Aspire Education

Aspire Education 2025–26 Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2026

July 2025–June 2026



Strengthening our Bay Area community by investing in young readers and leaders.





Aspire Education

A Letter from Our Executive Director

Friends,



I stepped into the role of Executive Director in May after serving on the Board for a few years, and in that time my appreciation for the commitment of our staff, partners, funders, and volunteers has only grown! As a team of three full-time staff, we serve hundreds of students each year across the Bay Area.

Since its founding more than 20 years ago, Aspire has grown to serve more students, ages, subjects, geographies, and formats. Like many nonprofits, we were eager to say "yes" in an effort to advance our mission, only to find ourselves stretched thin. And in education, where programs are notoriously difficult to scale given their dependence on human relationships, local context, and complex institutional systems, saying "yes" too often can be risky. And so my priority for Aspire in the last few months has been to simplify: to do fewer things and do them really well.

Aspire is focusing on programs that center consistent relationships and mentorship.

Aspire's strength is in working closely with partners and families to design programs that meet local community needs. We are leaning into that strength by prioritizing programs that center consistent relationships and mentorship like our dual-impact Community Reading Buddies (CRB) program and on-site, small-group tutoring programs in conjunction with longstanding partners.

As we prioritize connection and community, we are shifting toward more on-site programming. We see how in-person programs allow stronger connections to form among our program participants and create a foundation of trust and safety that allow for effective academic mentorship.

We're also reducing our reliance on screen time in our programs. Chief Program Officer Kathleen Mautner piloted screen-free CRB sessions at two OUSD summer school sites, training teens in a phonics curriculum grounded in the science of reading. More than 50 children and youth took part in the pilots, and the results were strong on both sides of our dual-impact model. After just four weeks, Buddies read an average of 8.5 more words correctly per minute, while teens showed significant gains in workplace skills and community connection.

At the same time, Aspire is prioritizing investments in technology and systems behind the scenes so that we can increase the efficiency with which we support hundreds of children and youth participants annually. Thanks to our new Operations Manager Julia Ormond, we're already seeing those investments pay off.

I look forward to working with you all in the coming months to further strengthen our programs and serve our Bay Area community. Thank you for your support of Aspire!



With gratitude,

Monica Chellam

Executive Director, Aspire Education

Who We Are

Foundedin 2005,Aspire Education is a community nonprofit whose mission is to provide high-quality educational mentorship to every student in the Bay Area. We offer affordable and accessible relationship-centered tutoring and mentorship programs.



Community Reading Buddies (CRB) is a dual-impact program that trains teen Youth Mentors to give one-on-one reading support to elementary Buddies. Both sides grow: Buddies gain reading skills and confidence, and mentors gain leadership experience and high-demand workplace skills.

During the 2025-2026 school year, our tutoring included a wide range of programs and models, from virtual SAT prep courses to on-site programs in partnership with Boys and Girls Club to specialized tutoring in partnership with CA's Department of Rehabilitation.

Impact at a Glance

10,916

hoursofeducationalmentorship

Tutoring

- 10+
- 4,337

CRB Participants

- 344
- 342 Teens

CRB Retention

- 34% Program Seasons
- 29% Program Seasons

CRB Growth

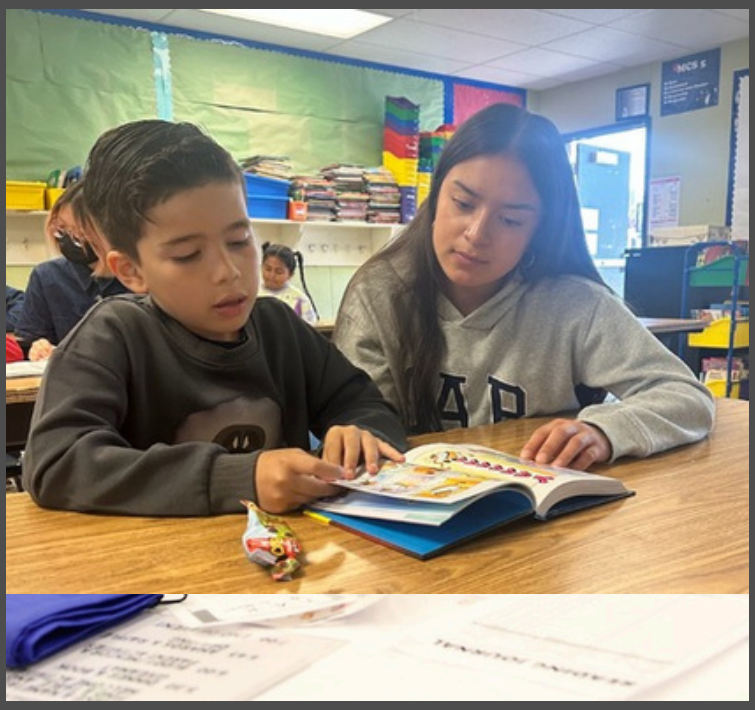
- 76% Children felt more positive about reading (motivation/confidence)
- 80% Teens grew in leadership and social-emotional skills

Our Programs

Community Reading Buddies

Community Reading Buddies builds the next generation of readers and leaders. Teen Youth Mentors are trained in communication, relationship-building, mentorship and literacy instruction, then meet with elementary Buddies twice a week for one-on-one reading sessions. Mentors receive weekly coaching throughout each season, and the program is free for every Buddy and family.

Partners included BACR, Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco, EBAYC, Oakland Public Library, OUSD, WCCUSD, YMCA of the East Bay, and YMHA.



Academic Tutoring

During the2025-2026schoolyear, Aspire's professionaltutorsprovidedone-on-one and small-group academicsupporttoawide range of students:

- Boys &Girls Clubsof SanFrancisco: on-site afterschool tutoring at11clubhouses
- Girls Inc. of Alameda County:aftercare tutoring and SAT prep
- YMCA of the East Bay: aftercare tutoring
- Squash on Track and LEMO Foundation: academic tutoring in youth sports programs
- California Department of Rehabilitation: tutoring for teens and young adults
- First Graduate: SAT prep
- SHE-CAN: virtual college writing and SAT prep
- PiedmontHigh School: one-on-onehigh-school tutoring across subject areas

4,337
hoursofprofessional tutoring

At a Boys and Girls Clubhouse, Aspire tutors worked with Macy, an elementary student who began the year needing a lot of help with subtraction.

By December, she was making progress with multiplication.

By February, she was tackling long division.

By May, she was solving 3-by-2-digit multiplication and pre-algebra problems on her own!

Community Reading Buddies: Going Deeper

Why connection matters: Research from Opportunity Insights finds that friendships across class lines are among the strongest predictors of whether low-income children move up the economic ladder. CRB enables meaningful relationship building across lines of differences, including class. This year, teens from 73 schools participated, building relationships with Buddies and with one another.

> "I've seen a real **boost in both their confidence and excitement for reading.** ... When I asked my 9-year-old if he'd want to be a Reading Buddy mentor someday, he immediately said yes, which speaks volumes more about **the example your mentors set.** The only complaint from my sons is that they wish they could go every day!"
>
> — Buddy Parent, Summer 2026

Each CRB Season By the Numbers

Season	Mentor-Buddy pairs	Hours of Mentor-ship	Buddy Reading Skill, Motivation and Confidence	Teen Leadership & Social-Emotional Growth
Fall 2025	123	2,918	81% felt more motivated to read	72% grew in social-emotional skills
Spring 2026	117	1,593	73% felt positive about reading	82% of teens grew in social-emotional skills
Summer 2026*	174	3,010	75% felt positive about reading 8.5 more words correct per minute (DIBELS) in screen-free pilot	87% of teens grew in social-emotional skills

** Data covers 3 full program seasons which span Aug '25 through July '26. July '25 data excluded.



What the research says

Both sides learn. A 2025 review of 32 cross-age tutoring studies found academic gains for younger students and even larger gains for older mentors.

Program structure is critical. A 2022 review found cross-age peer mentoring has a meaningful positive effect. It's largest in community or summer settings & with urban youth and strong adult supervision.

Young tutors can match adults. A federally funded study across 80 schools found struggling 1st- and 2nd-graders tutored by older elementary students grew in reading as much as those tutored by adults.

Sources: Chang et al., 2025; Burton et al., 2022; Vanderbit University, 2025, UT Austin College of Education, 2025; Chetty et al., Social capital | Nature, 2022.

Stipends for Youth Mentors

In 2025-2026, we partnered with OUSD's ECCCO program and the Child Mind Institute's YMHA program to provide stipends to 70+ teen participants.

By reducing barriers to participation, stipends have enabled participation from a more diverse population, including more low-income students and young men. And because stipends require regular participation, they've improved teen attendance, laying the foundation for strong connections with young students.

We are excited to expand stipends through support from the Oakland and Richmond Funds for Children and Youth.

Spotlight: Ruth & Yanderlin

Ruth, a 10th grader, formed a close connection with her Buddy, Yanderlin, and advocated for different reading material she thought Yanderlin might like.

When staff brought in a book about the women scientists and mathematicians of NASA's Langley Research Center, Yanderlin was so absorbed that she forgot she was practicing reading at all.

We love seeing motivation rooted in connection!

WHAT CHANGED BY GEOGRAPHY

West Contra Costa

shifted from Downer Elementary to Dover Elementary through a partnership with BACR, improving attendance and supporting ELL students

San Francisco

tested a CRB program with middle schoolers at Mission Clubhouse and learned a hard lesson about the importance of clear expectations and incentives

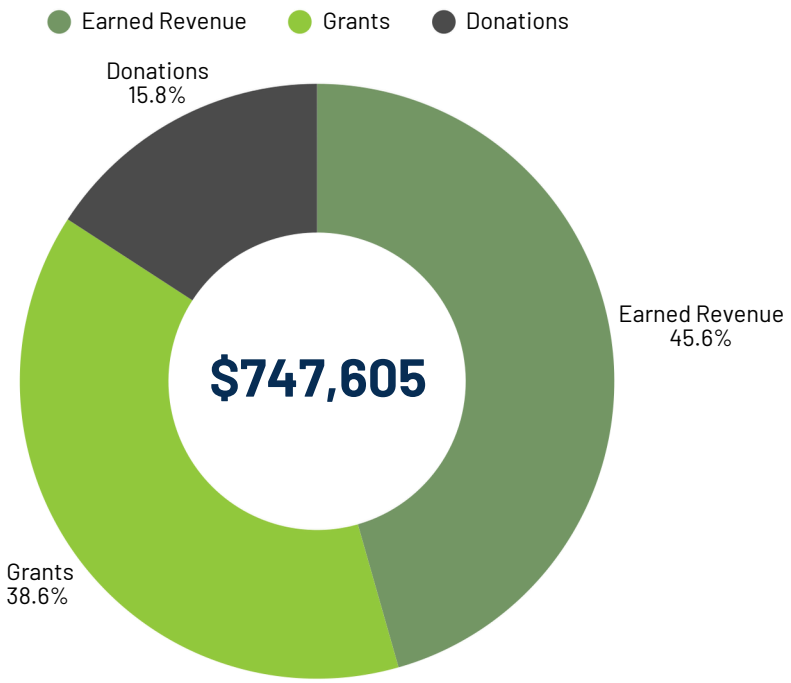
Oakland

expanded to two public libraries and four public school campuses and provided stipends to more than 70 Youth Mentors.

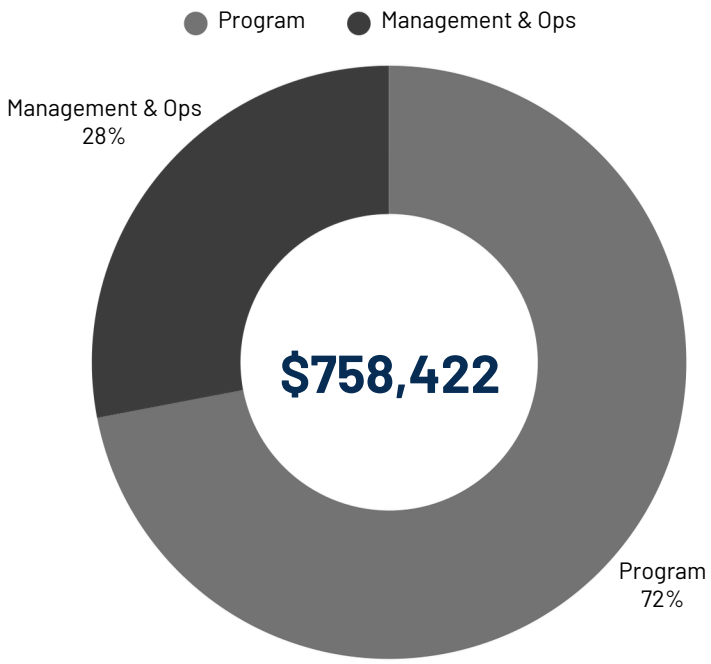
Our Finances

accountability, and focus on impact.

Revenue Breakdown



Expense Breakdown



Looking Ahead to 2026–27

1. **More in-person programs.** This fall 100% of our tutoring and ~80% of our CRB programs are on-site. We believe this is essential to building relationships and community.
2. **Better systems**. We've invested in a new backend system that more efficiently tracks participant applications, attendance, survey data, reading assessments, and other data.
3. **Pathway programs**. We're piloting CRB as a practicum experience for teens in Early Childhood Education pathway programs.
4. **Updated curriculum**. We continue to iterate on our curriculum for teens and young kids, focusing on science-based best practices.
5. **Virtual sessions for older readers**. Online programs will focus on upper elementary Buddies.
6. **Stipends for mentors** who qualify, so cost never keeps a teen from leading.
7. **Deeper engagement**. Our goal is for 250+ participants to reach 26–50 hours and 150+ to reach 50+ hours of mentorship this year.



Thank You.

Ourstudents,tutors,alumni,andstaffachievemorebecause of a community that believes in the power of reading, relationships, and opportunity. We are grateful for your partnership.

OUR PARTNERS

- Bay Area Community Resources
- Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco
- CA Department of Rehabilitation
- Child Mind Institute / YMHA
- EBAYC
- First Graduate
- Girls Inc of Alameda County
- LEMO Foundation
- Oakland Public Library
- OUSD/ECCCO
- Piedmont High
- Rising Sun Center for Opportunity
- SHE-CAN
- Squash on Track
- WCCUSD
- YMCA of the East Bay

FOUNDATION & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

- Oakland Fund for Children and Youth
- Richmond Fund for Children and Youth
- Golden State Community Foundation
- Ross Stores Foundation
- Quest Foundation
- Stocker Foundation
- Lesher Foundation Responsive Grants
- Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Foundation
- Barrios Trust
- Lois Lenski Covey Foundation
- West Davis & Bergard Foundation
- Lesher Foundation CARE Fund
- Heffernan Foundation
- Mary A. Crocker Trust
- Nicholson Family Foundation
- Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation
- Lowell Berry Foundation
- Mechanics Bank

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- Jack Woodruff
- Monica Marcone
- Albert Liu
- Blerina Sanocki
- Brian Sokolow
- Jonathan Asmis
- Katherine O'Connor
- Michael Guasco

FULL-TIME STAFF

- Monica Chellam, Executive Director
- Kathleen Mautner, Chief Program Officer
- Julia Ormond, Operations Manager
- *Thanks to CRB alumni Candice Bradley & Nathaly Basto*

TUTORS AND CRB STAFF

- Abrahim El Gamal
- Aditi Sen
- Aitanna Parker
- Ani Brady
- Anne Nino
- Annie Li
- Anthony Long
- April Mendoza Jimenez
- Ayla Azim
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- Bella Chang
- Belle Fisher
- Benjamin Wallace
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- Stella Joshi
- Theresa Thompson
- Valeria Rosa Rocha
- Zoi Calomiris

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Give a gift at aspireeducation.org/donate or by scanning this QR code!

Give monthly and support students all year long.

Introduce us to a school or youth-serving organization interested in partnering with us.

Share this report with a friend who cares about reading and community.

Individual Donors

ForgiftsmadeJuly1,2025–June 30, 2026

Albert Liu
Allison O'Brien
Amy Gurowitz
Amy Tirion
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Susannah Bjork
Tracey Borst
Trust of Shirley Kroll
Vijay and Jennifer Black-Mehorta
Wendy Jennis & Doug Mishkin



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