62          | 57                   | 20            | 15          | 2                | 6                       |
| <b>Leadership Staff</b>                                                       |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| The deans are continually working to improve this school.                     | 56          | 48                   | 27            | 19          | 4                | 2                       |
| The principal is an effective leasers.                                        | 49          | 50                   | 27            | 19          | 2                | 2                       |
| <b>Other Staff</b>                                                            |             |                      |               |             |                  |                         |
| The school's secretaries are helpful.                                         |             | Responses: 128       |               |             |                  |                         |

**Aspire Charter Academy  
Continuous Improvement Plan**

**Financial Dashboard**

|                                                                  |                                              |                                                                                                                              |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK<br/>BALL STATE UNIVERSITY</b> |                                              |                                                                                                                              | Meets           |
|                                                                  |                                              |                                                                                                                              | Does Not Meet   |
|                                                                  |                                              |                                                                                                                              | Falls Far Below |
| <b>1. NEAR TERM INDICATORS</b>                                   |                                              |                                                                                                                              |                 |
| <b>1.a.</b>                                                      | <b>Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio)</b> | Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities                                                                                | Meets           |
| <b>1.b.</b>                                                      | <b>Cash to Current Liabilities</b>           | Cash divided by Current Liabilities                                                                                          | Meets           |
| <b>1.c.</b>                                                      | <b>Unrestricted Days Cash</b>                | Unrestricted Cash divided by ((Total Expenses-Depreciation Expenses)/365)                                                    | Meets           |
| <b>1.d.</b>                                                      | <b>Enrollment Variance</b>                   | Actual Enrollment divided by Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget                                   | Meets           |
| <b>1.e.</b>                                                      | <b>Default</b>                               |                                                                                                                              | Meets           |
| <b>2. SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS</b>                              |                                              |                                                                                                                              |                 |
| <b>2.a.</b>                                                      | <b>Total Margin</b>                          | Net Income divided by Total Revenue and Aggregated Total Margin: Total 3 Year Net Income divided by Total 3 Year Revenues    | Meets           |
| <b>2.b.</b>                                                      | <b>Debt to Asset Ratio</b>                   | Total Liabilities divided by Total Assets                                                                                    | Meets           |
| <b>2.c.</b>                                                      | <b>Cash Flow</b>                             | Multi-Year Cash Flow = (Year 3 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash); One-Year Cash Flow = (Year 2 Total Cash)-(Year 1 Total Cash) | Meets           |
| <b>2.d.</b>                                                      | <b>Debt Service Coverage Ratio</b>           | (Net Income + Depreciation + Interest Expense)/(Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments)                              | Does Not Meet   |

| Financial Performance Framework – Data Points                 |                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Current Assets                                                | \$1,022,094              |
| Current Liabilities                                           | \$999,544                |
| Cash                                                          | \$783,152                |
| Unrestricted Cash                                             | \$783,152                |
| Total Expenses                                                | \$7,157,907              |
| Depreciation Expenses                                         | \$18,947                 |
| Enrollment Projection in Charter School Board-Approved Budget | 725                      |
| Actual Enrollment                                             | 704                      |
| Default                                                       | School is not in default |
| Net Income                                                    | \$22,550                 |
| Total Revenue                                                 | \$7,158,027              |
| Aggregated Total Margin                                       | .0031                    |
| Total 3 Year Net Income                                       | \$72,441                 |
| Total 3 Year Revenues                                         | \$23,129,950             |
| Total Liabilities                                             | \$999,544                |
| Total Assets                                                  | \$1,022,094              |
| Year 1 Total Cash                                             | \$783,152                |
| Year 2 Total Cash                                             | \$540,280                |
| Year 3 Total Cash                                             | \$100,945                |
| Depreciation                                                  | \$18,947                 |
| Interest                                                      | N/A                      |
| Interest Expense                                              | N/A                      |
| Annual Principal, Interest, and Lease Payments                | \$917,309                |