

2022 - 2023 ASPEN ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT



T H I N K

Tenacity | High Expectations | Integrity | No Excuses | Kindness



Contents

Introduction	2
2022-2023 Highlights	3
Governance and Management	5
School Board	8
Staff and Student Enrollment	10
Innovative Practices and Implementation	12
Curriculum	14
Academic Performance	19
Operational Performance	30
Financial Performance	30
Future Plans	31
Contact Information	32

Introduction

Aspen Academy 4184 is a state recognized ‘High Quality’ public charter school which is in its 15th year of operation. The school serves students in grades K-8. Founded in 2008 by a group of parents who wanted a more academically challenging curriculum option in the southern suburbs of the Twin Cities, Aspen Academy started with 104 students in a church building serving grades K-3. Today, Aspen Academy is in its own building after two expansions serving over 600 students. Authorized by Friends of Education, Aspen Academy offers a rigorous academic education that follows Minnesota Academic Standards and uses Core Knowledge Sequence as the content foundation.

The mission of Aspen Academy is to provide students with a well-rounded, Core Knowledge based education which meets the intellectual, creative, and social needs of each child.

The mission is achieved through our daily vision in preparing students for future educational opportunities and life in a global society by creating an academically rigorous, literature-rich environment where class sizes are small, and a strong sense of community is built and valued.



2022-2023 Highlights

Fifteen years of growth and development has supported Aspen Academy in being a leader amongst other public schools. As our first full year back in school after the COVID-19 pandemic, we were hard at work on identifying and addressing the social and academic challenges of our students.

The enhancement of our Title 1 programming allowed for us to serve more scholars than we have in past years. This programming change came at a critical time as the pandemic left many of our scholars with gaps in foundational reading and math skills. In reading interventions, we served 70 students last year in small groups and pairs and 40 students in Title 1 math. These scholars all reported growth through their progress monitoring.



Kindergarten at Aspen Academy was a year filled with exciting milestones and memorable experiences for our young learners. One of the key highlights was the journey into the world of reading, where our students developed foundational literacy skills that will serve them well throughout their academic careers. We also celebrated our 100th day of kindergarten in a fun and creative way, with students dressing up as 100-year-old individuals, bringing laughter and joy to the entire school community. The spirit of creativity continued with a fun day of special Valentine's Day crafts. Every

Friday, our kindergarteners had the pleasure of welcoming their 3rd-grade book buddies, creating valuable mentorship and friendship opportunities. And to wrap up the year with a bang, the students enjoyed an unforgettable field trip to the Como Zoo, creating memories that will last a lifetime!

First grade continued with their classroom transformation learning days with the favorite theme of being construction workers! The real life application of math and literacy skills always makes for a high level of engagement and learning. They applied their technology skills as they researched American Symbols, made a model at home, and using Flipgrid, recorded their presentations.

Second grade had a blast celebrating the day of "TWO's" 2/2/23! There were special math and literacy activities throughout the day that focused on the number two. In the second grade core knowledge curriculum, teachers read the story The Christmas Carol and were able to take a field trip and watch the play in action! They had a fun time comparing and contrasting the two versions. Second graders also had a fun habitat unit. They were able to pick their favorite habitat and work with a group that shared their favorite as well and make a 3-D diorama and share them with the other second grade classes.

Scholars in third grade attended the MN Zoo for a field trip. There they took a class specifically on Biomimicry, which they had just studied in their environment unit in science. Third graders participated in "March Mathness" which helped improve scholars' multiplication fact practice. They incorporated research and writing skills while working on the Native American Tribe project that went along with their social studies unit. Scholars also made a handmade artifact that went along with their tribe. Third graders worked with their

kindergarten buddies on various reading skills throughout the year and became experts at recalling and sequencing information from a story. The final day of school was capped off with a talent show, showcasing a variety of different acts.

Fourth graders took a trip to the Minnesota State Capitol where they learned all about government decision making while being surrounded by breathtaking architecture and art. They even got up close and personal with the golden horses sculpture on the roof deck. Fourth grade students also visited the Minnesota History Center, where scholars learned all about Minnesota history through many interactive exhibits. Fourth graders' favorite exhibit was the Weather Permitting exhibit. Here they got to participate in a simulation of being in a basement during a tornado. Fourth graders had a magnificent talent show...talents ranging from dancing and singing all the way to card tricks and comedy. Scholars worked hard on a month-long Medieval Project displaying their knowledge of Medieval Times. Their projects included a speech, poster board, and a handmade object representing their topic. Parents were able to come in and learn all about Medieval Times from our knowledgeable students. Throughout the year, fourth graders had the best time working with their paired buddy from first grade each month. Fourth graders were able to take the concept of being a "leader" to a whole new level and were able to become "teachers." All scholars looked forward to helping guide their first grade buddy through given activities once a month.

Fifth graders attended their annual trip to Junior Achievement's Biztown in October. Students learned about financial literacy, how to write a resume and interview for a job, balance a checkbook, and work together to run a city! They were also invited to attend the Vikings' Field Day which was a day at the Vikings stadium with multiple fifth grade classes across the Twin Cities attending for drills and football activities. Fifth grade scholars also took a field trip to the Bell Museum, where they saw a film in the planetarium about the Mars Rovers, directly relating to the STEM projects they were doing in science class. They also saw natural history come to life through the numerous displays and students got to hold giant cockroaches and touch snakes. The school year ended for fifth graders with the first annual Fifth Grade Bridging Ceremony, where students figuratively and literally walked across the bridge to middle school.

Our middle schoolers had an exciting year as well. Sixth graders enjoyed being able to attend the Eagle Bluff environmental learning overnight camp in March. Seventh graders took a field trip to the Sherlock Holmes exhibit at the Minnesota History Center, tying into the Core Knowledge book read in fifth grade, *Sherlock Holmes*. Eighth grade students celebrated the end of the year with a trip to Mall of America, a special 8th grade lunch, and 8th grade graduation. All middle school students participated in a number of special events throughout the year. The Middle School Dance in January was Retro (1990's/2000's) themed with music, open gym, photo booth, karaoke, games, and food. Scholars also celebrated Pi Day in March with their annual Pi reciting contest, activities in math class, Nuk 'Em Tournament in PE, and of course--pie! In May, the middle school held its annual SciVentBerg Fair with 6th grade inventions, 7th Grade Rube Goldberg Machines, and 8th Grade traditional science projects. On the last day of school, middle school attended the YMCA Gathering Pines Day Camp, where students enjoyed activities like archery, canoeing, high ropes, crafts, field games, and more.

Governance and Management

School Management and Administrator Biographies

Melanie Jiskra, K-8 Principal/Executive Director

Ms. Jiskra has served as the K-8 principal for the past six years and has officially taken on the role of Executive Director in addition to principal. She was named Executive Director in June of 2022. She has over 18 years of teaching and instructional coaching experience and 11 years in school administration. She earned her Masters of Education in Arts and Educational Administration through Saint Mary's University. She has been accepted into the doctoral program at Bethel University. Melanie has worked in traditional public schools, rural and urban settings, PreK-12, and elementary schools. Ms. Jiskra teaches aspiring principals through Saint Mary's University and trains Reading Corps Tutors across the state of Minnesota. Melanie's educational career highlights include being one of the three finalists for the 2022 MN National Distinguished Principal of the Year award, the recipient of the 2021 MESPA STEM Innovation Award, the recipient of the United States Department of Education 2019 National Blue Ribbon School award, and being a 2008 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalist.

Melanie's passion lies in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She leads professional development, handles the day to day onsite operations of the school and has implemented data driven decision making to all aspects of Aspen Academy intervention and instructional models. She has been a part of the partnership with the University of St. Thomas in the Charter School Residency program, is a selected member of the ServeMinnesota Education Stakeholder Committee, and has led Aspen Academy as a part of a research study with Reading Corps for the past two years. Her favorite part of the day still remains the morning when scholars arrive with smiles and a readiness to learn!

Mr. Eric Sandberg, Dean of Students

Mr. Sandberg is in his fifth year at Aspen Academy in his role as dean of students and his 12th year in education. His role has expanded exponentially at Aspen Academy as he coordinates our transportation department, arrival and dismissal systems, school safety, and Aspen's THINK efforts. Mr. Sandberg received his bachelor's degree in Social Studies Education from St. Olaf College and his Master's in Educational Leadership from Minnesota State Mankato. Currently Mr. Sandberg is taking courses towards his K-12 Administrator license through Saint Mary's University. Mr. Sandberg taught two years of high school social studies where he was a football, strength, and softball coach. After teaching, Mr. Sandberg served as the Youth Development Coordinator for Faribault Public Schools for six years. This position entailed coordinating multiple youth programs across the district focusing on academic and enrichment goals. This position grew to include additional programming and responsibilities; mainly coordinating after school and summer STEAM programming for 600 students in grades 1-8. Mr. Sandberg has developed a community summer program at Aspen Academy for the past three years with great success. Mr. Sandberg makes it a goal each and every day to make a positive impact on as many scholars as he possibly can. He strives to attain that goal through his servant leadership and passion for education.



Development of Leaders

Melanie Jiskra, Principal, Executive Director

Professional Development Plan 2022-2023 Summary

Goal 1: Continue to develop leadership skills through the work of Brene Brown; “Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts.”

Goal 1: Met: Mrs. Jiskra continued to study the work of Brene Brown throughout the 2022-2023 year and focused on leadership development through improving clarity to staff and implementing the 4 learnable skills: embracing vulnerability, living core values, braving trust, and developing resilience.

Goal 2: Continue to further my education to fulfill my personal goal of completing my dissertation in leadership.

Goal 2: In Progress: Mrs. Jiskra did not advance this professional goal during the 2022-2023 school year. The intention is to do so within the next two years.

Goal 3: Work to further understand and deepen my knowledge on charter school finance.

Goal 3: Met: Mrs. Jiskra continues to meet with Aspen Academy’s accountant, Nate Winters, through CLA Finance, to discuss the school budget in greater detail and gain a better understanding of past spending/balance trends.

James Jotter, Assistant Principal

Professional Development Plan 2022-2023

Goal 1: Continue to grow as an Aspen Administrator through staff development, active engagement around the school, attending meetings, and making myself available to staff and students when assistance is needed.

Goal 1: Met: Mr. Jotter was an active participant in professional development, taking part in the MESPA conference for the first time this past February. He was visible and active around the school in his oversight of the buildings and grounds, along with fulfilling his responsibilities with meeting requirements, supervision, events and school functions.

Goal 2: Continue to build strong relationships with staff through continued support, active listening, trust on follow through, and role modeling dependable and reliable leadership.

Goal 2: Met: Mr. Jotter made a concerted effort to connect with staff that he had not worked as closely with in the past years. He made extra rounds in the mornings and afternoons to check in, along with increasing follow up on issues of which he had been a part of the problem solving process. Staff had commented he was more approachable.

Goal 3: Continue to improve the school building, school grounds and curriculum through improvements and additions of current materials, supplies and equipment.

Goal 3: Partially Met: Mr. Jotter worked to ensure that we had adequate coverage for the custodial needs in the building. The school grounds were taken care of and there were improvements in some of the areas with purchasing new and needed equipment such as lawnmower, snowblower, and working with contractors for new playground equipment. Mr. Jotter left Aspen Academy in the summer of 2023, so there were some gaps with curriculum materials and manipulatives that did not get ordered at that time.

Eric Sandberg, K-8 Dean of Students

Professional Development Plan 2022-2023

Goal 1: To become an effective educational leader with the knowledge and skills to positively impact the student experience.

Goal 1: Met: Mr. Sandberg completed his Master's Degree program from Minnesota State University- Mankato in Educational Leadership. Mr. Sandberg has also continued his education by taking coursework to obtain his K-12 Principal Licensure through St. Mary's University. The anticipated completion date for that program is the summer of 2025. In addition to coursework Mr. Sandberg is an aspiring principal member of MESPA as well as a member in ASCD. These memberships allowed Mr. Sandberg to stay up to date on best practices in education and educational leadership. Throughout the year, Mr. Sandberg continued to contribute to the administration team and to learn from the licensed administrators.

Goal 2: To become a more impactful leader to ensure the educational success of all students.

Goal 2: Partially Met: Mr. Sandberg continued to learn about best practices when working with culturally diverse students. Mr. Sandberg supported the work of our Dare2BReal student leadership group that supports diversity and inclusion throughout the school. Mr. Sandberg continued to implement aspects of courageous conversations and restorative justice practices into his work when meeting with students and working on student situations. Mr. Sandberg chaired the Festival of Nations committee and led the planning and execution of the event. The Festival of Nations was a family event that celebrates the diverse population we have at Aspen Academy. All families were invited to this event to celebrate different heritages. By celebrating the cultural diversity of our students we were able to create a more inclusive culture.

Goal 3: To become a school leader that improves student achievement through high achieving staff

Goal 3: Partially Met: Mr. Sandberg increased his knowledge of the staff evaluation process by observing evaluation meetings and researching best practices for staff feedback. Mr. Sandberg used informal inquiry based feedback methods to assist staff in reflecting on their professional work. In addition to gaining experience in evaluations, Mr. Sandberg worked very hard to keep staff motivated by recognizing their accomplishments and celebrating their successes.

Eric Sandberg, K-8 Dean of Students

Professional Development Plan 2023-2024

Goal 1: To become an effective educational leader with the knowledge and skills to positively impact the student experience by continuing coursework towards administrative licensure.

Goal 2: To become a more impactful leader to ensure the educational success of all students through equity work and increased knowledge of Special Education.

Goal 3: To continue to develop as a school leader that supports and promotes the work of high quality staff through effective leadership and feedback.

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

School Board

The Aspen Academy School Board is the governing body that sets policy and provides oversight of the school through its five standing committees. The Aspen board is composed of no more than 5 parents, 3 teachers and 2 community members. Board elections take place every May and those elected are seated at the July meeting. Information about the election process is sent to parents and teachers in September with a deadline for responses. Candidates interested in running for a seat on the board are asked to respond to a slate of questions which is shared with parents and employees as well as complete a Conflict of Interest form.

The annual election of board officers took place at the July 18th meeting. At that time, Michael Faulise was elected Board Chair, Andrew Price was elected Vice-Chair, Rob Allison was elected Treasurer and Stephanie Smitley was elected Secretary.

Board Member Name/Email	Type of Member	Term	Office Held	Committees	Meeting Attendance Rate
Michael Faulise michael.faulise@aspencademymn.org	Parent	July 1, 2023 - Present	Chair	Finance / Facility Strategic Marketing	73%
Misty Schutrop misty.schutrop@aspencademymn.org	Parent	Jan. 2020-July 31 2022		Governance	100%
Robert Allison robert.allison@aspencademymn.org	Parent	July 2021 - Present	Treasurer	Finance / Facility	82%
Stephanie Smitley stephanie.smitley@aspencademymn.org	Teacher	July 1, 2021 - Present	Secretary	Program Services Governance	100%
Brandy Mosser brandy.mosser@aspencademymn.org	Teacher	July 2021 - Present		Program Services Strategic Planning	91%
Rachel Mong rachel.mong@aspencademymn.org	Teacher	November 2021- July 30, 2023		Program Services Marketing Governance	100%
Andrew Price andrew.price@aspencademymn.org	Parent	Jan 2021 - Present	Vice-Chair	Finance & Facility Marketing Strategic Planning	100%
Andrew Petrenko andrew.petrenko@aspencademymn.org	Parent	Jan 2020- August 20 2022		Program Services Strategic Planning	100%
Chris DiCapo chris.dicapo@aspencademymn.org	Parent	July 1, 2023-Present		Governance, Marketing	86%
Erica Schipani erica.schipani@aspencademymn.org	Community Member	Nov 2022-Nov 2023			0%
Julie Finnerty julie.finnerty@aspencademn.org	Parent	November 2022-June 30, 2023		Program Services	63%

Special Board meetings during the 2022/2023 school year were held on: August 17, August 19, March 6 and June 5.

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

The School Board has five committees which meet throughout the year. Committee meetings are published on the school’s community calendar located on the school website, as well as on the board in the lobby outside of the main office and the weekly newsletter. The board agenda lists all five committees and has room for discussion by either the committee chair or the Director to address any matter that falls under the purview of the committee. In addition the Director provides the board with a monthly report that covers these areas. This report is also used as the vehicle for administration to report to the board its compliance with MDE and authorizer reporting.

The following is a list of committees, chair of the committee and meeting dates.

Committee	Committee Chair	2022-2023 Meeting Dates
Governance	Misty Schutrop	July 21, Jan 31
Facility & Finance	Robert Allison	July 18, Sept 19, Oct 17, Nov 21, Jan 23, March 20, May 15
Strategic Planning	Andrew Price	Oct 12, Feb 13
Marketing	Andrew Price	Oct 12, June 12
Program Services	Stephanie Smitley	July 21, Nov 1, Jan 18, April 13, May 11

The school board members completed the following trainings:

Date	Training Topic	Attendees
October 17	MCA, Fall Fastbridge Data and Goals Review, World’s Best Workforce Summary and Plan	Allison, Mosser, Price, Faulise, Smitley, Jiskra, Mong
February 27	Winter Fastbridge Data	Mosser, DiCapo, Price, Mong, Faulise, Smitley, Jiskra
May 15	Special Education Update	Mosser, Mong, Price, Allison, Faulise, Smitley, Jiskra
June 12	Spring Fastbridge Data	Smitley, Price, Mosser, Jiskra, Allison, Faulise, DiCapo

Individual board member trainings:

Date	Training Topic	Attendee
February 2022	Financial Board Trainings	DiCapo, Finnerty
January 2023	Governance, Employment, Financial	DiCapo, Carlson

Staff and Student Enrollment:

In the 2022-2023 academic year, Aspen Academy employed 49 full time licensed and 2 part time teachers. All teachers employed by Aspen Academy are licensed, or approved for licensing, and meet state requirements for public education instructors. In addition, Aspen Academy employed 27 non-teaching support staff. Aspen Academy had one staff that worked with an Out of Field Permission granted by the Minnesota Department of Education: Mandi Berndt for Grades 4-8 Latin, 0.2% FTE.

Aspen Academy teaching staff is selected through license review, interview with hiring team and final interview with administrator to review job description, policies, procedures, salary and benefits.



School Enrollment Process

Aspen Academy offers a free-access, well rounded Core Knowledge public education. Aspen follows all Minnesota statutes regarding the application and admission procedures for public charter schools.

Each year, applications are available fall/winter for enrollment the following fall. Procedures and deadlines are posted on www.aspenacademymn.org and explained during prospective parent open houses.

All applications received during the open enrollment period prior to the deadline will be on equal footing for the lottery. Applications are time- and date- stamped upon receipt. If more applications are received than space per grade level are received, the school holds a public lottery. In the fall of 2021 we started the application process for the 2022/2023 school year.

Applications were released online on October 15, 2021 with a due date of December 22nd at noon. The lottery was held on Thursday, January 5, 2022 at 4:30 PM via zoom. Aspen provides sibling/foster and sibling/staff preference to families with currently-enrolled students and children of staff. Applications received after the open enrollment period are numbered and responded to in the order in which they were received.

School Enrollment History

Aspen Academy opened in the fall of 2008 with 134 students enrolled K-3rd grade and has grown to an enrollment of 640 students in K-8th grade at the end of the 2022/2023 school year. Aspen has had two significant events due to growth; the first was breaking ground to build its own school structure in 2012 and an addition to that structure in the 2017/18 school year. In 2022/2023 Aspen Academy served 4 sections in the

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

elementary with the exception of 2nd grade which had 5 sections. The Middle school had 2 sections in 6-7th grades, and 1 section in 8th grade.

The tables that follow show Aspen’s school year historical and projected enrollment by grade level. Our actual counts were holding steady with two sections of sixth grade, not three, so the projections were updated to reflect two sections of sixth grade to align with current data. Numbers represent actual average head counts based on state-reported data.

Historical Enrollment by Grade Level

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
2014-15	66	66	66	67	66	66	47	50	45	539
2015-16	66	66	66	65	64	64	39	23	30	485
2016-17	76	68	68	69	67	57	41	26	14	486
2017-18	85	86	64	67	65	59	27	38	23	512
2018-19	82	83	87	66	67	65	43	19	25	537
2019-20	111	88	92	84	67	70	39	31	14	596
2020-21	107	110	91	87	79	70	38	30	26	638
2021-22	95	107	95	87	82	74	60	34	25	659
2022-2023	87	82	99	86	83	80	50	50	23	640

Projected Enrollment by Grade Level

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
2023-24 *actual 10/9/23	81	89	83	92	76	84	47	38	36	626
2024-25 *projected	88	88	88	88	88	88	50	50	25	653
2025-26 *projected	88	88	88	88	88	88	50	50	25	653

Innovative Practices and Implementation

With most Covid restrictions scaled back or gone completely, we were able to bring back many of our innovative practices. For example, all students in grades Kindergarten through 5th participated in a multi-grade reading buddy program. Parent volunteers came back to the building and classrooms, helping with a variety of tasks. Band and choir held two in person concerts each, one in December and one at the end of the year. The students made amazing musical progress between the two concerts. End of the year celebrations, such as the 5th Grade Bridging Ceremony and 8th Grade Graduation were back in person as well. The Youth Dance Ensemble joined us here at Aspen Academy to perform the timeless classic, The Nutcracker. This is a performance that we enjoy yearly and have not been able to see since before Covid. Our kiddos were captivated as soon as they heard the music start and remained attentive as the action unfolded before them.



The physical education teachers showed their creativity and versatility by planning a Push, Pedal, Walk event for elementary students in the spring to replace the original winter sledding event that was canceled due to rain. Students brought bikes and scooters to school and could push, pedal, or walk around the parking lot with their classmates. Many parent volunteers also helped make this day fun and safe!

Our annual fall fundraiser was once again a successful financial resource for adding exciting and innovative spaces at Aspen. We exceeded our fundraising goal and were able to add three seesaws, one merry-go-round, and a new swing set bay to our playground. In addition to the playground equipment, we added a 45'x80' blacktop surface on which students can play games such as basketball and four-square and a paved walkway to our middle school doorway from our morning drop off and evening pick up designated area.

Aspen continues to offer a plethora of after school activities, where students can sign up for engaging extracurricular fun. Options ranged from basketball, flag football, chess club, lego league, art club, knitting and crocheting, board games, Penguin Corps, and many more! Our teachers and staff run these classes, sharing their time and talents with students. Aspen Afterschool Activities, or AAA, run every day of the week, in multiple sessions throughout the year. There truly is something for every scholar to engage in extracurricular interests and participation is high for these programs.

In 2022-23, Aspen added a number of enrichment activities for our gifted and high achieving scholars. Students in grades 4-6 participated in Math Masters, a team-based math competition. Our fourth grade team won first place, while our fifth and sixth grade teams also placed competitively amongst their peers. A handful of students in grades 4-8 attended the Young Author's Conference in March. At this conference, students got to practice their writing skills, learn new skills from various Minnesota authors, and hear from a Newbery Medal recipient. We also had five scholars qualify for the Minnesota Band Directors Association South Central division honor band! These scholars worked with talented musicians and band directors all day to prepare five pieces of music and then performed those pieces in concert with other honor band participants from around the state.

Aspen's THINK values continue to be the most influential in the school's success in meeting the mission and vision, the thread that runs through all that we do every day for every student is our continuing application of THINK (Tenacity, High Expectations, Integrity, No Excuses, and Kindness) principles. The THINK principles encompass developing those critical character traits that are necessary for reaching the district's mission and vision. With the implementation of THINK principles, the explicit teaching, modeling, and practice of the human values that make the world a better place not only leads to students reaching outcomes, but to developing agents of change who will have far-reaching positive impact in the world.

Curriculum

Language Arts

The Common Core ELA standards are the driving force for what we teach in reading and English language arts. To meet standards, Aspen Academy implements Collaborative Classroom Curriculum (CCC) in grades K-4 and Core Knowledge in grades 5-8. Collaborative Classroom integrates whole group, small group, and individualized learning in literacy. While using a wide variety of books for instruction, CCC is grounded in scientific literacy research, incorporating foundational skills, comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. CCC also includes an intervention component, SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words), that we have successfully used to guide learning for students who require a more focused instructional approach.

Core Knowledge is a curriculum which systematically outlines topics to be studied by each grade level, ensuring that no gaps in instruction occur; teachers know what students have experienced in previous years and build on the common foundation to deepen and enhance additional learning. It utilizes novels, plays, poems, speeches, and other written materials to teach the foundational skills of studying literature. Core Knowledge ELA has many cross curricular components with Core Knowledge science, social studies, music, and art.

Three times a year, elementary students are assessed on their early literacy skills, comprehension, and fluency. From the data, teachers are able to differentiate lessons and develop leveled guided reading groups to target specific skills and address standards that are not mastered. Additionally, universal screening is conducted in fall, winter, and spring for both elementary and middle school students. This screening is conducted through Fastbridge. Students not on target for seasonal benchmarks are identified with further diagnostic testing and provided additional support through interventions. All students undergoing interventions have their progress monitored weekly for response.

Best-practice instructional strategies are utilized to bring the curriculum resources to life for Aspen Academy scholars. This includes training for all teachers on the Teach Like A Champion/ Uncommon Schools strategies, which involve teachers implementing habits of discussion, formative assessment, cooperative learning, and project-based learning. Support staff, including Title 1 and EL teachers, push into classrooms to support guided reading groups during core instruction, as well as having some pull out groups for intervention work. Aspen Academy utilizes a balanced literacy approach and guided workshop model within the classrooms. Through use of running records, universal and diagnostic screening, and common grade level assessments, teachers use data to determine flexible groups and instructional decisions.

Aspen Academy has continued to update their scope and sequence with Collaborative Classroom Curriculum in grades K-4. Collaborative Classroom has supported social emotional learning in addition to the guided reading workshop model for our youngest readers. Implementation of Collaborative Classroom in grades K-4 is now established, in addition to the intervention program of SIPPS, Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words, which aligns with Collaborative Classroom.

Aspen Academy continues to have literacy tutors from Impact, formerly known as MN Reading Corps, who deliver evidence-based interventions for young readers below target in grades K-3. Due to the strong partnership between Aspen Academy and Impact, we were approached to take part in a research study led by Impact researchers.

Math

Math instruction is designed to address the Minnesota Math Standards. Multiple curriculum resources are used to meet standards. Aspen Academy follows the Singapore Math philosophy, which is defined as instruction that supports students as they move through the stages of deeper math. The school uses Math in Focus as their curriculum, having adopted the newest edition in 2019 - 2020.



Teachers utilize the CPA (concrete, pictorial, abstract) approach, which allows for students to be introduced to concepts in a tangible, hands-on way and then deepens understanding and application as they progress to increasing levels of abstraction. Specific strategies Aspen Academy teachers implement include number bonds, bar modeling, and mental math. The important component in this math instructional approach is that, at any time, students are fluidly moving between the CPA levels with concepts. This creates a natural differentiated experience for students.

Aspen Academy uses the Math In Focus cumulative assessments to monitor student retention of the curriculum. Aspen recognizes that Math In Focus does not meet all of the Minnesota State Standards and therefore teachers have worked with the math specialist to design and implement instruction to meet those standards and incorporate those standards into the cumulative assessments. The cumulative assessments are designed to be standard-specific and rigorous and provide detailed data on each student.

Following these assessments, teachers and teacher leaders review the data and make instructional decisions. One important piece of the data meetings is planning “re-teaching” lessons for students who did not demonstrate mastery. The grade level will create and offer choices for how the re-teaching lesson(s) will be delivered. Following the re-teaching lesson(s), students are given a formative assessment to assess mastery, and the data review continues. In addition to the cumulative assessments, assessment Aspen Academy utilizes the best practice of triangulating data. Students also take the FastBridge math three times a year, and along with examining student work samples, the educational team is able to create an individualized learning plan for each student.

Aspen Academy also had two Math Corps tutors focused on scholars below target in grades K-3. Huge gains were shown in fact fluency which supported scholars in their problem solving and number sense.

Science

Our science teaching supports student interest, inquiry, and project-based learning and is aligned to the MN State science standards. With the Core Knowledge thread of science running through the classes, students are able to dive deeper each year into the biological, physical, environmental, and earth sciences.

For example, if we take environmental science throughout the scholar’s years at Aspen, kindergarteners learn how environmental changes affect the needs of plants, animals, and humans. Third graders would learn how the traits of different organisms make them more likely or less likely to survive in their environments. In fifth grade, students take on the role of ecologists to investigate and figure out what can be done to return an ecosystem to its original healthy state and by middle school, students are learning about wetlands and habitat

loss and its impact on the greater environment. Additionally, our physical building location offers a backyard pond that connects inside learning to outdoor learning. During the winter season, students in grades K-8 set out bird feeders and learn to identify and classify the different bird species through observation. Our kindergarten students sprout plants in their classroom and then plant them in the front of the school, while second graders develop an insect museum where their research and model insects are on display.

Students in the middle school grades apply their learning of cross-curricular areas during the SciVentBerg Fair. This project-based learning experience includes the use of a scoring rubric aligned to standards. Sixth grade students are responsible for conceiving, building, and demonstrating an invention. Seventh graders take their unit on engineering and simple machines to a new level by working together to build a complex Rube Goldberg machine. Eighth graders apply their knowledge of the scientific method to perform an experiment and gather data. They then analyze their results and draw conclusions by use of a scientific paper, display board, and oral presentation. Through these events, parents and community members join the school as competition judges. Students in grade 6 attend Eagle Bluff, an environmental camp for three days each year to experience hands-on lessons of various science projects in an authentic nature setting. Students build community through this camp and learn valuable skills to promote responsible behavior and treatment of our Earth and local environment.

Students are assessed through rubric scores on projects, classroom assessments, and, in grades 5 and 8, state standardized science tests.

Social Studies/History

Teaching in social studies/history/civic learning and engagement incorporates the depth of rich literature from the Core Knowledge curriculum, aligned to the state standards, and allows for students to have choice in ways to demonstrate their learning. Project-based learning is the major type of instruction utilized. In first grade, students learn about Early World Civilizations and created an American Symbol and used Flipgrid to teach their classmates about their symbol.

Third graders completed and presented research reports on different regional Native American groups. Students also wrote their own myths after studying Roman and Norse mythology in our Ancient Rome and Vikings Units, integrating social studies and writing skills. Fifth graders completed a cross curricular writing and social studies research project on Civil War events and people. Sixth grade students create illuminated manuscript pages in art and then use Latin text to create their own manuscript page.

The literary selections within each grade level for the social studies/history/civic learning and engagement are often set in those parts of the world and time periods being studied. Some of the texts used include: The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, King Arthur and the Round Table, and Animal Farm. Assessments include rubric scoring on projects and reports, along with classroom tests and Socratic seminars.

Other Curriculum Areas

Aspen Academy offers music, band, physical education and health, Spanish, and Latin as our specialist curriculum areas. All students in grades K-8 receive scheduled time with specialists. All of the specialist curriculum areas integrate the Core Knowledge curriculum into their classes.

Art

We did not provide art during this school year due to teacher shortage. We were able to offer art therapy for middle school students. This was an expansion of our social/emotional learning curriculum. Student data from our SAEBRS (Social, Academic, Emotional, Behavioral Rating Scale) data supported those who attended, along with caregiver and teacher recommendation. It was a unique way to provide art in this manner.

Music

Band is offered for students in sixth grade through eighth grade and meets twice a week. Musicians learn about reading and writing music notation, improvisation, and composers from different eras. The middle school band also integrates the Core Knowledge history periods into their music selection, studies, and performances. Band supports state standards and essential skill acquisition every day as students perform alone and in groups. Band students evaluate music after concerts and small group performances to refine skills. Individual and group lessons are offered throughout the school day for mastery of skills.

Choir is another music option for students and has been steadily growing in popularity. Students build off of previous years knowledge in Music class and apply musicianship skills of reading rhythms and tonic solfa as well as standard choral octavos. In the past year the program has had both mixed choir, TTBB, and treble ensembles. In the past year students have worked individually on their voices by submitting videos of their singing and utilizing technology tools. Students have resumed singing together and are continuing to refine ensemble skills such as diction, blend, balance, articulation, and partwork.

Music is offered for students in grades K-8. The MN state standards define the essential skills needed to be acquired by students. Through these grades, music study and learning happens through the different eras, which align with the Core Knowledge curriculum. Students in grades K-5 are taught through a Kodaly based approach. Music history of the medieval, renaissance, baroque eras are studied.

Physical Education/Health

Physical Education lessons in grades K-8 are skill based on the National Physical Education standards. Students in grades K-5 get PE class 1 time per week for 57 minutes, and students in grades 6-8 receive PE 1 time per week for 55 minutes. Students in grades 6-8 get health education once a week for 55 minutes. Topics covered in health include the social emotional curriculum of Second Step. The topics covered include goal setting and growth mindset, bullying and harassment, emotional health, and empathy. The usual health topics of personal health, nutrition and body systems continue to be covered. Due to the PLC work, gym teachers have intentionally incorporated more social emotional learning lessons into their PE lessons.

World Languages

Starting in fourth grade, Latin is offered for 57 minutes once a week. The focus of Latin instruction is on enjoyment, exploration of another language, culture, time period, and supporting general education goals. Latin specifically ties into grammar and vocabulary acquisition and connecting Latin roots to words in English, which students are learning in language arts, and reinforces the Core Knowledge subjects of mythology and Roman history that were taught in primary grades, while deepening and expanding students' understanding of these topics. Students also learn about prominent Roman mythology through reading and examination of related Roman art and architecture.

In middle school grades, Latin is also offered once a week. While there are no Minnesota state standards for Latin, the class adheres to the new American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards and the most recent Standards for Classical Language Learning. This means students focus on

communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Students in grades 5-7 read from *Latin for Children* which is published by the Classical Academic Press and in grade 8 they read the second *Minimus Book*. Then they enrich their understanding of the topics covered through independent research, creative projects, and discussion of archaeological artifacts and primary texts. Students use Latin to read, write, speak, and listen to level-appropriate texts and use those texts to learn about Roman culture and history. This supports Core Knowledge covered in Social Studies, for which Greco-Roman history is a major unit in sixth grade. Students meet standards for connections and comparisons through drawing connections between what they learn about the Latin language and Roman culture to what they are studying in their other classes; they are encouraged through games, assignments, and class discussion to find the similarities and differences between Romans and themselves, the Latin language and the other languages they know, and to recognize the Latin roots of their vocabulary in health, science, language arts, and other core subjects.

Our Spanish program starts in kindergarten and goes through eighth grade. Elementary students receive Spanish instruction on a weekly rotation. Elementary Spanish classes use the TPRS approach (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling), with stories, songs, activities and games to help students acquire the language. We did not have Spanish for Grades K and 1 last year due to teacher shortage.

Middle school students (grades 6th-8th) have one 57-minute Spanish class each week. Spanish also uses the ACTFL proficiency standards and primarily focuses on the four modes of communication (speaking, reading, writing and listening) in class. Cultural topics are also discussed during class and students are encouraged to make connections and comparisons to their own cultures. Core knowledge topics are also included throughout the middle school lessons.

Academic Performance

Aspen uses a variety of standardized assessments to measure student achievement and academic growth, including standardized tests (MCA III and FastBridge), interim testing, content area assessments, formal and informal teacher observations, and formative and summative assessments.

Aspen Academy compares performance with the State of Minnesota and with the neighboring district of Prior Lake/Savage according to the charter contract with Friends of Education. The following data will outline the performance of Aspen Academy with regard to the charter goals.

The new charter began on July 1, 2021 and therefore our updated goals are used and listed below for the 2023 school year. Goals are in bold and results are italicized.

Charter Goal 1: State Assessments (weighted 50%)

Sub Goal 1.1: Absolute proficiency: At the conclusion of the FY 2025, the school-wide proficiency rate for the preceding four years will average no less than 13 percentage points higher than the state average for all students in reading, 20 percentage points higher than the state average for all students in math, and 18 percentage points higher than the state average for all students in science, the state average for each subject computed for the same grades as offered by the School.

Result: Based on the 2023 MCAs, Aspen Academy was 13.4 percentage points higher than the state in math proficiency (goal not met), 13.5 percentage points higher in reading (goal met) proficiency, and 18.5 percentage points higher in science proficiency (goal met).

World’s Best Workforce Charter Contract Target: All third-graders can read at grade level. In addition by the conclusion of FY 2025, the 3rd grade proficiency rates will be no less than 10 points higher in reading than the state average.

Result: In Progress

- 82% of Aspen’s 3rd graders were at or above target on the aReading assessment in the spring
- 77% of Aspen’s 3rd graders were at or above target on the CBMreading assessment in the spring
- **Goal Met:** Aspen Academy’s MCA third grade proficiency rate was 15.7 points higher in reading than the state average.

Result: Goal Met - Aspen Academy’s percentage points on the reading MCA was 13.5 percentage points higher than the state average for all students (Grades 3 - 8).

MCA Subject	2018 Aspen	2018 State	2019 Aspen	2019 State	2021 Aspen	2021 State	2022 Aspen	2022 State	2023 Aspen	2023 State
Math 3-8	79.3%	57.6%	73.9%	55.4%	55.0%	44.0%	59.6%	45.5%	58.9%	45.5%
Reading 3-8	72.2%	60.3%	69.3%	59.6%	64.2%	52.3%	61.9%	51.7%	63.4%	49.9%
Science 5 & 8	72.5%	51.7%	66.7%	50.4%	58.4%	42.7%	58.2%	41.3%	57.7%	39.2%

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Sub Goal 1.2: Comparative Proficiency: Each year, the school district will demonstrate higher school wide proficiency rates than the Prior Lake-Savage School District for reading, math and science (for the same grades as offered by the school).

*Result: **In progress** - Aspen demonstrated higher proficiency rates in Reading and Science content areas in 2023. This was an increase from 2022, where Aspen Academy obtained higher proficiency rates in the area of Science only.*

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments - Historical Proficiency Results

Subject	2017		2018		2019		2021		2022		2023	
	AA	PLS	AA	PLS	AA	PLS	AA	PLS	AA	PLS	AA	PLS
Math 3-8	82.1%	81.0%	78.1%	76.9%	73.9%	74.5%	55.0%	51.9%	59.6%	60.5%	58.9%	59.4%
Reading 3-8	75.4%	73.4%	71.6%	72.7%	69.1%	71.3%	64.2%	56.9%	61.9%	62%	63.4%	60%
Science 5 & 8	83.6%	81.1%	72.5%	69.9%	66.7%	68.3%	58.4%	46.8%	58.2%	51.5%	57.7%	49.7%

*AA = Aspen Academy, PLS = Prior Lake Savage

An important part of this academic goal is the comparison of Aspen Academy to the district in which it lies, Prior Lake Area Schools. Below is a table showing comparison of demographic information.

Demographic Comparison: Aspen Academy, Prior Lake, Shakopee and Burnsville Schools

**Data pulled from MDE Report Card (11/14/2023)

Demographic Category	Aspen Academy K-8	Prior Lake/Savage Elementaries (K-5)	Prior Lake/Savage Middle Schools (6-8)	Shakopee Elementaries (K-5)	Shakopee Middle Schools (6-8)	Burnsville Elementaries (K-5)	Burnsville Middle Schools (6-8)
English Learner	7.9%	5.7%	2.4%	18.5%	10.5%	28.5%	24.7%
Special Education	13.6%	13.3%	11.1%	14.4%	14.4%	15.9%	69.9%
Free and Reduced Lunch	28%	23.7%	19.8%	39%	42.9	70%	75.2%
Native American	1.2%	2.3%	2%	1.5%	1.75%	1.8%	2.6%
Asian	18.2%	5.6%	5.2%	7.9%	10.3%	5.9%	4.6%
Black	18.2%	5.5%	6.6%	13.9%	15.5%	34.1%	28.7%
Hispanic	3.6%	5.5%	5.9%	13%	15.1%	22.9%	28.3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	0%	0.4%	0.6%	0.1%	0%
Caucasian	53.5%	75.8%	75.2%	39.5%	50.5%	26.9%	29.2%
Two or More Races	4.6%	5.9%	4.9%	7.1%	6.4%	8.3%	6.7%

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Sub Goal 1.3: Growth: At the conclusion of FY2025, the average number of progress points generated by all students based on changes in their achievement levels, for the immediately preceding four years, will average no less than 2.30 in math and reading combined, as published by the Minnesota Department of Education NorthStar system.

Result: (Partially Met): No Data published by the MDE NorthStar System from the 2020 and 2021 school year, therefore we do not have the immediate four years of data. However, from the 2022 and 2023 school year, Aspen Academy generated the following:

	2021-2022	2022-2023	Combined Progress Points
Reading	2.58	2.47	2.53
Math	2.39	1.95	2.17
Combined	2.49	2.21	2.348

In 2022, Aspen Academy generated 2.58 progress points for all students in the area of reading and 2.39 progress points in the area of math. In 2023, Aspen Academy generated 2.47 progress points for all students in the area of reading and 1.95 progress points in the area of math. This results in an average of 2.53 progress points generated for all students in the area of reading (Goal Met) and 2.17 progress points in the area of math (Goal Not Met). The combined progress reports for reading and math for the preceding year is 2.348.

Result: Aspen Academy demonstrated higher proficiency rate for all 3rd graders in Reading, all 6th graders in Reading, all 7th graders in Reading, all 8th graders in Reading, and all 8th graders in Math.

	Reading		Math		Science	
	AA	PLS	AA	PLS	AA	PLS
Grade 3	63.1%	58.8%	75%	75.1%		
Grade 4	60.5%	61.8%	58%	71.3%		
Grade 5	70%	76.1%	53.8%	55.3%	62.5%	66.8%
Grade 6	67.3%	63.7%	51%	60.3%		
Grade 7	57.4%	54.6%	48.9%	57.8%		
Grade 8	52.9% (n=17)	52.3%	58.8% (n=17)	47% (n=658)	35.3% (n=17)	46.9% (n=658)

*AA = Aspen Academy, PLS = Prior Lake Savage

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Sub Goal 1.4: Achievement Gap Reduction

World's Best Workforce Charter Contract Target: All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.

- Each year, for reading and math, the average number of progress points generated by School students based on changes in their achievement levels, for students identified in the FRP subgroup, will exceed two.
- Each year, the School will demonstrate higher school-wide proficiency rates than the Prior Lake-Savage School District for reading, math, and science (for the same grades as offered by the School) for economic subgroups; and higher than the SHakopee school district for racial subgroups.

*Result: **In progress** - In 2023, Aspen Academy generated 2.17 progress points for students in the FRP subgroup in the area of reading and 1.57 progress points in the area of math.*

Each year, the School will demonstrate higher school-wide proficiency rates than the Prior Lake-Savage School District for reading, math, and science (for the same grades as offered by the school) for economic subgroups, and higher than the Shakopee school district for racial subgroups.

Result: F/R Lunch Science Reading Math
***Partially Met** **Not Met** 27.6%/30.5% **Met** 53.8%/42.5% **Met** 44.2%/36.9%*
(Aspen Academy / Prior Lake Savage)

***In Progress** - The proficiency rates that are in bold indicate where Aspen Academy has higher proficiency rates for those subgroups.*

	Reading		Math		Science	
	AA	Shakopee	AA	Shakopee	AA	Shakopee
Racial Subgroups						
Hispanic/Latino	50%	29.4%	60%	22.7%	NA	NA
American Indian/Alaska Native	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Asian	78.9%	57.4%	73.7%	49.9%	78.6%	34.9%
Black/African American	47.8%	42.9%	37.3%	28.2%	33.3%	16.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	61.6%	64.1%	61.0%	58.5%	62.3%	48.5%
Two or more races	78.9%	59.9%	73.7%	45.5%	NA	NA

*AA = Aspen Academy

Charter Goal 2: Nationally Normed Assessments (25% weight)

World's Best Workforce Charter Contract Target:
All students are ready for career and college.

Each year, the School will administer a nationally-normed assessment in at least grades 4 and 8. For 4th grade students who remain in the School through 8th grade:

- If their 4th grade national percentile ranking was less than 70%, at least 50% of the students will increase their national percentile ranking.



Result: Goal Met - There are nineteen continuously enrolled (from 4th grade to 8th grade) scholars at Aspen Academy during the 2022-2023 school year.

Twelve scholars were below the 70th percentile in the area of reading as 4th graders. 50% of those students increased their national percentile ranking in the area of reading based on their fall 2023 administration of the nationally normed assessment.

Nine scholars were below the 70th percentile in the area of math as 4th graders. 56% of those scholars increased their national percentile ranking in the area of math based on their Fall 2023 administration of the nationally normed assessment.

Charter Goal 3: Ready for School (15% weight)

World's Best Workforce Charter Contract Target: All children are ready for school.

Each year through FY2025, 95% of all the School's kindergarten students continuously enrolled since the first day of school will be able to:

- **generate all sounds of the first 26 phonograms (letters a-z) by April 1 of each year.**
- **count to 32 by June 1 of each year**
- **identify all 26 upper and lower case letters by February 1 of each year**

Result - In progress

- *93% of scholars could generate all sounds of the first 26 phonograms*
- *On a fluency measure, kindergartners grew an average of 46 sounds in a minute from fall to early spring*
- *93% of scholars could count to 32*
- *An increase over the 2021-2022 percentage of 27 - 92% of scholars could identify upper case letters and 77% of scholars could identify lowercase letters*

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Charter Goal 4: Professional Development (5% weight)

100% of teachers will receive professional development training annually through FY2025, as determined by School records.

Month	Professional Development Topic
August	Aspen Philosophy, Core Knowledge, HR, Technology, Catalyst, Envoy, Infinite Campus, PBIS-THINK and reTHINK Values and Expectations, Collaboration and Communication for Leaders, Math in Focus, Amplify Science, Legal Updates, CPI Verbal Interventions, Sensory Room, Benchmark Assessment Training, ALICE, Math in Motion, SIPPS, PCA, CFSS Support Worker
September	SPED/SST/Early Interventions, Truancy, PLC* - 1 time this month
October	PLC* - 2 times this month
November	Inclusivity in Classrooms, Using Data to Design Interventions, PLC* - 1 time this month
December	PLC* - 1 time this month
January	New board member required training, SPED-Gradual Release Model training, MSBA Charter Board financing and HR, Sensory Systems in the School, PLC* - 2 times this month
February	MCA requirements, PLC* - 2 times this month
March	Suicide and Early Onset Mental Health, Engaging the Reluctant Learner, MCA requirements, PLC* - 4 times this month
April	Truancy Reporting Training, PLC* - 2 times this month
May	Seizure Training, PLC* - 2 times this month
June	Dare to Lead for Educational Leaders - Administration Team

**All Licensed Staff PLC topics: Tab:Teaching for Artistic Behavior; Implemental mental health and social/emotional strategies in PE; Recharge-increase diversity in Music; Scope and Sequence for Northern Lights Social Studies; Math alignment to standards; Updated Scope and Sequence; Differentiation for guided math and book club groups; develop math activities and interventions; increase student engagement through explicit instruction (Anita Archer Work); Research based SEL practices; Enhance use of Envoy

Charter Goal 5: School Culture (15% weight)

The School will implement an Academic Governance Plan & Calendar to critically evaluate and strategically lead the School's academic performance and improvement. The School shall include a summary of its findings in the School's board minutes no less than twice annually through FY2025.

*Result: **Goal Met:** The School has created a Board calendar to ensure the governance plan is kept up to date monthly on timely implementation of requirements. In addition, the Academic Calendar is created to include assessments and updates to the board on a regularly scheduled basis.*

Sub Goal: Retention. *Each year, the School will increase its student retention rate until it achieves a minimum of 90% student return rate for students entering into grades 1-5 and 60% return rate for students entering grades 6-8, and a minimum 70% teacher retention rate for those teachers the School asks to return.*

Aspen Academy's goal is to retain as many of its students as possible in middle school. Typically, Aspen sees a dip in retention in the 5th to 6th grade year, which is a result of families deciding to start middle school with their district of choice due to concern over open enrollment restrictions at the high school level, academic elective options, and athletic sports options. Aspen changed its middle school model a couple of years ago to add grade 5 to hopefully retain our middle school students. However, after running the program for a couple of years, we returned our grade 5 students to elementary. In the 2022/2023 school year, grades 6-8 are considered middle school, with a retention rate of 67%. The goal is still to increase retention between fifth and sixth grade.

*Result: Elementary 85%: **In Progress.** Middle School: 67%: **Goal Met.** Our school wide retention rate is 80%.*

Historical Student Retention

Grade	2018-2019	%	2019-2020	%	2020-2021	%	2021-2022	%	2022-2023	%
K Returning to 1st	68/87	78%	66/83	80%	93/111	84%	96/107	90%	80/95	84%
1st Returning to 2nd	85/93	91%	68/83	82%	77/88	88%	91/110	83%	93/107	87%
2nd Returning to 3rd	85/91	93%	79/87	91%	76/92	83%	80/91	90%	79/95	83%
3rd Returning to 4th	65/73	89%	59/67	88%	73/84	87%	75/87	86%	71/87	82%
4th Returning to 5th	71/73	97%	63/67	94%	58/67	87%	69/79	87%	71/82	87%
5th Returning to 6th	35/70	50%	53/65	82%	24/70	34%	49/68	72%	46/74	62%
6th Returning to 7th	41/49	84%	24/43	56%	30/39	77%	32/38	84%	47/60	78%
7th Returning to 8th	20/26	77%	13/19	68%	24/31	77%	23/30	77%	21/34	62%
Average	470/562	84%	425/514	83%	455/582	78%	521/610	85%	508/634	80%

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Teachers and non-licensed staff are reviewed two to three times during the school year. This past year, we had a number of staff members that left during the academic school year. Of the 49 licensed staff members, we didn't have any licensed teachers resign during the school year.

Aspen Academy invited all 49 staff back for the 2023/2024 school year. Of those offered positions, 8 chose to resign for the following reasons: taking a different position, taking a position closer to home, and not returning to teaching due to family changes.

Results: Retention rate of staff asked to return was 84%, which exceeds our goal.

2022/2023 LICENSED STAFF

Name	File Folder No.	Assignment	Year Hired	Resigned	Non-Renewal	Returning Fall 2023
Emily Skahen	492714	Kindergarten	2022			Yes
Darby Thomas	422730	Kindergarten	2008			Yes
Jackson Miller	1003881	Kindergarten	2021			Yes
Jennifer Japel	449625	Kindergarten	2017			Yes
Marilyn Torvik	308819	Grade 1	2013			Yes
Jenna Petersen	1016178	Grade 1	2022			Yes
Carissa Moe	503793	Grade 1	2018	X		No
Alicia Wolf	1018003	Grade 1	2022			Yes
Kristin Behrens	348313	Grade 2	2011			Yes
Taylor Jiskra	501772	Grade 2	2020			Yes
Cara Wiese	421058	Grade 2	2013			Yes
Veronica Woodward	472318	Grade 2	2018			Yes
Mitchell Hopkins	506310	Grade 2	2021			Yes
Hannah Graham	487715	Grade 3	2021			Yes
Diane Sterna	403650	Grade 3	2010			Yes
Kerry Tieman	415975	Grade 3	2021	X		No
Amanda Wolf	513141	Grade 3	2020			Yes
Shania McElroy	1018338	Grade 4	2022			Yes
Olivia Lietzau	1002149	Grade 4	2020	X		No
Stacie Milton	1006500	Grade 4	2021			Yes
Kirsten Tyler	472335	Grade 4	2013			Yes
Rachel Mong	503174	Grade 5	2020			Yes
Shelby Schneider	1004185	Grade 5	2022			Yes
Rebecca Veer	516262	Grade 5	2020			Yes
Kristin Carlson	430651	Grade 5	2022			Yes
Shannon Mahaney	1009485	6-ELA/SS	2022			Yes

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Name	File Folder No.	Assignment	Year Hired	Resigned	Non-Renewal	Returning Fall 2023
Madison Zoromski	1000376	MS English	2019	X		No
Jodi Ovrebo	411237	MS Math	2019			Yes
Alan Hergott	501664	MS Social Studies	2019	X		No
Deb Olson	404745	6-Science/Math	2021			Yes
Cindy Carey	440594	MS Science	2017	X		No
Nate Sickmann	500350	PE K-8/Health	2018			Yes
Zach Jiskra	507543	PE/Health	2019			Yes
Barry Gross	417902	Music - K-8	2014			Yes
Scott Fairweather	370968	Band/Music - MS	2017	X		No
Amy Jacobson	451230	Spanish - K-8	2012			Yes
Mandi Berndt	488896	ELL/Latin	2019			Yes
Stu Keroff	428164	Technology	2019	X		No
Katelyn Pieper	1009939	SPED - K-4	2021			Yes
Brandy Mosser	411676	SPED K-4	2019			Yes
Nicole Grams	448751	SPED	2016			Yes
Anne Keroff	497453	SPED	2022			Yes
Phillip Poole	1013483	SPED	2019			Yes
Stephanie Smitley	433554	In House Substitute/Math Support	2017			Yes
Rachel Humensky	1017188	In House Substitute	2022			Yes
Danielle Kittredge	1006500	In House Substitute	2022			Yes

Support Staff

Name	Assignment	Year Hired	Resigned	Non-Renewal	Returning
Teresa Drees	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Sara Berge	Paraprofessional	2021			Yes
Maia Caldwell	Paraprofessional	2021			Yes
Kayla Bramhall	Paraprofessional	2018			Yes
Tim Spika	Paraprofessional	2018			Yes
Manisha Pradhan	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Morgan Walters	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Stacey Foust	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Angie Juergens	Paraprofessional	2021			Yes
Noah Jiskra	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Jayne Kubler	Paraprofessional	2022	X		No
Jennie Teichman	Paraprofessional	2021			Yes

ASPEN ACADEMY 2023 Annual School Report

Name	Assignment	Year Hired	Resigned	Non-Renewal	Returning
Emily Larson	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Shania Lindsey	Paraprofessional	2022	X		No
Abbigael Linkert	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Maria Paulson	Paraprofessional	2022			Yes
Kennedy Trout	Paraprofessional	2022	X		No
Jasmin Brusas	Eagles Nest/SIPPS	2021			Yes
Katherine Smith	SIPPS Interventionist	2021			Yes
Christian Cockrill	Student Support	2021	X		No
Jodi Herlick	Special Education Coordinator	2018			Yes
Lorien Parson	Reading Interventionist	2021			Yes
Nathan Tuma	Counselor	2021			Yes
Rita Marshall	Custodian	2018	X		No
Nereyda Mina	Custodian	2018			Yes
Jean Brening	Receptionist	2018			Yes
Diane Hummel	Business Manager	2008	X		No
Julie Martini	Enrollment/MARSS	2019			Yes
Lydia Cedarberg	Admin Assistant	2023			Yes
Kortney Krampotich	SPED due process	2023			Yes
Jill Ruekert	Health Aide	2022	X		No
Nasra Mahamoud	Nutrition Services	2023	X		No
Sara Berkness	Nutrition Services	2020			Yes
Molly McGrath	Nutrition Services	2019			Yes

Administration

Name	File Folder No.	Assignment	Year Hired	Resigned	Non-Renewal	Returning
Melanie Jiskra	380483	Director/Principal	2017			Yes
James Jotter	412142	Vice Principal	2020	X		No
Eric Sandberg	462825	Dean of Students	2019			Yes

Operational Performance

Aspen Academy began its charter school contract with Friends of Education on June 11, 2007 and had its first five-year renewal on June 1, 2016 and recently had its second five-year renewal on June 15, 2021. Friends of Education monitors Aspen Academy in the areas of programming, reporting and academic performance. In the area of programming, Friends of Education continues to provide oversight and support for both Core Knowledge implementation and the Singapore Math program. Friends of Education requires monthly financial reports which also includes a board approved budget and audit report. They also monitor the school's reporting to the Department of Education. Aspen Academy also reports student academic performance to Friends of Education four times a year. These reports include data and trends for both nationally normed tests as well as state required tests. Friends strongly encourages the use of data to guide instruction and the monitoring of student test scores and checks with the school to find out what steps are being taken toward meeting these goals.

Aspen Academy is sponsored by:

Friends of Education
Beth Topoluk - Liaison
11100 Wayzata Blvd
Suite 800
Minnetonka, MN 55305
Phone: 952-745-2718

Financial Performance

Key financial highlights for the 2021-2022 fiscal year include the following:

Total net position at June 30, 2023 was (\$3,572,974).

Overall General Fund revenues were \$7,594,031 compared to \$7,569,730 of expenditures.

Days cash on hand as of June 30, 2023, was 57 days.

Debt service coverage ratio as of June 30, 2023, was 1.67.

Future Plans

Aspen Academy will continue to focus on the growth of our student enrollment. Some families still ask about the option of a high school. There is a study group focusing on researching offering a Pre-K program in the future. The youngest students entering into school have minimal school readiness skills in social, emotional, academic, and behavioral domains. There is a growing need for early childhood to support the preparation of our Pre-K scholars. In the study, we are researching designing our building to first transition to a K-5 configuration and then a Pre-K-Grade 5 configuration. The middle school has stayed steady in enrollment, however, we are reviewing if the programming is robust enough, is offering enough options, and is the most effective use of resources for student achievement. In lieu of doing a lot with a more shallow focus (K-8) in comparison of doing less better and deeper with greater rigor (K-5) we may have a more effective way of delivering programming to meet individual needs. We will continue to look at the current strategic plan as it was designed in 2019 and much has changed since then - a pandemic, demographic changes, level of community engagement/involvement, etc. There are a lot of options to explore to stay competitive and a school of excellence.

The school will continue with a dedicated focus on school safety. While there are procedures in place for emergencies, a more comprehensive school emergency plan is needed. A risk assessment has been completed and administration is bringing recommendations forward to the board for enhanced security options. School administration will attend and be certified as part of the School Crisis Emergency Team and provide more extensive school safety training for teachers. Aspen Academy will continue to work with the Prior Lake School District to partner as a safety response school. The next steps will include more in depth training for staff and also parent education on the protocol along with development of a reunification plan.



MTSS, Multi-Tiered Support System, continues to be a strength for Aspen Academy. With the early interventions and progress monitoring in place, we do have a need for a dedicated curriculum coordinator to support the work of teachers and interventionists. We need to be keeping everyone up to date on best practices, researching evidence based curriculum, and planning professional development. This is a critical next step for Aspen Academy.

Aspen Academy is extremely proud of its scholars and the dedicated teaching and support staff. Moving past the pandemic pivots, there is a renewed sense of appreciation for the start of the return of 'normalcy' of a traditional school year. We view the end of the 2022 school year as the beginning of our re-new, re-engage, and re-discover movement in re-establishing our family and community partnerships and expectations of rigor and excellence.

Contact Information:

Aspen Academy
14825 Zinran Ave
Savage, MN 55378
952-226-5940 Telephone
952-226-5949 Fax
Melanie.jiskra@aspenacademymn.org

Minnesota School District #4184-07

Andrew Price
Chair of the Aspen Academy School Board
andrew.price@aspenacademymn.org



Melanie Jiskra
Director/Principal of Aspen Academy
952-226-5940 Ext. 143
melanie.jiskra@aspenacademymn.org