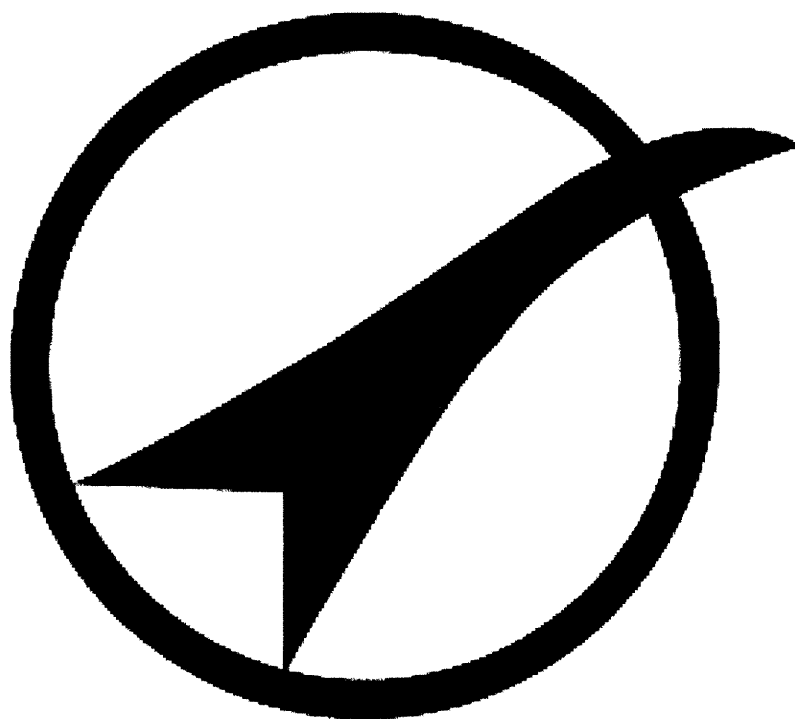


# **Leadership CORE Curriculum**



# ASPIRA

## Leadership Curriculum

...Life is a struggle. It never ends. And in this regard the struggle for justice and freedom must continue. The work must be linked from one generation to another, and we must see ourselves as links. Everyone has a part to play. No one can afford to sit on the sidelines. What affects one of us affects all of us. No one can really escape the experiences of injustice when the group is colonized. Our individual rights, as well as the rights of our communities in the United States and in our Island home, are at stake.

-Antonia Pantoja, Founder of ASPIRA

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
  - a) **ASPIRA Goals and History (p10-11)**
  - b) **What is Leadership? (p12-14)**
  
2. Identity
  - a) **Community-Dissecting *Latinidad* (p16-19)**
  - b) **Race or Culture? A Look at Afro-Latin@s (p20-22)**
  - c) **Assimilation and Acculturation (p23-25)**
  
3. The “ISMS”
  - a) **Racism 101 (p27-31)**
  - b) **Ageism (p32-36)**
  - c) **Homophobia (p37-43)**
  
4. Gender/Sexism
  - a) **Male Privilege, Sexism, and Feminism (p45-49)**
  - b) **Latina Images/Latino Images (p50-55)**
  - c) **Biological and Social? (p56-59)**
  
5. Conclusion
  - a) **Evaluations/Tools (p61-65)**
  - b) **Hand in Portfolio**

## Forward

Contemporary U.S. society remains highly stratified along racial and class lines. Latin@ high school students are directly impacted by the problems of the society at large. Despite these formidable challenges, the Latin@ community continues to resist and thrive as the largest People of Color community in the United States. If we take into account the progressively more conservative climate in this country, the continued inequalities of marginalized groups, and the changing demographics, the need for youth leadership to enact change is critical. We must look to our youth for new ideas, energy, and directive.

Most leaders are made, not born, as many would lead you to believe. Moreover, there is a potential Lolita Lebrón, César Chávez, or “Ché” Guevara in every one of our youth. Consequently, it is the community’s responsibility to create safe and secure urban spaces where students can experiment, grow, and gradually assume positions of leadership. This curriculum represents the beginning of ASPIRA’s commitment to cultivating the next generation of Latin@ leadership. We believe that our youth will be the change of tomorrow.

## Curriculum Overview

The CORE curriculum is divided into three sections with an introduction and a conclusion, each divided into broad themes and accompanied by suggested readings and lesson plans. These CORE topics were decided for (a) their relevance to the students’ daily lives and interactions with others, (b) general importance for leaders to understand, (c) improvement of critical reading, discussion/speaking, and writing skills, (d) emphasis on Latin@ history, identity, and culture, (e) opportunity to have a base understanding of concepts/realities. While this CORE curriculum stresses self-awareness within society, the second curriculum deals more complex identity politics, the overall history of Latin@s in the United States, and global politics. This moves the student from a self-contemplation to a greater understanding of intersections and movements beyond borders. The second curriculum also begins to apply the CORE concepts critically to current events/culture of the United States. In the last part of the ASPIRA process students begin to practice our mission of giving back to the community intensively. Students

can either do a series of short projects or a year-long action in their communities (although the last curriculum is project-oriented, all years should include some work outside of the classroom. This can range from sharing the knowledge they have gained with others to actually tackling injustices). In this piece students will learn how systems operate and how to change the world around them in whatever field they chose. This overall process moves from a place of gaining awareness and analyzing one's self and world to action to change. Each year should build on the previous year and begin with review of learned concepts. In this way students also get the chance to reinforce concepts for themselves by teaching their peers. Every year the students' work should also improve. A portfolio of readings, reflections, journal entries, and essays is collected at the end of each year as a physical product to monitor a student's success. Throughout the students' time in ASPIRA we will provide workshops/trainings around financial responsibility, health, writing, speaking/self-confidence, and job skills. This is all accomplished with the overarching idea of what it means to be a Person of Color/Latin@ in these fields and giving back to one's community.

As a facilitator your role is to act as a mentor, to ask critical questions, and to lead the youth to their own opinions/self-direction on issues. All sides of an issue should therefore be presented. This requires self-analysis in many ways as well. From the beginning you are asked if you understand these CORE concepts fully and are comfortable teaching sections outside of your own experience. This guide offers many resources to support you in that process. If you desire further support, feel free to contact us directly. In the future we will begin the school year with a training for facilitators in order to increase your comfort with the curriculum. Its structure should be flexible enough to tailor it to your student body. As CORE concepts each area needs to be touched on, but their depth can vary depending on the student body. The CORE curriculum leads naturally into the second, more advanced curriculum. The culmination is the student taking the information beyond the classroom. We understand that the curriculum is in depth and may take more than one academic year to complete. We would like to stress that it is important for the students' knowledge and development in the program that all topics are covered.

This curriculum remains a work in progress, as well as a community document. ASPIRA welcomes any suggestions.

## Strategies

Our teaching methodology is to allow the students to come to their own synthesis of the issues presented to them. If learning is the end goal, teaching becomes a tool to get there. Therefore, it is not effective to say, “The students will not listen to me.” Rather, one must ask how can I change my teaching style and avoid blaming the student. This problem should be easy to avoid since this curriculum is tied with the participant’s daily life experience and structured to empower the individual. In this process a few points must be emphasized:

1. Adults have power. Even though many times we do not embrace this power we are the ones in the role of teachers
2. In the beginning of class identify the leader of the group. Youth will always learn better from their peers. Therefore, if you can get the leader to listen to you, the rest of the group will follow suit
3. If you treat the youth like children, they will act as children. This is why it is exceptionally important to refer to them as “youth,” “young women,” “young men,” “woman,” or “man.” Language is very powerful in creating an atmosphere for learning and growth
4. Compliment evenly. Students know when one is “playing favorites.” Also, try to find positives when bringing up the negatives so that the criticism will be better received
5. We recommend that you begin the sessions with an icebreaker or do a check in/check out. This builds trust and serves as an introduction/conclusion to the time. Check in/check out allows the students to process what they have learned and feel about the session
6. Come to meetings prepared. Each section has a set of suggested readings and notes which will make the discussions much more focused. Please read the notes beforehand
7. Make the lessons fun and enthusiastic. This is an after school leadership development program, not a class. In order to maintain a club it has to be appealing for the students to attend
8. Lastly, the best teaching tool is belief in what you are teaching. If you come into the classroom with energy and a true conviction in the lessons, students will learn. Idealists and those who ignored the norms have been the ones to change the world. This curriculum has the potential to inspire a whole generation of Latin@ youth, and we believe that it should be regarded in that esteem

## Goals

The three main goals are:

1. The curriculum seeks to provide students with a thorough, critical, and engaging historical foundation of: (a) ASPIRA, (b) the United States, New York City, and abroad, (c) Latin@s who struggled to create autonomous spaces and political victories for their communities, (d) overarching issues in society

The purpose of such a foundation is twofold. First is to inform the students of their collective/distinct pasts, so they may acquire a sophisticated knowledge and respect for their identity and those of others. In this way we create informed individuals who are better able to address the society of today. The second, and more compelling, motive is to provide students with the opportunity to learn from the past to impact their future decisions. This historical foundation is not meant to “star worship” individuals in the Latin@ community. Rather, the curriculum’s purpose is to mention various leaders and to give the youth the opportunity to analyze their actions. This creates an integrated view of past leaders/events and their relation to current conditions

2. A second goal of this curriculum is to sharpen the critical reading, discussion, writing, and thinking skills of the student participants

Each of the accompanying units places an emphasis on improving their skills as students and thinkers. These skills are essential for their success as individuals. Discussions and exercises are meant to be challenging and expansive beyond a normal school curriculum. They will gain the skills to be leaders of their community and grasp the issues of society today. In their written critiques and responses they will create a portfolio. This acts as an archive for the students’ intellectual, artistic, and political growth and can act as an important resource for their college applications. Portfolio material could include: reaction papers, poetry, oral histories, original compositions of fiction or drama, art, or film reviews. These also serve as evaluation tools for the students’ development and should be monitored. We also recommend a yearlong journal as a good means for youth and you, as a facilitator, to observe the students’ thought processes develop around issues

3. Lastly, this curriculum seeks to develop and nurture the students' leadership and commitment to give back to their respective communities. This is accomplished through service learning activities

Service learning entails hands-on and meaningful activities so that students can apply their skills and beliefs outside of the classroom. Social justice campaigns can include: student-created documentaries, petition/letter-writing campaigns, street murals/sculptures of political issues, outdoor dramatic theater, consciousness-raising events in the community, or an organized social action

Gradually, as students grapple with complex and unwieldy social and political challenges, they will learn the importance of well-planned actions to address injustice and gain the skills needed to be active members of society. In this process they will also learn the meaning of community and internalize the connection between their success and the success of their community as a whole. It is a plan for young leaders to become accountable to those around them. This requires that the youth also maintain the club. Continuity through the years of the club and the passing of knowledge from older to younger students is part of community development

### **NOTE**

With any of the films or field trips we recommend having parental consent forms. Many optional activities have been suggested to enhance the topic, but each overarching topic must be touched. Optional resources and films can be obtained from our midtown office (limited), the local library, El Centro for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, or video store (we suggest for more obscure or additional films: Kim's Mediopolis, 212-864-5321 or Mondo Kim's, 212-529-3410)