

ED Abstract

Applicant: ASPIRA, Inc. of Pennsylvania

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Project Title: Olney Charter High School, a turnaround school in Philadelphia

Project Description:

Because of persistently low academic achievement and consistently high incidences of violence in the schools, in 2011, Olney East High School and Olney West High School were named Renaissance turnaround schools in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). ASPIRA, Inc. of Pennsylvania (ASPIRA of PA) was voted for by the community and officially named by SDP as the turnaround team and new operating entity for both Olney East and Olney West High Schools. ASPIRA of PA is currently working to transform the school into a united, innovative charter high school. Olney Charter High School will open for the 2011/12 academic year with several school improvement and reform initiatives.

School Profile:

Olney Charter High School (Grades 9 to 12) has a racial/ethnic breakdown of 56% African American, 35% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 1% Caucasian, less than 1% American Indian, and 2% did not specify. 91% are eligible for free/reduced meals, 23% are special education students, and 13% are English language learners. 2009-10 PSSA proficiency in reading was 19.5% in Olney West and 28.6% in Olney East, and proficiency in math was 11.4% in Olney West and 12.6% in Olney East.

Targeted Needs / Project Goals:

Building on ongoing school reform planning work in which ASPIRA of PA and the new Olney Charter Leadership Team have engaged over the past 6 months, the team has identified the following five specific priority areas of need:

- Transform School Climate / Culture
- Add School Support Structures
- Parents as Vital Partners
- Increase College and Career Preparation
- Increase Academic Advancement

Expected Outcomes:

- Decreased # of behavioral incidents
- Decreased # failing 9th grade
- Decreased # who enter juvenile justice system
- Increased graduation rate
- Increased student attendance
- Increased academic proficiency
- Increased parent involvement
- Increased # enrolled in college / placed in careers

Alignment to CSP Goals and Contributions to the Field:

We hope Olney Charter shows that our school turnaround process and reform initiatives are successful, and that our educational philosophy and instructional methods are effective. We believe success at Olney will solidify ASPIRA of PA as a replicable, effective, cradle-to-college educational model, and we hope other urban charter schools serving disadvantaged students can learn from our work.