Seattle Public Schools is an essential civic institution, educating 3 out of 4 Seattle youth.

2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted by the Board of Directors | January 29, 2014

ON A MISSION to ensure every child in Seattle Public Schools is prepared for success in college, career, and life.
PREAMBLE

The Alliance for Education exists for the singular purpose of promoting excellence in public education in Seattle. We view Seattle Public Schools as essential to the health and vitality of our city. Our shared vision is of Seattle Public Schools as a high-performing, highly regarded urban school system, equipped to provide an excellent education to every student.

Eliminating achievement gaps between student groups, which exist primarily along the lines of race, income, and ethnicity, is foundational to this vision. We believe our collective moral and economic responsibility is to ensure every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, zip code, or home circumstance, has the opportunity to succeed academically and to participate fully in the economic and cultural bounty of American life. This imperative requires stable, courageous leadership at every level of our school system.

Public education is the cornerstone of democracy. We proudly rededicate ourselves to helping build and sustain a successful, innovative, joyful school system of which Seattleites can be proud. Nearing our 20th anniversary, we remain passionately committed to strengthening our community, economy, and democracy through high quality public education.
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS
The Alliance for Education exists for the singular purpose of promoting excellence in public education in Seattle. Foundational to our vision is a deep commitment to equity for all. We are driven by a desire to eliminate achievement gaps between student groups, which exist primarily along the lines of race, income and ethnicity. We believe this requires stable, courageous leadership at every level of our school system.

PLANNING PROCESS
After Seattle Public Schools (SPS) adopted its new five-year plan in July 2013, Alliance board and staff began a comprehensive, six-month strategic planning process to ensure alignment in our shared work. We invited the expertise of a broad cross-section of district administrators, Alliance donors, community partners, researchers, civic leaders, and school leaders. Through this process, we carefully assessed the local education landscape, considered our own core competencies, and identified our areas of greatest potential impact.

CASE FOR CHANGE
Academic progress is evident in SPS, and the Alliance for Education has contributed meaningfully to gains over the last five years. However, our collective responsibility is to all students, and outcomes are nowhere near our expectations. Chronic leadership turnover at multiple levels of the district has impeded progress and put tremendous pressure on the talented professionals who have chosen to stay. This plan goes to the heart of the human capital realm of school improvement and sets forth a path to grow and nurture leaders within the district at every level – teacher, principal, administrator and School Board Director.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY
The Alliance’s partnership with SPS falls into three realms – strategic work, service work, and spirit work:

Strategic Work: The Alliance will “triple down” on leadership. We will deepen our focus on the human capital realm of school improvement. Through programs and targeted investments in teachers, principals, administrators, and School Board members, we will partner with SPS to develop and support leaders at every level.

Service Work: The Alliance will continue to provide superior fiscal services to schools, including fiscal sponsorship and consultative services to individual school groups (PTAs, booster clubs, et al) and school programs.

Spirit Work: The Alliance will continue to host a roster of public events and activities showcasing the district overall, as well as particularly accomplished students, teachers and principals.

PROGRESS MONITORING & EVALUATION
This plan is intended to set a clear path forward but also be a living, breathing document reflecting reality. On an annual basis, the Executive Committee of the Alliance for Education will review a scorecard to assess progress against this plan. Following review, the Executive Committee will issue a report and recommendations for any necessary adjustments to the Board of Directors.

CONCLUSION
Seattle is a pioneering, generous city. A tapestry of business leaders, philanthropists, community advocates, service providers, parents, and guardians are invested in the success of all of Seattle’s young scholars. Nearing our 20th anniversary, we proudly rededicate ourselves to helping build and sustain a successful, innovative, joyful school system of which Seattleites can be proud.
II. ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

In 1995, the Alliance for Education was formed through a merger of three education-related organizations with similar goals. The objective of this new organization was to serve as a catalyst for change, a convener of community leadership, and a conduit for directing private resources — both dollars and expertise — toward critical needs in Seattle Public Schools. Nineteen years and over $150 million later, the Alliance is more dedicated than ever to supporting and improving public education in Seattle. Serving as Seattle’s Local Education Fund (LEF), the Alliance operates independently of the school district as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The Alliance is one of approximately 80 LEFs across the country. The ways in which LEFs support their partner school districts vary considerably. The scope of work of any LEF is informed by local context and community need.

III. SCOPE OF PARTNERSHIP WITH SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Alliance for Education partners with Seattle Public Schools in three specific and interconnected ways, codified in a Memorandum of Understanding with the district.

**Seattle Public Schools at a Glance:**
- 95 schools
- 51,000 students
- 126 languages & dialects
- 3,000 teachers
- 39% FRL
- 12% Special Ed
- 9% APP/Spectrum
- 11% ELL
- $639.3 million general fund budget

**STRATEGIC WORK**
Fundraising, grant-making, research, advocacy, program development, and program implementation that support and accelerate Seattle Public Schools’ strategic priorities.

**SERVICE WORK**
Fiscal sponsorship and services on behalf of individual school groups (PTAs, booster clubs, et al) and school programs.

**SPIRIT WORK**
Public events and activities showcasing the district overall, as well as particularly accomplished students, teachers and principals.
IV. 2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Alliance for Education timed its 2014-2018 strategic planning process to follow adoption of Seattle Public Schools’ strategic plan. After SPS adopted its five-year plan in July 2013, Alliance board and staff began a comprehensive, six-month process. We invited the expertise of a broad cross-section of district administrators, Alliance donors, community partners, researchers, civic leaders, and school leaders. Through this process, we carefully assessed the local education landscape, considered our own core competencies, and identified our areas of greatest potential impact.

Early on, the Board of Directors determined that the Alliance for Education’s Service Work and Spirit Work should remain constant. Board consensus was that these realms of work meet a demonstrated district need and are a strong fit for our organizational capacity. Re-assessing our Strategic Work, in alignment with Seattle Public Schools’ newly adopted strategic plan and reflective of community need, was the task at hand.

V. SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES & REFLECTIONS

SUCCESSES
Since 2008, the Alliance for Education’s Strategic Work focused on priorities set forth in the district’s 2008-2013 strategic plan, “Excellence for All.” Our work included, but was not limited to, securing and overseeing $9 million in grants for plan implementation. These grants contributed to:

- The four-year high school graduation rate increasing to 72%, a 10-point increase since 2008;¹
- The percent of graduates who took an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course in high school increasing by 21 points, from 51% to 72%;
- More students achieving proficiency on Washington’s statewide standardized tests;²
- The number of schools in the two highest levels of the SPS Performance Segmentation Framework increasing by 52%, and the number at the two lowest levels decreasing by 60%.

Infrastructure support critical to measuring the above trends was provided by the Alliance for Education through generous grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli Broad Foundation. These funded the development of new, technically sophisticated student data, assessment and performance management tools now institutionalized for long-term use at the district.³

*Narrowing Achievement Gaps in Southeast Seattle*
Of particular note are the achievement gains in the city’s southeast schools, where historically persistent achievement gaps have narrowed significantly. District officials attribute these successes in large measure to the new performance management tools cited above, which drove improved teaching practices, benefitting students.⁴

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¹ A full report on strategic plan results is in the 2012-13 District Scorecard at http://goo.gl/qjihpS.
² The percentages of students passing Washington’s Measures of Student Progress test increased from 62% to 69% in math, from 51% to 74% in science, and from 73% to 77% in reading (OSPI tables are at http://goo.gl/UOpjiD).
³ These include Measures of Academic Performance (http://goo.gl/g7jCPr), a formative assessment tool that pinpoints each child’s academic achievement; the Academic Data Warehouse used by principals and staff to generate reports disaggregated by ethnicity and other filters to identify problem performance areas; Scorecards which report progress toward district and individual schools’ goals; and the Performance Segmentation Framework (http://goo.gl/waTw6Y).
⁴ SPS portion of final report to Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 12/3/13
Achievement Gap Closing Trend in Southeast (3rd to 8th Grade Math)

More directly, over the past five years the Alliance for Education:

- Invested in **School Board Leadership Development** to train and support School Board Directors in best practices governance;

- Designed and launched the **Seattle Teacher Residency** in partnership with SPS, University of Washington, and the Seattle Education Association;

- Led the **Seattle College Access Network**, helping enroll hundreds of students in Washington State’s College Bound scholarship program and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Additionally, developed a new Agency Data Report to track success indicators related to students’ paths toward post-secondary education;

- Developed and implemented an **Intensive School Partnership Model** with Denny Middle School, West Seattle Elementary, and Emerson Elementary, aligning community-based services to support student needs (Rainer View Elementary was added for the 2013-2014 school year);

- Co-founded and led the **Our Schools Coalition**, a diverse 40-member coalition of parents, businesses, community organizations, direct service providers, and elected officials. OSC’s public advocacy contributed to the passage of a groundbreaking 2010 labor agreement between SPS and its teachers’ union, which the district credits with significant increases in teacher effectiveness system-wide;

- Led the **Philanthropic Partnership for Public Education**, a funders collaborative including the Bezos Family Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Boeing Company, JP Morgan Chase, Microsoft Corp, Nesholm Family Foundation, Raikes Foundation and Seattle Foundation. On behalf of this group, the Alliance acts as direct grantmaker to SPS, supporting time-limited projects to improve systems and student outcomes;

- Expanded **School Account Services**, providing consultative and fiscal services to more than 200 individual PTAs and other school support groups, generating high levels of customer satisfaction.5

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5 School Account Advisor survey, June-July 2013
CHALLENGES

Academic Performance
Between 2008 and 2013, SPS made progress toward goals set in Excellence for All, the five-year strategic plan. Relative to baseline, progress was made on 21 of the 23 goals; however, none of the targets for 2013 were met.\(^6\)

The district’s 2012-13 scorecard shows:
- The percentage of third-graders meeting standard in reading grew from 73% in 2008-09 to 79% in 2012-13, but this was nine points short of target.
- The percentage of ninth and 10th graders meeting standard in math grew from 59% in 2010-11\(^7\) to 67%, but this was 15 points short of target; and
- The on-time graduation rate grew from 62% in 2008 to 72% in 2013, but this was eight points short of target.

Within these figures, disparities persist between racial subgroups.\(^8\)

Institutional Stability
While constrained resources have been cited as one factor in lower-than-expected outcomes, a prime contributor has been chronic turnover throughout the district. Between 2010-2012, Seattle Public Schools had three superintendents. Between 2005 and 2013, there were:\(^9\)

- 19 school board directors (SPS is governed by an elected, 7-member board carrying 4 year terms)
- 7 chief financial officers
- 6 VPs of human resources
- 6 executive directors of special education
- 10 executive directors of schools
- 5 special education directors
- 4 chief academic officers
- 4 chief operating officers
- 5 chief information officers
- 3 general counsels
- 3 communication directors
- 2 deputy superintendents
- 36 principals and assistant principals left the district in 2012 alone (20% of 180 total)

SPS does not currently conduct formal exit interviews, so no hard data is available to indicate the reasons and trends behind this turnover.

This instability has, in some cases, obscured the tremendous work occurring daily in classrooms and buildings across the city. In other cases, it has stalled progress.\(^10\)

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\(^6\) Seattle Public Schools District Scorecard, 2012-2013: [http://goo.gl/qjihpS](http://goo.gl/qjihpS)

\(^7\) The goals set in 2008 became inapplicable because OSPI changed high school math testing in 2010-11.

\(^8\) Seattle Public Schools District Scorecard, 2012-2013: [http://goo.gl/qjihpS](http://goo.gl/qjihpS)

\(^9\) School Board Director Sherry Carr, Crosscut, April 10, 2012; independent tally

\(^10\) - In a poll of registered Seattle voters conducted in October 2013, only 37% had a favorable view of the Seattle School Board.
   - In a poll of Seattle taxpayers conducted in January 2013, including a statistically valid subset of SPS parents, 36% of SPS parents reported being very or somewhat dissatisfied with the quality of education their children are receiving in SPS.
   - Philanthropic support to the district declined precipitously from 2003 to 2012.
Despite these conditions, which, during this period, also included a devastating economic recession, the Alliance for Education was able to expand the donor base supporting our mission, achieve a balanced budget annually since 2009, and consistently receive the highest-possible audit rating.

REFLECTIONS
Academic progress in SPS is evident, particularly among some of our most chronically under-achieving schools. This is encouraging. However, dramatic academic improvement has eluded the district, achievement gaps persist, turnover is chronic, and public confidence has room to grow.

The strongest antidote — and the catalyst for accelerated academic improvements — is a concentrated focus on supporting SPS in attracting and retaining talented leaders at all levels. Programs, policies, and even shifts in funding formulas are inadequate without a central focus on people and culture. By partnering with the district to strengthen and support leadership at every level of the school community, the Alliance will champion academic excellence and equity, leverage our core competencies, and ensure a school system worthy of the community that supports it.

VI. THEORY OF CHANGE

The research is conclusive:

- Teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor in student learning. 11
- The influence of school leadership is second only to teaching in potential influence on student learning. 12
- The beliefs and behaviors of school boards correlate with student achievement. 13

Consistent, inspiring leadership at all levels of our school system is essential to meeting the challenges of urban public education today. Investing in the full continuum of talent development — from recruitment, selection, and training, to support, reward, and retention — is essential to realizing our collective academic achievement goals for SPS students.

Outstanding, highly supported leaders in the classroom, at the building level and within central administration are essential to eliminating achievement gaps and creating conditions for universal academic success.

12 “How leadership influences student learning,” Wallace Foundation, 2004
13 www.ia-sb.org/StudentAchievement
VII. 2014-2018 FOCUS

STRATEGIC WORK
The Alliance will “triple down” on leadership. We will deepen our focus on the human capital realm of school improvement, partnering with SPS to develop and support leadership at every level. This will be achieved through:

**Direct Programming:**
1. The **Seattle Teacher Residency**, an adaptation of the medical residency model aimed at accelerating student achievement through the training, support, and retention of excellent teachers who reflect the rich diversity of Seattle Public Schools.

2. A **Principal Leadership Partnership** to identify, develop and support current and future principals for sustained, successful tenures in Seattle Public Schools;

3. Investments in senior leadership at the governance and management level, including a proposed **Seattle School Board Institute**, a non-partisan, apolitical entity cofounded with other local institutions to prepare and support high quality School Board leaders into the future.

**Supportive Investments & Advocacy:**
This direct, programmatic work will be augmented and enriched by:

4. Support for SPS **Human Resources Redesign** to dramatically improve HR functionality and services to schools, transforming HR into a next-generation department focused on the strategic work of talent acquisition, development, and retention.

5. Community-building through our continued leadership of the **Our Schools Coalition**, Seattle’s largest coalition of parents, businesses, community organizations, direct service providers, and elected officials, all focused on high quality public education.

SERVICE WORK
A continued focus on providing superior fiscal services to schools.

SPRIT WORK
An expanded, and in some cases more targeted, roster of public events and activities showcasing the district overall, as well as particularly accomplished students, teachers and principals.
VIII. ALIGNMENT WITH SPS’S 2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

Seattle Public Schools’ current strategic plan, adopted in July 2013, states, “We believe effective leadership is vital at all levels of the organization and will create student success.” With this plan, the Alliance will design and implement a body of work that supports district goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPS 2013-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN</th>
<th>AFE 2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> “Elevate professional practice by investing in effective, culturally responsive teachers, staff and leaders.”</td>
<td><strong>Strategic Work:</strong> AFE will serve as a partner in human capital development, investing in teachers, principals, administrators, and school board directors</td>
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<td><strong>Goal:</strong> “Ensure proper stewardship of resources.”</td>
<td><strong>Service Work:</strong> AFE will nurture relationships in the business and philanthropic communities and act as a faithful steward of private dollars</td>
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<td><strong>Goal:</strong> “Build community partnerships to support academic success.”</td>
<td><strong>Spirit Work:</strong> AFE will convene communities in support of SPS students</td>
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Importantly, this body of work will support the Seattle School Board’s Race & Equity Policy, adopted August 15, 2012, stating, “Seattle Public Schools will raise the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students [and will] eliminate the racial predictability and disproportionality in all aspects of education and its administration.”

IX. IMPACT GOALS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

As of this writing, SPS has not set specific academic targets to be achieved by the end of the 2017-2018 school year (those will be announced in May 2014). As a proxy, we will refer to the goals of the Roadmap Project Consortium, of which SPS is a part, along with the six other school districts in the Puget Sound region.

2020 Roadmap Consortium Targets

All targets reflect no achievement gap between student groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADUATION</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>MATH</th>
<th>SCIENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-time high school graduation: 92% with no achievement gap</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd graders meeting standard: 87%</td>
<td>4th graders meeting standard: 76%</td>
<td>5th graders meeting standard: 79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th graders meeting standard: 80%</td>
<td>7th graders meeting standard: 80%</td>
<td>8th graders meeting standard: 83%</td>
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14 Seattle School Board Core Beliefs, 2013-2018 Strategic Plan
15 Seattle Public School Board Policy No. 0030, adopted August 15, 2012
16 www.roadmapproject.org
**PROGRAMMATIC GOALS**
AFE’s focus on leadership development will quantifiably and qualitatively contribute to the district’s goals of excellence and equity for every student. In each of our programmatic areas, we play one of three roles: leader, partner, or supporter. In all cases, we engage in deep collaboration with project partners inside and outside the district.

### Seattle Teacher Residency

By 2018, the **Seattle Teacher Residency** will have:

1. **Quality**: Significantly boosted academic achievement in Residency classrooms.
2. **Quantity**: Trained a diverse group of more than 200 teachers, each committed to serving at least five years in SPS.
3. **Quality**: Prepared Teacher Residents such that at least 85% rate proficient or innovative in at least two of four domains in the Danielson Framework.

### Principal Leadership Partnership

By 2018, the Alliance will have secured adequate funds to support SPS’s **Principal Development Initiative** and partnered with the district to ensure accountability for results. SPS goals are to:

1. **Quality**: Prepare new principals such that by the end of their first induction year, 100% meet or exceed proficiency standards as defined by the AWSP Leadership Framework; and by the end of their third year, 100% are ranked innovative in at least two of the four AWSP focus criteria.
2. **Quantity**: Train an identified number of outstanding principals and retained 100% of them for a minimum of four years.
3. **Process**: Fill all principal vacancies no later than July 15 of each school year.

### Seattle School Board Institute

By 2018, the **Seattle School Board Institute** will have achieved a set of defined qualitative and quantitative impact goals. As of this writing, the process of identifying partners, defining the structures, and designing the effort has begun. An amendment will be included once goals are set.

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18 [http://www.awsp.org/FrameworkCriteria](http://www.awsp.org/FrameworkCriteria)
19 As of this writing, SPS is finalizing outcome and impact goals for its principal development strategy.
**HUMAN RESOURCES REDESIGN**

By 2018, the Alliance will have secured adequate funds to support SPS’s Human Resources Redesign and worked in partnership with the district to ensure accountability for results. SPS’s goals are to:

1. **Quality**: Achieve 90% principal satisfaction with core HR services.
2. **Quality**: Rate “highly functional” in at least 80% of the metrics outlined in the ABC (Assess, Breakthrough, Change) Tool, proprietary to the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy.
3. **Process**: Fully implement the HR Partner role in direct support of principals’ building needs.

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**COMMUNITY BUILDING/OUR SCHOOLS COALITION**

By 2015, the Our Schools Coalition will have achieved a defined set of policy and advocacy impacts. Multi-year goals are being developed in collaboration with coalition partners, and will be included as an amendment once finalized.

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**X. PROGRESS MONITORING & EVALUATION**

This plan is intended to set a clear path to the future but also be a living, breathing document that reflects reality.

**At the Board level:**
On an annual basis, the Executive Committee of Alliance for Education will review a scorecard to assess progress against this plan. Following review, the Executive Committee will issue a report and recommendations for any necessary adjustments to the Board of Directors.

**At the staff level:**
Operating plans will be developed on an annual basis and reviewed quarterly.
XI. RISK MITIGATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>RISK</th>
<th>MITIGATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited “span of control”</td>
<td>The Alliance for Education does not directly control the full body of work outlined in this plan. On a program-by-program basis, our role ranges from leader, to partner, to supporter. Managing risk will necessitate a strong focus on oversight and accountability with respect to district commitments to producing results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political noise</td>
<td>District activities are conducted in the context of an often-charged political environment. Our obligation is to remain focused on the students at the center of the work, monitor performance and progress against outcomes (our own and the district’s), and to encourage district leaders to do the same. In particular, avoiding political entanglements with respect to the School Board Institute will be critical; it is intended as an engine of good governance, free of rigid political ideology. This can be achieved through deep partnerships with other apolitical, city- and statewide entities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational capacity</td>
<td>We will need to nurture and support current staff, leverage our many existing assets, and build additional capacity to fully realize the potential of this work. An analysis of funding and staffing needs will be included in the operating plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient funding</td>
<td>This work will require increased operational and programmatic resources. An analysis of funding needs and possible sources will be included in the operating plan.</td>
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<td>Continued SPS leadership turnover</td>
<td>This plan itself is oriented toward reducing the rate of attrition at SPS and partnering productively to encourage a more positive, joyful culture within the district.</td>
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<td>Institutional resistance to change</td>
<td>“Big systems don’t change themselves.” Success will require focus, sustained energy, investments in the relational aspects of the work; and a commitment to hold ourselves accountable for quality, follow-through and continuous improvement.</td>
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<td>Communication gaps within the district</td>
<td>This work will support and encourage efforts by district policy makers and administrators to connect with grassroots reality in the buildings (historically a deficit area for the district). To the degree necessary, we can serve as a conduit of information and convener of multiple stakeholder groups within the district.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor relations</td>
<td>Our relationship with labor has evolved considerably in recent years. With the advent of Seattle Teacher Residency, the Alliance and Seattle Education Association (SEA) have become full partners. SEA may undergo leadership changes of its own in future years, which will necessitate a renewed commitment to communication and relationship-building.</td>
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XII. TRANSITIONS
To be successful, we must employ organizational discipline and resist the urge to be all things to all people. In the course of implementing this plan, the Alliance will shift away from its leadership role in Intensive School Partnerships and the Seattle College Access Network. Transition planning scenarios are being evaluated by staff, with the prime goal of selecting a “soft landing” where these programs can continue to grow, thrive, and benefit students. Transition plans will be finalized by June 30, 2014.

XIII. CONCLUDING STATEMENT
Seattle is a pioneering, resource-rich city. A tapestry of generous and committed business leaders, philanthropists, community advocates, service providers, parents, and guardians are invested in the success of all of Seattle’s young scholars. The Alliance for Education is passionately devoted to partnering with SPS to ensure a healthy, vibrant school system that serves all students well and mirrors the dynamism of the city in which we live.