



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Harrison School District 2- Atlas Preparatory High School 2019-2020 ELPA Excellence Award Report

August 2020



## English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) Excellence Award Report Overview

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ELPA statute requires each awardee to provide data analysis and a summary of their evidence-based English language proficiency program, or English language development (ELD) program. The intent of the reporting requirement is to disseminate best practices that have contributed to the successes of the ELPA Excellence Award recipients.

This report includes a description of each category below and how the respective categories have contributed to the success of English learners in the district or charter school. While the report may include activities provided in the 2019-2020 school year and/or activities provided with the ELPA Excellence award funds, the intent of the report is to detail the supports and services that are offered to English learners and have contributed to their high linguistic and academic growth and achievement.

## English Language Development Program(s) Description

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During the 2018-19 school year, 80% of Atlas' incoming fifth grade class tested below the national average in math on the nationally normed NWEA exam. 77% of Atlas' incoming fifth grade class tested below the national average in reading on the same test. Atlas student CMAS test results continually improve as Harrison School District Two (HSD2) student CMAS test results continue to decline. In order to advance our efforts to close the opportunity gap in Colorado Springs, it is critical for Atlas to reach these at-risk, low-income students sooner than fifth grade. Therefore, this is the basis for which Atlas leadership chooses to launch Atlas Elementary School in fall 2020.

Atlas is located in and authorized through Harrison School District Two, a historically underserved, economically depressed, sprawling zone populated with small strip malls, urban blight and a startling lack of community resources or quality school choice. Atlas is a school which is very much immersed and representative of our community. The majority of our students come from low-income households and identify as racial minorities. Ninety-three percent of Atlas students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 88% identify as racial or ethnic minorities, 47% are English Language Learners, and 11% have IEPs. We anticipate these demographics to be similar to our replication elementary school.

Our students primarily live at the crossroads of the three poorest zip codes in southeastern Colorado Springs. Less than 10 percent of the adult population in the area possesses a college degree. The percentage of families living below the poverty line in our neighborhood continues to increase annually. As the cost of living in Colorado Springs continues to increase, low-income families in our neighborhood struggle to make ends meet. Steadily rising rental prices contribute to high rates of residential mobility among low-income families that Atlas serves.

The student body at Atlas is 93.1% Free and Reduced Lunch and 49.8% Limited English Proficient. Atlas students are incredibly diverse, with 76% identifying as Hispanic/Latino, 14% as African-American, 9% Caucasian and 1% other. Many Atlas families live below the poverty line, which results in a mobility rate of 17.8%. Despite this reality, our graduation rate of 86.8% exceeds the state average and our dropout rate has shrunk to 1.3%. Of our student body, 97% would be first generation college students and over 25% will be first generation high school graduates. Each year, 27% of high school students complete at least one credit recovery course.

- ELD program model:
  - Culturally and linguistically diverse education
  - 1.0 FTE CLDE Teacher and Coordinator
- Structures and times:
  - Pull-out small group intervention
- Framework or instructional strategies:
  - Novel based and thematic ELA curriculum
  - PSAT/SAT aligned curriculum and standards
  - Quarterly benchmark assessments on PSAT/SAT aligned curriculum and standards

## Instructional Practices

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At Atlas, we believe in a growth mindset for all staff and students, and our curriculum, class schedule, and cohort grouping is designed around that mindset. The curriculum is aligned to common core standards, but our units across the content areas of math, English language arts, science, and history are thematic or novel-based to promote the highest levels of engagement and retention. Furthermore, our students receive double time in math and reading to close any achievement gaps before 9th grade. Within strategically seated heterogeneously grouped cohorts, students are both pushed to collaborate with peers of different levels and are supported through small group targeted instruction through either a pull-out or push-in model depending on the lesson.

## Professional Learning Opportunities

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All Atlas teachers participate in 40 hours of professional development at the start of each year, which is centered on quality instructional practices, behavior management, delivery of effective intervention services and lesson planning support. Throughout the year, they participate in instructional rounds and professional development two Fridays a month.

Specific to ELD, our CLDE teachers participate in our District's CLDE professional development program and participated in the ELD training that we used some of our ELPA Excellence Award funds to support.

## Program Evaluation and Data Analysis

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Atlas uses data in real time to inform staff about the effectiveness of our systems and the impact of our interventions. Attendance, behavior, and academic data are gathered and reported throughout the year to direct us in layering support to effectively meet the needs of students. In addition, Atlas regularly uses pre/post surveys to measure the effectiveness of its programs and guide decision-making. Previous examples include:

- Adding a three-week summer enrichment program due to observed summer learning loss and May-through-August student attrition.
- Addition of a second math period for all students in response to stagnant growth in single period math students and accelerated growth and achievement of students receiving two periods of math instruction.
- Quarterly family satisfaction surveys (92% completion rating, with an average score of 4.2 out of 5) to affirm our advisory model and communications.

ELLP's are created and housed in Alpine Achievement. Goals and progress are monitored quarterly using benchmark assessment data, grades, and informal student observations.

## Community Supports and Family Partnerships

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Atlas serves our community by providing access to nutritional, healthy food. Our food provider, Revolution Foods, provides three meals daily. The immediate area surrounding Atlas is effectively a "food desert," meaning there are limited access points for quality, fresh, and nutritional food. Open year-round each Friday afternoon, the on-site Atlas Food Pantry provides shelf stable and fresh produce weekly to provide students and families with nutritional options to carry them through the weekend and summer months when food insecurity is a significant concern.

Additionally, Atlas provides Safety Net Resources and Assistance which are coordinated through our Community Team. Atlas' Community Team has a designated staff member who works with families to access health and human service agency resources, hosts family education events, and works through crisis situations. The Atlas Family Scholarship provides direct assistance to help families bridge the financial gap so that they can afford to provide their kids with an excellent education over a longer period of time. Funds can be used to assist with school, housing, and health expenses. Atlas' Mental Health Team consists of our school psychologist, social workers, and counselors who regularly push-in to classrooms to provide relevant lessons on character and wellness development. As mental health is a critical component of overall health and wellness, Atlas' on-site team works with a licensed mental health therapist to provide individual and group therapy services.

Our school is united in the firm belief that no matter where you come from, no matter what you currently know or are able to do, and no matter the circumstances at play in your life outside of our buildings, you can be a successful Atlas student and leave our school with clear and proven success. We help students grow and achieve at levels indicating readiness for high school graduation and postsecondary success. We know that it is mandatory for students to reach these levels in order to access future opportunities and to be able to make real choices about their lives and career paths. We help students find their voices, feel safe, and provide them with social-emotional support inside and outside of the classroom. We use intentional techniques to raise participation and facilitate discussion, and to help students build positive relationships with one another as a team. An Atlas education catapults a student above a performance level necessary for future success, develops the positive connections between people required for deep learning, and engages families and the wider community in the pursuit of a collectively achieved mission.

Because of the diverse needs of our student population, our school is engaged with numerous community partners, including those highlighted below. While these programs significantly impact the students that take part in them, our hope is to use grant funding to generate additional partnerships that lead to success for every student.

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters Mentor 2.0 Program –matches freshmen with college-educated mentors and provides them with the support and guidance they need to graduate high school and succeed in college and the workforce.
- REACH Beyond – Atlas partners with the Colorado College to provide a 3-week summer enrichment experience to explore individual interests, complete SAT prep courses, learn about the financial aid process, and write college essays.
- Colorado College Summer Pre-Collegiate Program – invites rising juniors and seniors to enroll in dynamic college-level courses. Atlas currently works with CC to secure four full-ride scholarships to cover tuition and room & board.

## Fiscal Resources

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Data shows that students who remain enrolled at Atlas year after year outperform students at other local schools. Thus, we aim for all low-income students in Colorado Springs to have the opportunity to receive a K-12 education the Atlas Way: through the combination of quality education, character development, and community involvement. Challenges with growing our school to include grades K - 4 are identifying consistent sources of funding, elementary student recruitment, hiring qualified talent, and establishing quality partnerships to provide the resources our students need. Therefore, Atlas staff and board members connect with organizations, businesses, and influential members of the community to acquire the best possible resources for our students.

At the time of this application, Atlas has ten years of success in the areas of fundraising, recruiting and retaining students and top talent. Atlas leadership has devised a solid plan to continue this tradition of success as we grow over the next four years.

## Post-Secondary Practices

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*ASCA Academic Standards:* Atlas' Middle School Counseling team provides content promoting academic self-concept and learning skills during conferences (ASCA Standard A: A1.1, A1.2, A1.5), and the Counselor delivers a personality and style assessment to help students define their interests and approach to work (A: A2.4). Teacher observations are aligned to ASCA standards for postsecondary preparation (A: B1.1-7) and include metrics for creating a positive culture of mistakes (A: A1.4) and helping students take responsibility for their actions (A: A3.1). Though no current School Counselor is working in the high school, we utilize the same standards for faculty and staff when working with students and this would be further implemented if awarded the grant to hire a School Counselor for our high school.

The Atlas program is heavily focused on postsecondary options, with the goal of helping students identify paths that are consistent with their interests, aptitude, achievement, and abilities (A: B2.7). We offer extracurricular programs for students during the school year (A: C1.1), including junior and varsity athletics, daily tutoring, and more than fifteen interest-based clubs. We also provide internship experiences and partners with nonprofit organizations to provide opportunities for character growth and community involvement (A: C1.2, 1.6).

### *ASCA Career Development Standards*

Identifying student's career goals and defining strategies to achieve them is a group effort between the School Counselor, High School Assistant Principal, and Transitions Coordinator (C: B1.1-6). All high school students complete ICAPs in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and revisit them each year (C: A1.1-3). Atlas also partners with the graduate program in counseling at the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, giving students the opportunity to receive career counseling (C: B2.1-4). Our School Counselor works with students and teachers to drive career awareness and exploration through elective classes (C: C1.2-4).

### *ASCA Personal/Social Development Standards*

Atlas uses the Brain Wise curriculum for social emotional learning (PS: A1.1-12 and PS: A2.1-8) which provides tools for managing stress, navigating life events, and seeking help (PS:C1.3-11). Students gain decision-making and problem-solving skills through our health curriculum, which infuses skills such as problem solving, seeking help, peer pressure, setting boundaries, resolving conflicts, and appropriate physical touch (PS: A1.1-12). Atlas has fully integrated Restorative Justice practices to reduce suspensions, instill respect of self and others, and teach interpersonal skills (PS: B1.1-12).

## Other Practices or Any Other Effective Program Elements

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Atlas is unique in that we accept any student interested in attending Atlas. In fact, many students arrive performing below grade level. Nationally normed NWEA tests show that students who stay at Atlas over the long term significantly outperform students enrolled at district schools. CMAS results for Atlas show students continually improving while HSD2 results decline. Atlas provides students with tailored supports, wraparound services, extended classroom time, and differentiated instruction for students struggling in core subjects. Students receive experiential and project-based learning opportunities and benefit from our character program which provides counseling. We offer comprehensive, age-appropriate, evidence-based sexual education classes, and emphasize wellness and nutrition through after-school physical activities and providing healthy meals.

## Contact Information

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For more information, please contact: Nico de Vries, Head of Schools, [ndevries@atlasprep.org](mailto:ndevries@atlasprep.org)