

The cover features a dark blue background at the top, which transitions into a white background at the bottom. A thick orange diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom right. To the right of this line, there is a green triangular area. The text 'ACHIEVE NOW' is positioned in the dark blue area, and '2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT' is positioned in the white area.

ACHIEVE NOW

2020-2021  
ANNUAL REPORT



**ACHIEVE NOW**



16

The cat ran.  
The cat ran.  
The cat ran.  
The tan ca

1. "Read these se
2. "Explain what s
3. "What does AT  
[Answer] can
4. "Copy one se

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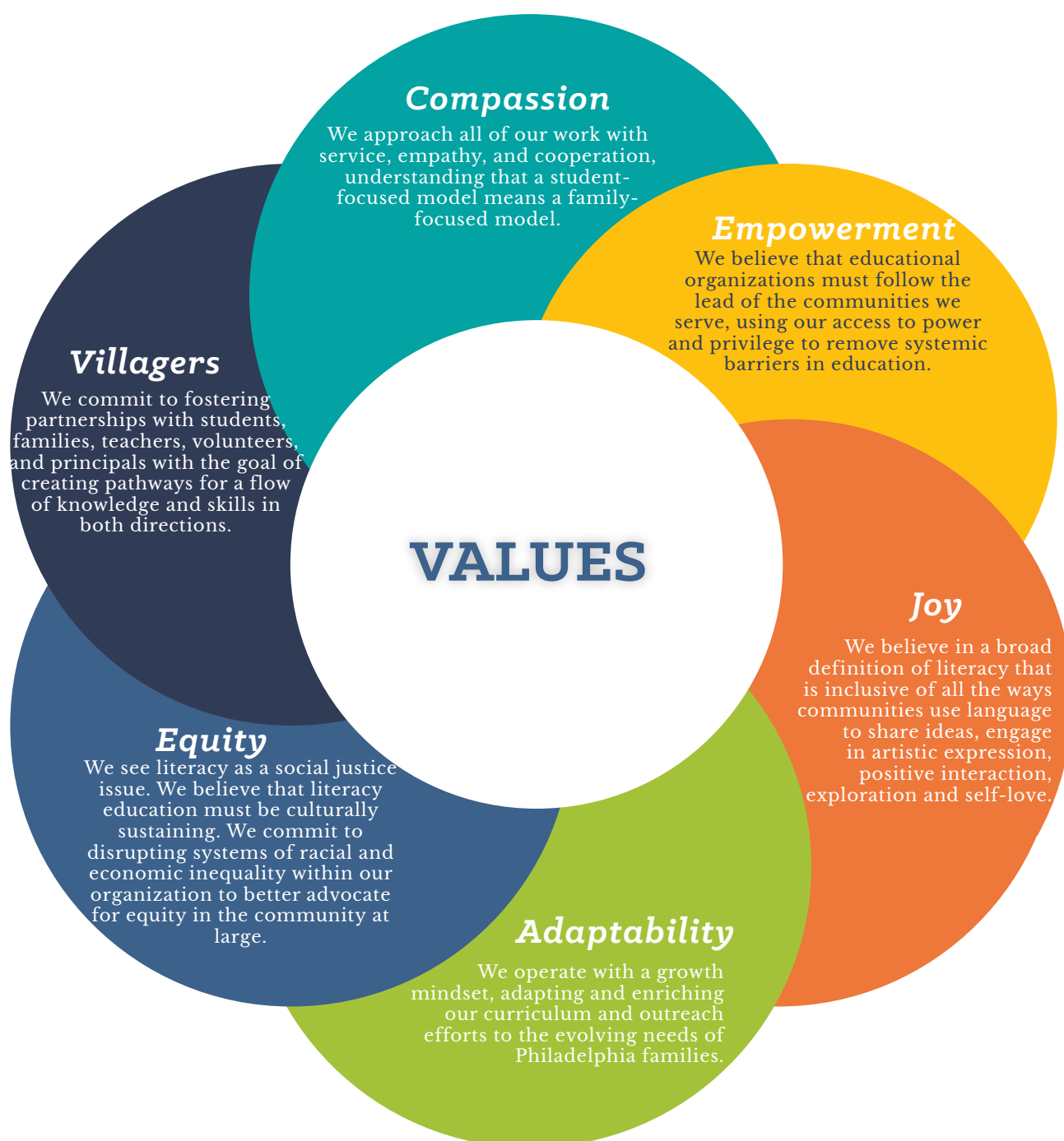
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# MISSION AND VALUES

We see literacy as a social justice issue. Our mission is to produce students who are stronger readers, who enjoy reading, and who see reading as an integral part of their lives. Through coach engagement and mentorships we strive to build student confidence and growing ownership of their role as life-long learners, as we embrace our role as educators and also life-long learners.



# A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

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In July 2020, as we prepared for a new school year, Achieve Now faced a long series of questions without ready answers: how would our partners respond to the pandemic? Would students return to the classroom? Would gathering restrictions prevent us from offering our core programming? Amidst so much uncertainty, we made the critical decision that the 2020-21 school year would be 100% remote no matter what answers emerged in response to those questions.

This report showcases the fruits of that decision. We had not previously offered remote programming; a pivot to a virtual model necessitated that we reconceive every aspect of our practice and build a program from the ground up. Everyone at Achieve Now contributed enthusiastically while at the same time navigating a minefield of fears and anxieties brought on by the pandemic. We cannot tell you how grateful and proud we are to be a part of this group. Achieve Now not only survived; we thrived. Critical to this enterprise was the creation of a curriculum for a virtual learning platform. We sourced and secured funding for the extra 1400 staff hours needed to adapt our in-person phonics curriculum. The result is a scripted, remote curriculum that adds innovative, research-driven improvements to our in-person curriculum.

These new lessons feature a renewed emphasis on skills building and strategy use; encourage growth mindset; and are informed by trauma-informed best practices. This year, our students average gain in decoding was more than ten percent higher than in any other previous year—a testament to the increased effectiveness of the new curriculum. The pandemic disproportionately impacted the communities we serve, bringing educational inequities into even starker relief. In response, we created the necessary infrastructure for meaningful community engagement. We added three board members with a history of community advocacy and hired an Outreach Coordinator; together, they formed a Task Force whose purpose is to learn what our communities need and to help them access the resources to meet those needs.

In the report that follows, you'll read about our programs and impact from the 2020-21 academic year. None of this work would be possible without the support of a legion of deeply committed teachers and school administrators, students and parents, corporate partners and volunteer coaches. As we consider the opportunities ahead for Achieve Now, we invite you to join them in shaping the programs of the future.

With gratitude,

Shawn Kairschner  
Executive Director



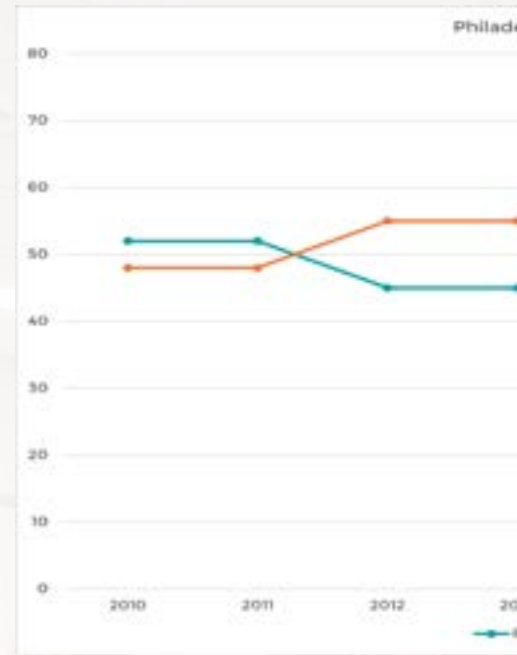
Michelle Conn  
Board Chair



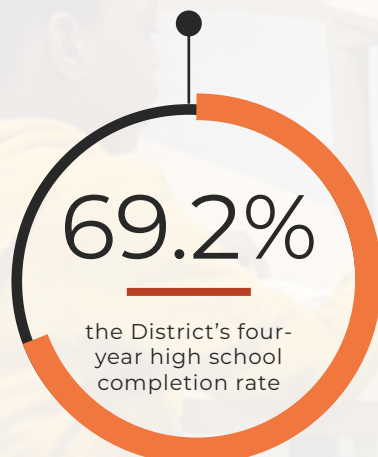
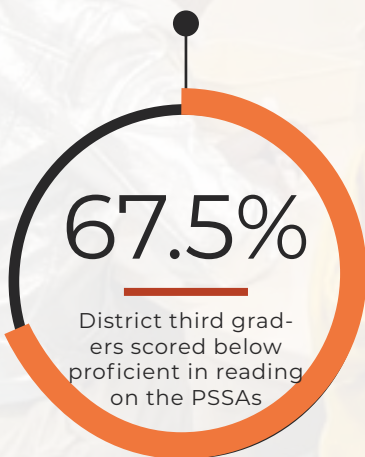


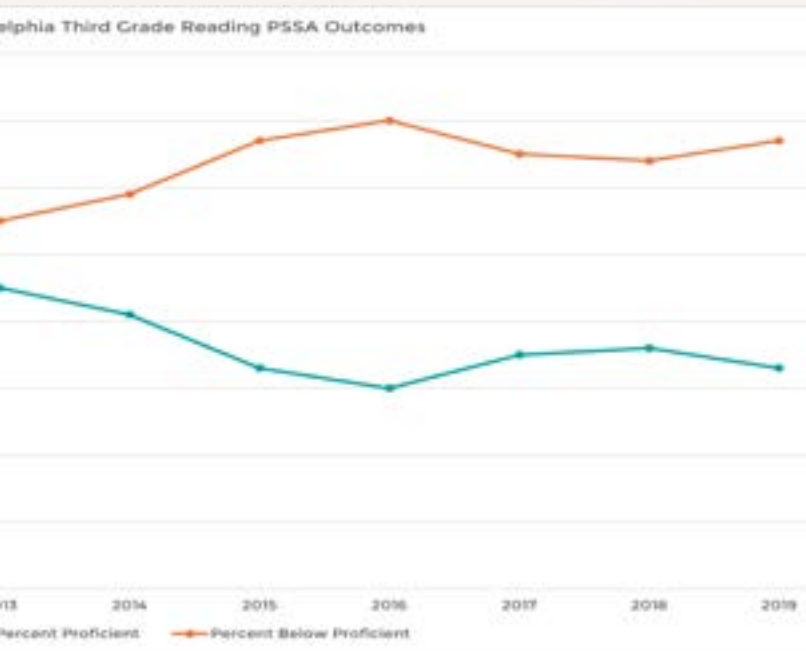
# THE CHALLENGE

Philadelphia has long had what many consider to be a literacy crisis. In 2019, 67.5 percent of District third graders scored below proficient in reading on the PSSAs. The same year, the District's four-year high school completion rate was 69.2 percent, 16 percentage points below the national average. The most recent data on adult literacy suggests that 67 percent of Philadelphia adults are low-literate or below. It is no coincidence that these numbers align across age demographics; students in low-income households who struggle to read are six times more likely to drop out than their peers who read proficiently.



The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these systemic inequities. Next year's third graders will have experienced an incomplete first grade year featuring an instructional deficit of over 390 hours and a virtual second grade year plagued by uncertainty and prohibitive technology and attendance challenges.

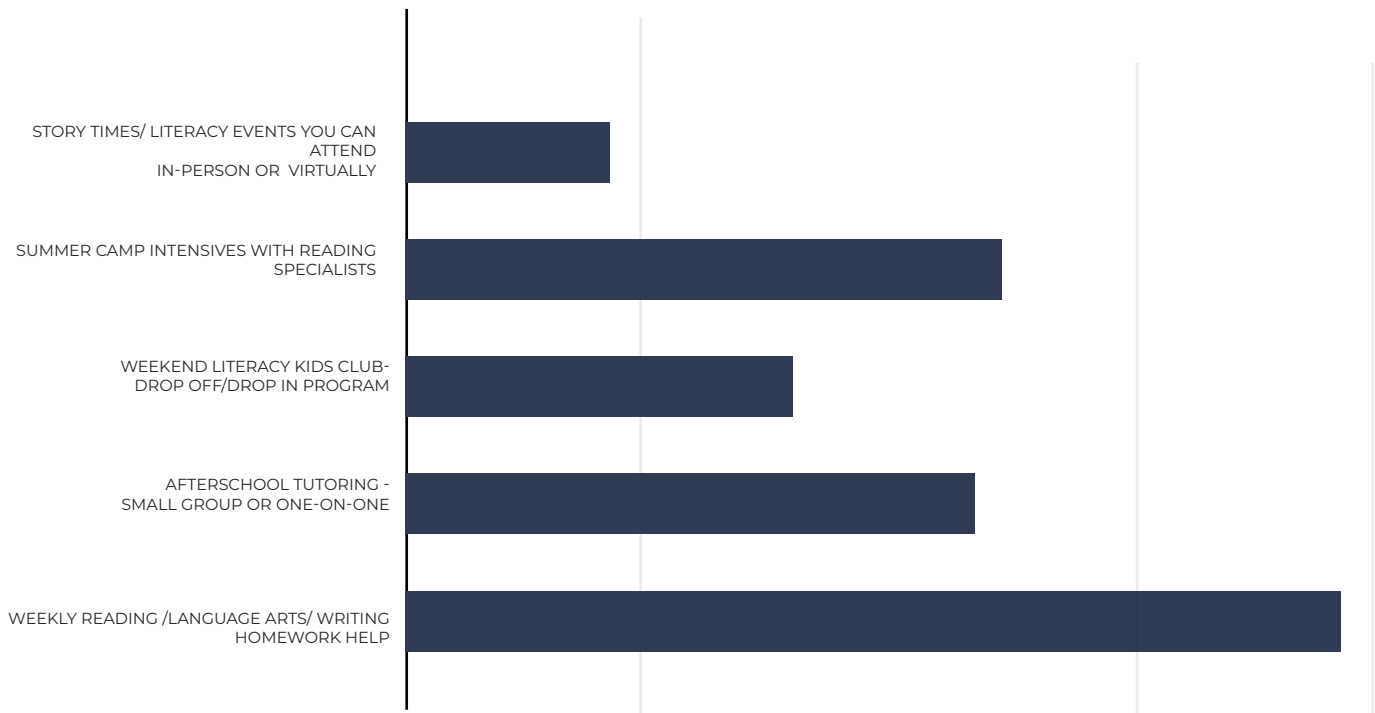




The evidence is clear that [synthetic phonics instruction](#) is significantly more effective than other literacy intervention programs in improving low socio-economic status children’s alphabetic knowledge and word reading skills. Using data-driven and trauma-informed practices, Achieve Now believes in engaging the whole village in fulfilling our mission to create a city where all children have the resources to become effective, independent readers. Our students grow to be confident readers through our holistic approach that trains volunteer coaches to use our research-based phonics curriculum to meet students’ needs in an affirming and empowering environment.

## ACHIEVE NOW 2020-2021 COMMUNITY SURVEY

WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS WOULD BE MOST VALUABLE (CHOOSE UP TO TWO)



# WHAT WE DO

This year, Achieve Now adapted our in-person, one-on-one phonics coaching model to a virtual platform. Each week, students met with their coaches on Zoom or Google Meet to build their phonics skills, practice their reading, and create meaningful mentorship relationships.



## RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING

Students were assessed during the first week of programming using the Consortium On Reading Excellence (CORE) Phonics Survey. Based on their CORE scores, students were assigned a lesson sequence based on their individual needs. Each week, students completed phonics lessons to learn to decode (read) and encode (spell) words using 10 foundational strategies that build students' phonemic awareness and give them tools to use independently. Working closely with a professional Achieve Now reading specialist and intervention coordinator, student progress was monitored closely and curricular adjustments were made as needed.

It didn't take long for us to realize that the learning disruption from the previous year had caused a greater need for additional foundational support, as a higher proportion of students enrolled in our virtual program were still learning their letter sounds and how to blend those sounds together. In response to this, our curriculum team developed three additional lesson tracks—a modified track to focus on blending, a foundational skills track to focus on letter sounds, and a word family track to focus on pattern recognition—to better serve our students. By the time we ended our programming year, we had a bank of 76 lessons, modifications, and interventions that we used to build differentiated lesson sequences for each student.



# ACHIEVE NOW SCHOOLS

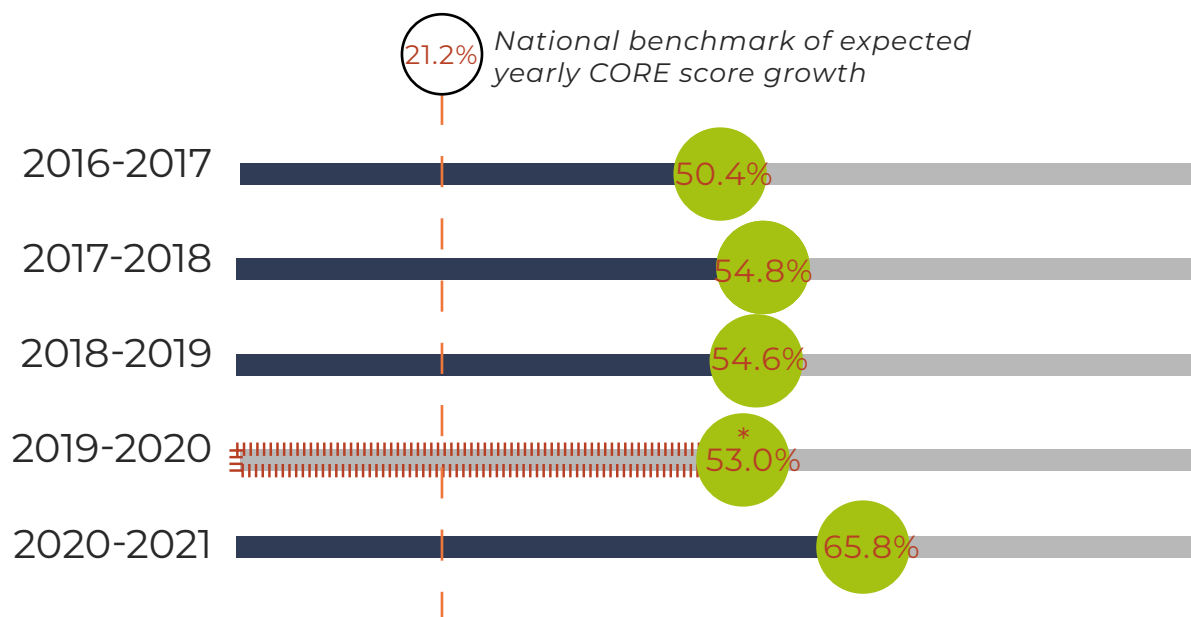
2020-2021



- Bache-Martin School
- Cole Manor Elementary School
- Comegys Elementary School
- Penrose Elementary School
- Isaac A. Sheppard School
- Allen M. Stearne School
- William D. Kelley Public School
- West Oak Lane Charter School
- E.W. Rhodes School
- Laura W. Waring School

# STUDENT SUCCESS

In a year of unprecedented challenges, Achieve Now is celebrating unprecedented successes. We are excited to share these quantitative outcomes with you, but we also want to acknowledge that these numbers, as great as they are, offer an incomplete picture. What we cannot communicate with numbers is the value of one-on-one personal connection for children whose formative interactions took place through a screen. For one hour a week, students met with a caring adult whose entire focus was on interacting with and empowering them. While students showed incredible growth in phonics, the growth we are most proud of is in the confidence of our students!



*\*Final assessments in 2019-2020 were not conducted due to COVID closures. 53% is the projected outcome based on February interim assessments*



# OUR IMPACT

## ONE COACH'S STORY

The first time I met Hasan, in December 2020, he seemed like a reserved, shy kid who was uninterested in being tutored. By the end of the school year, he was a much stronger reader and begging his mother to continue with me throughout the summer. I have tutored kids before but working with Hasan has honestly been one of the greatest experiences I've had. He is smart, funny, enthusiastic, and determined. Every Wednesday at 10am we would log onto our call, and he would be eager to learn, share a Pokémon fact, and to read the stories at the end of the lesson. We would talk about what he wanted to be when he grew up, the fun places his parents took him over the weekend, his siblings, and his feelings. As I learned more about him, and our connection grew, so did his reading skills. Now, I continue to tutor him over the summer where he is just as eager to learn and growing just as much. Working with Hasan has truly been a dream come true, and I can't wait to see what an amazing adult he turns into.



*“I loved working with my coach because she helped me with reading...I was able to spell words much better and it helped me with writing, because I can use the sounds of the letters to spell any word I don't know.”*

*-Achieve Now First Grader*

# Student Testimonials:

*"I loved getting to spend time with my coach this year...She helped me face my fears with reading by breaking up words and it made reading easier."*

-Achieve Now First Grader

*"My coaches helped me to learn how to blend letter sounds to make words. I have started to love writing words this year. Working with my coaches helped me feel like I could do better on my spelling tests."*

-Achieve Now First Grader

*"I liked how she taught me how to sound out words correctly...And she helped me with blends that are tricky in words that are lots of letters like 'Germantown,' 'marshmallow,' or 'megalodon'."*

-Achieve Now Second Grader

# Coach Testimonials:

*"I really enjoyed the coaching experience through Achieve Now! I thought the scripts were incredible and the support during the session was also extremely helpful—and necessary given we're volunteers and don't have a background in education."*

-Volunteer Coach

*"So much time, thought, and care went in to making a program that could be delivered virtually. It's easy to follow as a coach and engaging for the student!"*

-Volunteer Coach

*"The lessons are incredibly well prepared. I can see that [my student] makes progress throughout the lesson, so it is very rewarding for me to see that by simply following the prompts you provide, I can teach a student!"*

-Volunteer Coach



# STORY OF THE YEAR

## Newly Designed Virtual Curriculum



- ▶ More than 70 fully scripted lessons
- ▶ Multiple instructional tracks to accommodate all students
- ▶ Each lesson features reading, spelling, and comprehension sections
- ▶ Brain breaks and rewards slides to motivate and refresh students
- ▶ Process praise feedback to build students' growth mindset



MARCH 13, 2020

Our last day of in-person programming, following the beginning of social distancing guidelines.



APRIL-MAY 2020:

Our team began creating and distributing packets to help teachers and students' families with the transition to remote learning.



MAY-JUNE 2020

Achieve Now secures financial backing to create virtual curriculum.



JUNE 2020

We commit to providing 100% remote programming in 2020-2021.



APRIL-JULY 2020

Achieve Now staff works an extra 1400 hours to create virtual curriculum



# Key Aspects of Our DEI Work



AUGUST 2020

Two-week summer pilot of remote program model.



OCTOBER 18, 2020

Remote programming begins



MARCH 1-5, 2021

Read Across America Week



MAY 26, 2021

Remote programming ends, and student assessments are compiled.

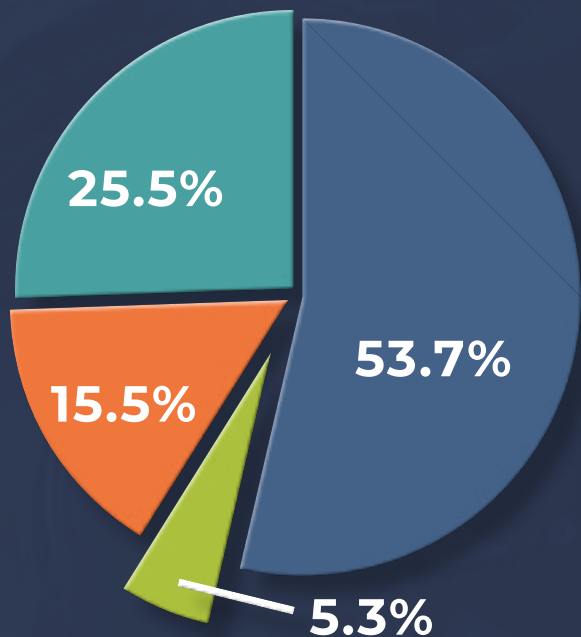


JUNE 2021

2020-21 student gains 10% higher than previous best, thanks to new curriculum

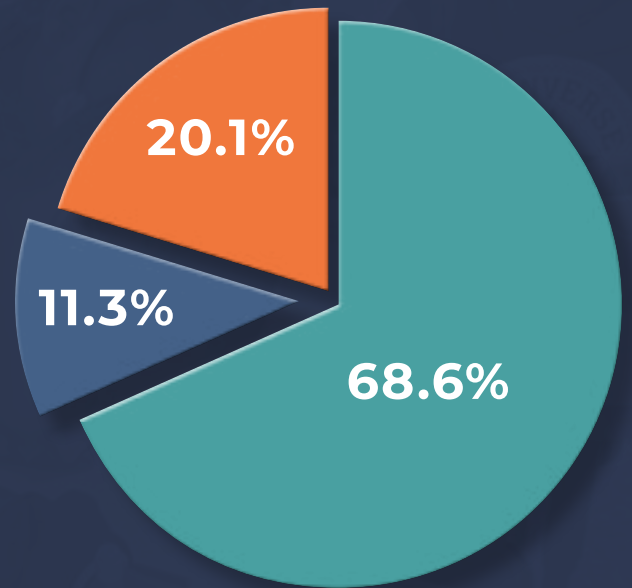
- ▶ Work funded by a Philadelphia Foundation grant
- ▶ Led by Danielle Cooper-Williams, Director of Equity & Cultural Proficiency in Philadelphia
- ▶ Year-long consultancy across all levels of the organization
- ▶ Explored implicit bias and the effects of internalized oppression
- ▶ Examined systematic oppression and white supremacy

# FINANCIALS



■ CORPORATE    ■ INDIVIDUAL  
■ FOUNDATION    ■ GOVERNMENT

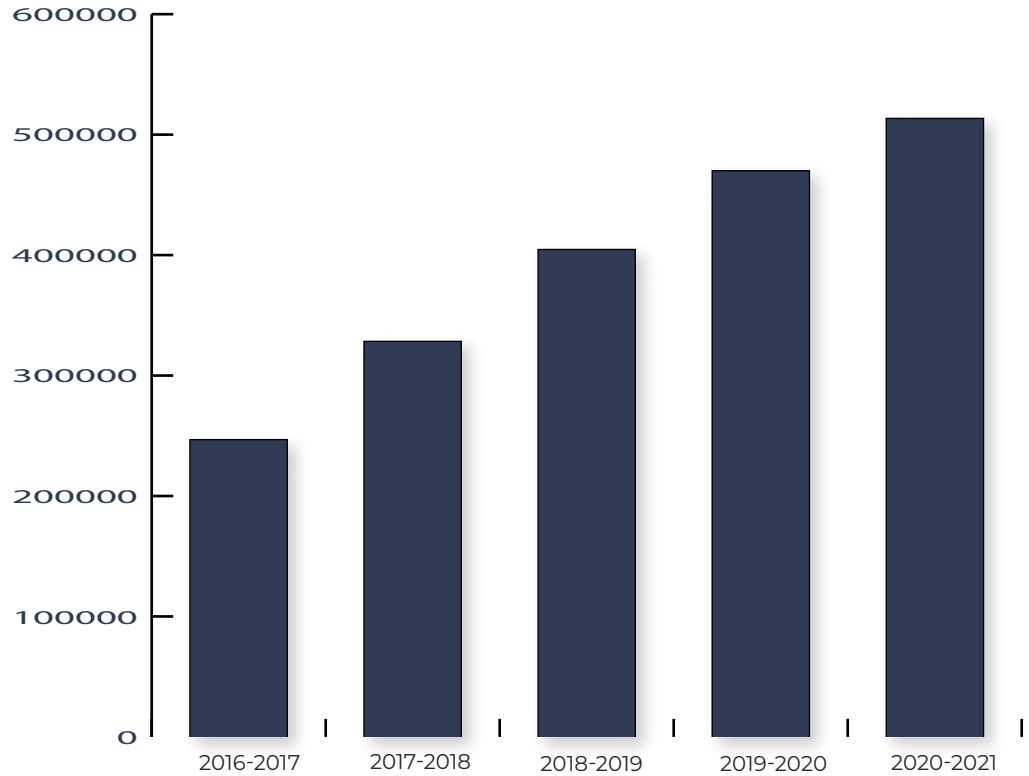
Source	Revenues Percentage	Amount
Corporate	53.7%	\$275,776
Foundation	25.5%	\$131,005
Individual	5.3%	\$26,888
Government	15.5%	\$79,567
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$513,236</b>



■ ADMINISTRATIVE    ■ PROGRAMMING  
■ FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Source	Expenses Percentage	Amount
Administrative	20.1%	\$105,882
Fundraising and Communications	11.3%	\$59,249
Programming	68.6%	\$360,426
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$525,557</b>

## ACHIEVE NOW REVENUE TOTAL BY YEAR



## Achieve Now Board 2020-2021

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# PARTNERS AND DONORS

Thanks to all the generous school and corporate partners, donors, organizations, and individuals who work tirelessly alongside us to improve children's literacy in Philadelphia. Our work would not be possible without your support!

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Steve and Lynne Spencer Foundation

***A BRIGHTER FUTURE***



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Toxcinia Whitney  
Victoria Cohen  
William Benzig  
Zachry McKenna

***BECAUSE OF YOU!***



# *Honoring Steve Spencer*

*In June of 2020, we lost our board chair, program advocate, and friend Steve Spencer. In honor of him, 97 people across 14 states donated to Achieve Now. We were able to support two classrooms of students this year in his memory. A very special thank you to the following donors for celebrating Steve's life with us by supporting the students he cared for so deeply.*

Ali Kliment  
Asher Goldfinger  
Barbara Klippert  
Barbara Shifrin  
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