

Friendship Aspire – Downtown Pine Bluff Accountability Profile



Prepared by
Arkansas Department of Education
Charter School Office

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Section 1: Abstract

The Accountability Profile for Friendship Aspire Academy Downtown Pine Bluff provides an analysis of the school's enrollment trends, academic outcomes, financial condition, and operational compliance from 2022–2025. The report highlights persistent challenges in academic performance, with fluctuating state letter grades—moving from *F* to *C* and back to *F*—as well as achievement scores that remain significantly below state averages in English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and reading. Growth indicators from the 2024–2025 ATLAS assessment show that the large majority of students fall into the “Not Meeting Standard” range, reaffirming substantial instructional gaps. Enrollment remains low relative to the school's approved capacity, attendance trends are inconsistent, and discipline incidents spiked sharply in 2024–2025.

Financially, the school demonstrates mixed stability, with ending fund balances generally hovering at or just below the state's threshold for meeting expectations. Metrics such as days cash on hand and operating margin fall within “Does Not Meet” or “Falls Far Below” categories for multiple consecutive years. Operationally, the school meets basic accreditation standards but exhibits deficiencies in transparency and governance practices, including the absence of public board minutes, limited documentation of leadership roles, outdated staff recruitment and retention plans, and insufficient evidence of financial oversight. Collectively, these findings identify critical areas in need of improvement to ensure the school's long-term viability and academic success.

Section 2: School Summary

Background Information

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location | 700 S. Main St., Pine Bluff, AR 71601 |
| Year Opened | 2018 (District) |
| Grade Levels | k-3 |
| Enrollment Cap | 2,785 (District) |
| Charter Type | Open Enrollment |
| Mission Statement | The mission of Friendship Aspire Academy is to provide a world-class education that motivates students to achieve high academic standards, enjoy learning and develop as ethical, literate, well-rounded and self-sufficient citizens. Friendship Aspire Academy seeks to fulfill this mission by providing students a high quality, liberal arts education focused on preparing students with the academic and life skills needed to be successful in college and beyond. |

Leadership Team

There does not appear to be any information on the Friendship general website or the school website regarding the makeup of their leadership team, nor board members, board meeting agendas nor minutes. The principal noted on the webpage is Ashley Williams; however, contact information was unavailable.

| Personnel | Title | School / Organization | Email |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ashley Williams | School Principal | Friendship Aspire – Downtown Pine Bluff | |

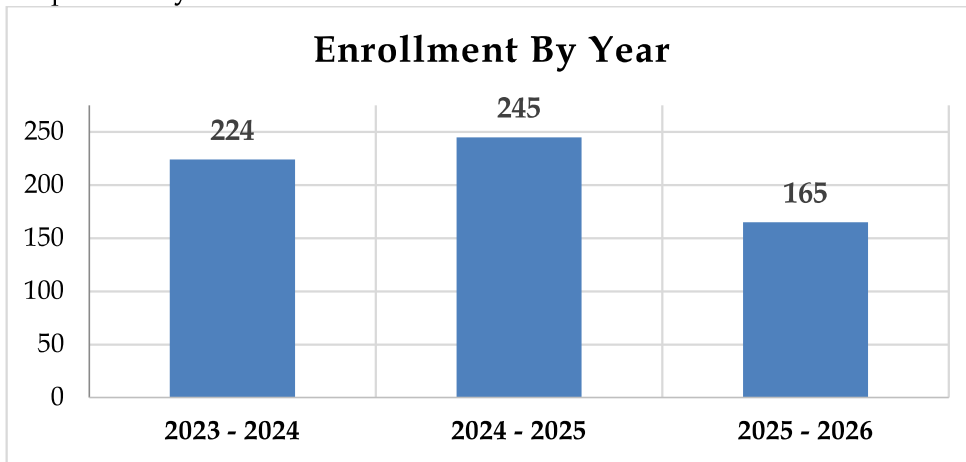
Section 3: Student Enrollment Data

Table 3.0 – 2025 – 2026 Enrollment

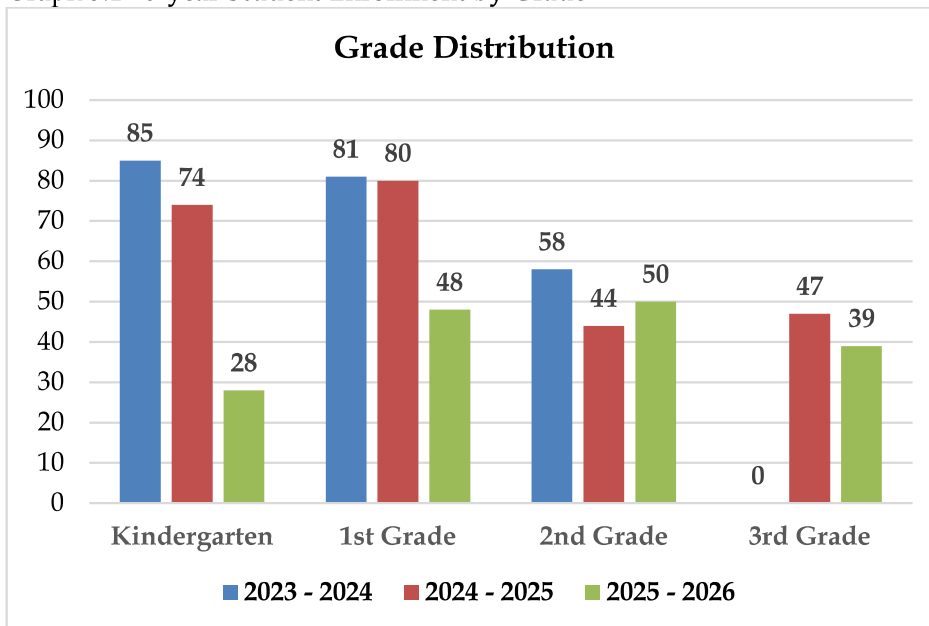
| 2025 – 2026 Enrollment | Enrollment CAP | Percent of Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 165 | 2785 | 16.88% |

Graph 3.0 reports the total enrollment count by year; **Graph 3.1** shows student enrollment by grade for the past three school years; **Graph 3.2** shows student demographics over the past three years. The data reported was captured from the Arkansas Department of Education’s Data Center.

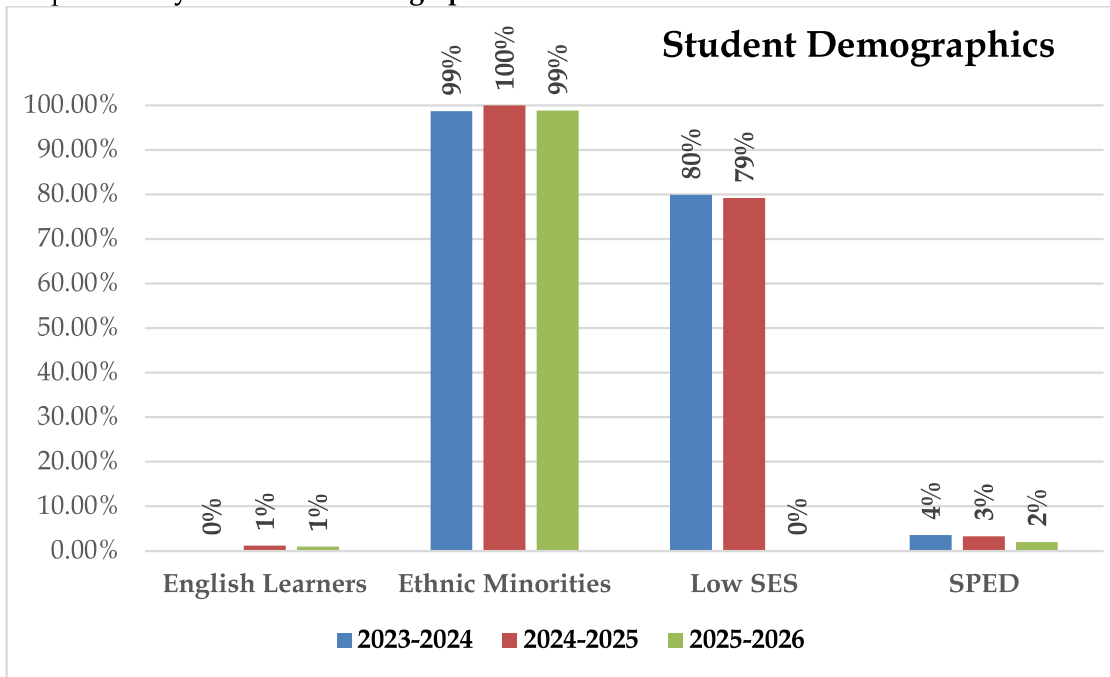
Graph 3.0 - 3-year School Enrollment



Graph 3.1 - 3-year Student Enrollment by Grade



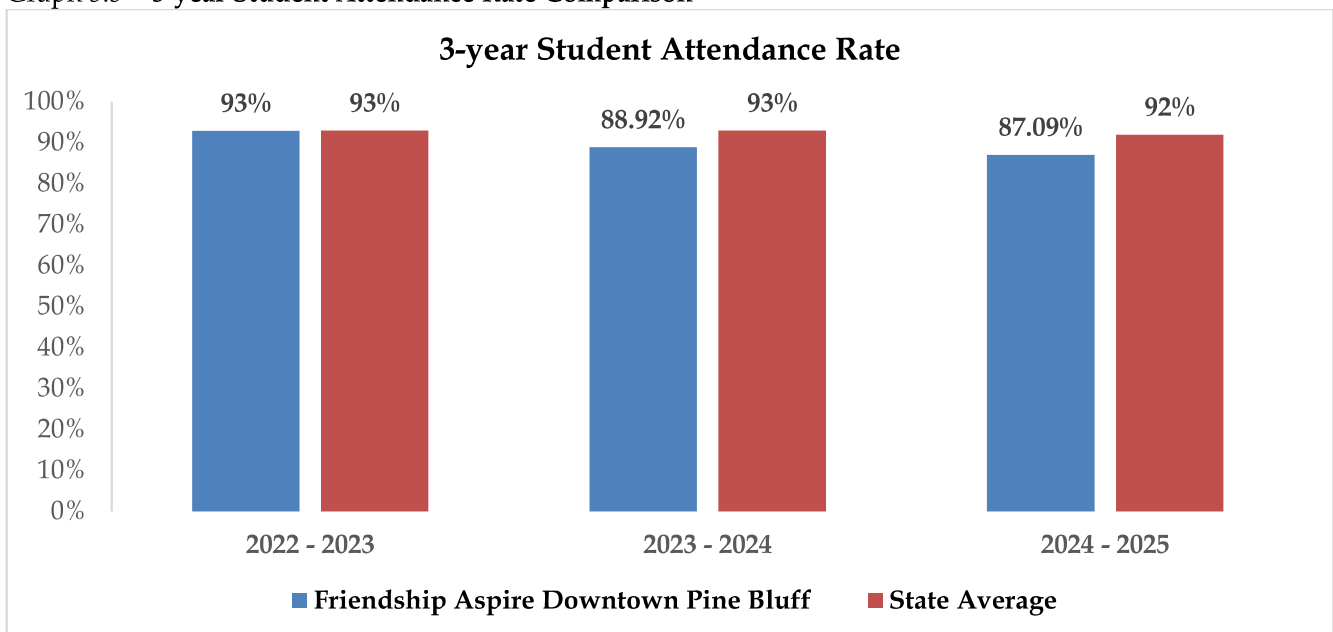
Graph 3.2 - 3-year Student Demographics



Student Attendance Rates

Graph 3.3 presents student attendance rates from the 2022-2023 school year through the 2024-2025 school year along with a comparison to the state average attendance rate.

Graph 3.3 - 3-year Student Attendance Rate Comparison



Section 4: Academic Performance Data

In 2013, the Arkansas legislature passed A.C.A 6-15-2105, requiring the state to implement an A-F grading scale for schools as an indicator of a school’s overall academic health. **Table 4.0** shows the three-year history of the school’s letter grade compared to the Pine Bluff School District and state.

Table 4.0 - **Letter Grade Comparison**

| School | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Friendship Aspire – Downtown Pine Bluff | F | C | F |
| Pine Bluff School District | F | F | F |
| State average | C | C | C |

Growth and Achievement Indicators

Growth scores show how many students met their **individual growth goals** on the end-of-year tests. It highlights how well a school helps **all students make progress**, no matter where they start.

Achievement scores show the percentage of students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations on the annual statewide tests in comparison to state average.

Each public charter school is responsible for educating students according to the standards set for all Arkansas public schools. As of the 2024 – 2025 school year, the ATLAS assessment is being used to track both Growth and Achievement for schools.

Table 4.1 – **Growth Score Ranges for the ASPIRE and ATLAS assessments***

| | ASPIRE Growth Score Ranges | ATLAS Growth Score Ranges |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Exceeding Standard | 85% or Higher | 51% or Higher |
| Meeting Standard | 80% – 84% | 45% - 50% |
| Approaching Standard | 70% - 79% | 35% - 44% |
| Not Meeting Standard | 69% or Lower | 34% or Lower |

Table 4.1.a **Achievement Score Ranges**

| | Achievement Score Ranges |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Exceeding Standard | Greater than the state average |
| Meeting Standard | Equal to or within 5% of the state average |
| Approaching Standard | 6 – 10% below the state average |
| Not Meeting Standard | 11% or more below the state average |

**Team members from the Charter School Office worked with Public School Accountability team members to create estimated ASPIRE score ranges for comparison to ATLAS Growth Scores.*

Table 4.2 depicts both growth and achievement scores. (note: during the 2021 - 2022 school year, the ASPIRE assessment was utilized for both Growth and Proficiency(Achievement). The ATLAS assessment was first used in the 2023 - 2024 and there were no officially published scores for the 2023 - 2024 school year).

Table 4.2 - **Growth and Achievement Scores**

| Growth - English | | | | | State Average |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 80.00% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 80.14% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | | | | 18.6% | 51.94% |

| Growth - Math | | | | | State Average |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 79.83% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 79.88% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | | | | 4.65% | 52.15% |

| Achievement - English | | | | | State Average |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 38.59% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 41.73% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | 36.36% | | | | 35.39% |

| Achievement - Math | | | | | State Average |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 26.67% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 23.45% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | 38.64% | | | | 32.88% |

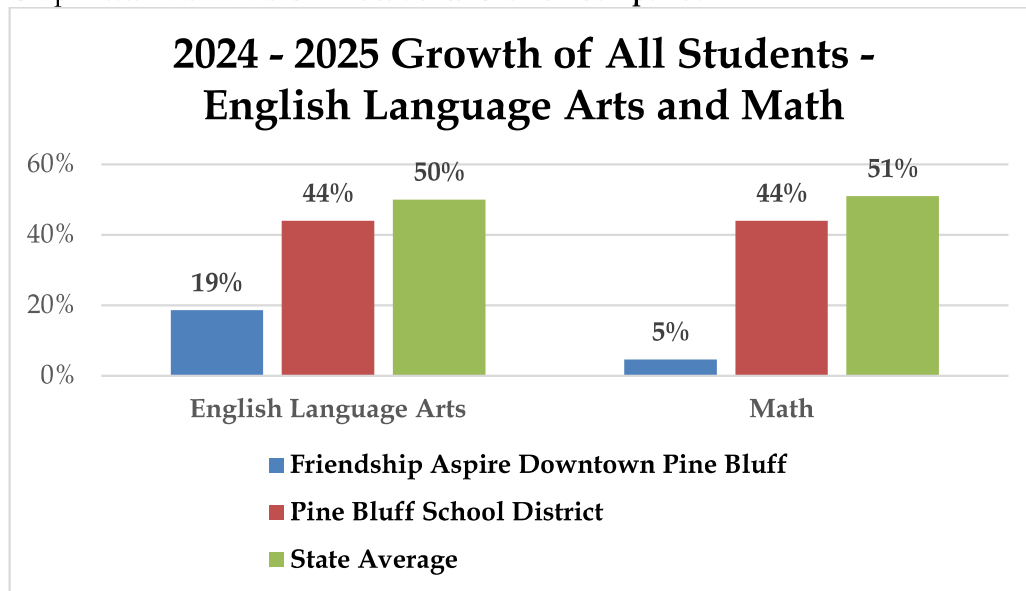
| Achievement - Science | | | | | State Average |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 30.22% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 30.17% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | 38.64% | | | | 36.97% |

| Achievement - Reading | | | | | State Average |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Exceeding Standard | Meeting Standard | Approaching Standard | Not Meeting Standard | |
| 2021-2022 ASPIRE | | | | 20% | 38.44% |
| 2022-2023 ASPIRE | No Data | | | | 39.01% |
| 2023-2024 | No Official Scores Published by the State | | | | |
| 2024-2025 ATLAS | No Data | | | | 34.13% |

School Growth Comparison Data 2024 – 2025 school year

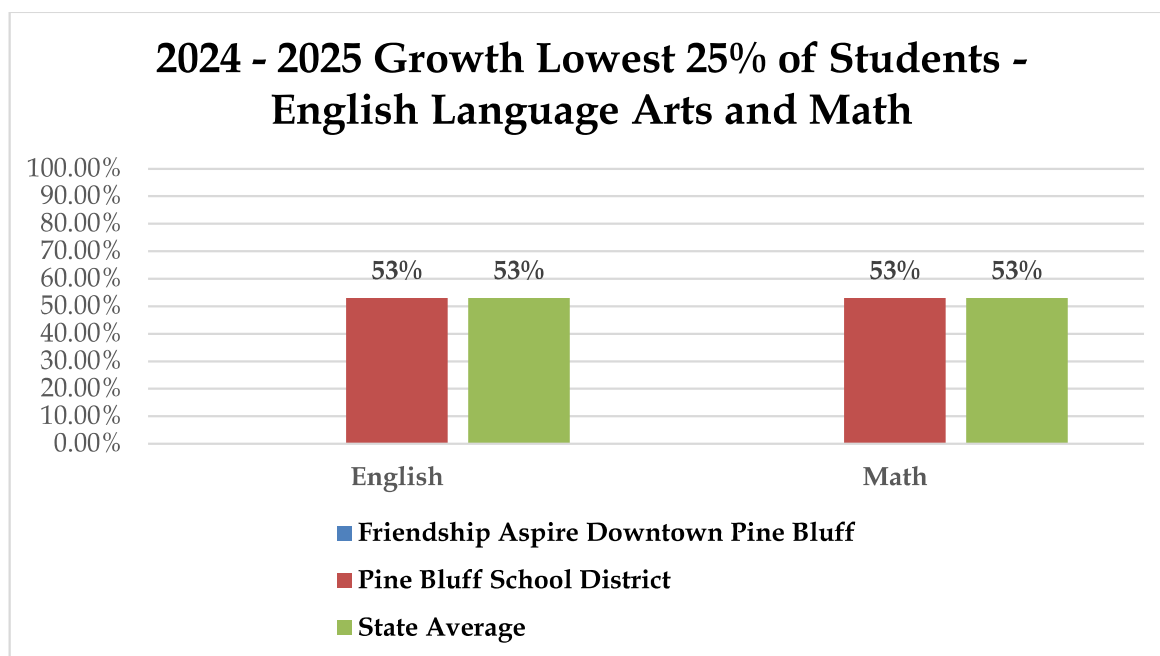
Graph 4.0.a compares growth of all students at the charter school in English Language Arts and Math with the Pine Bluff School District and state average. **Graph 4.1.b** compares growth of the lowest 25% of students in English Language Arts and Math for the Pine Bluff School District and state average. *There was not enough data* to score the charter school's lowest 25% of students' growth.

Graph 4.0.a – 2024 – 2025 All Students Growth Comparison



Graph 4.0.b - Lowest 25% Growth Comparison

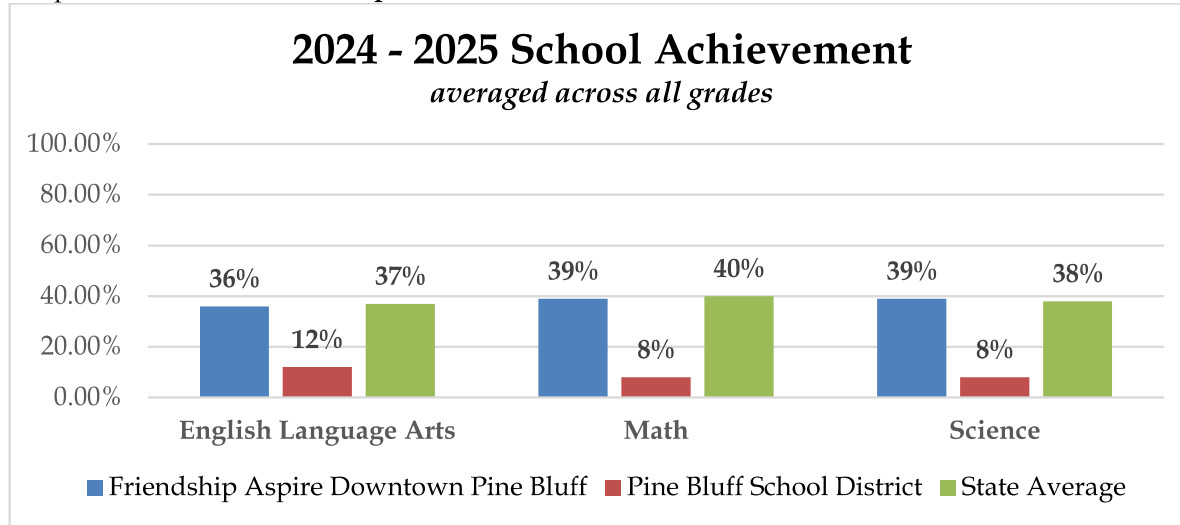
There was not enough data to score the charter school's lowest 25% of students' growth.



School Achievement Comparison Data

Graph 4.2 presents proficiency scores, averaged across all grades, for the charter school in English Language Arts, Math, and Science for the 2024 – 2025 school year compared to the Pine Bluff School District and the state average.

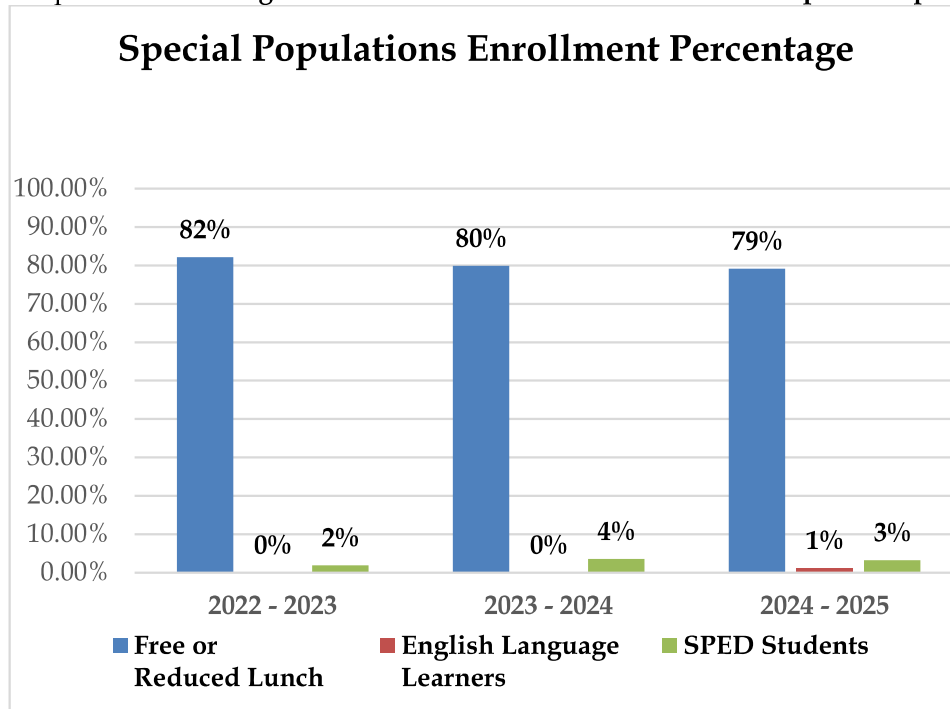
Graph 4.2 - Achievement Comparison



Special Populations

The State of Arkansas' definition of special populations includes students who receive a free or reduced lunch, English language learners, and students identified as SPED. **Graph 4.3** provides the charter school's enrollment percentages of students identified as part of a special population during the past three years.

Graph 4.3 - Percentage of Enrolled Students Considered Part of Special Populations



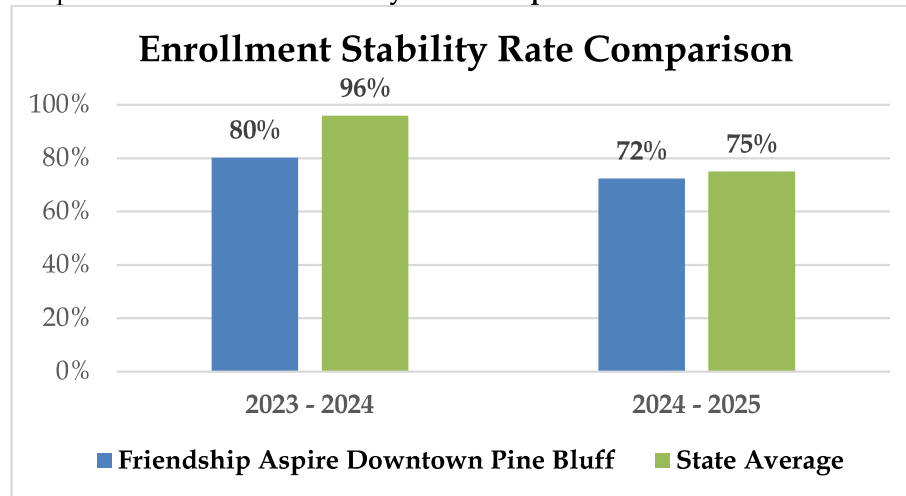
Learning Services Summary

Friendship Aspire Downtown Pine Bluff had limited support from ADE Learning Services.

Enrollment Stability Rates

Graph 4.4 illustrates Friendship Aspire Downtown Pine Bluff’s enrollment stability for the past two years as compared to the state average. Enrollment stability is defined as the percentage of students who return to the same school from the previous school year.

Graph 4.4 – Enrollment Stability Rate Comparison



Student Discipline

Table 4.3 presents the school’s disciplinary history over the past 3 years and compares it to the state average.

Table 4.3 - 3-year Disciplinary history

| | Friendship Aspire Downtown Pine Bluff Whole Number Count | State Average |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| School Suspensions (In & Out of school) | | |
| 2022-2023 | 7 | 103.93 |
| 2023-2024 | 2 | 103.90 |
| 2024-2025 | 68 | 96.03 |
| Expulsions | | |
| 2022-2023 | 0 | 1.06 |
| 2023-2024 | 0 | 0.94 |
| 2024-2025 | 0 | 0.81 |
| Chronic Absenteeism | | |
| 2022-2023 | No Data | 22% |
| 2023-2024 | 11.35% | 27% |
| 2024-2025 | 20.07% | 21% |

Section 5: Financial Performance Data

Financial information was provided by the Arkansas Department of Education’s Finance office in late October 2025. There were no Board Meeting minutes found on the CMO’s website to determine whether discussions about finances were part of the Board’s agenda.

Financial Metrics (3-years)

Table 5.0 provides definitions used for categories, while **Table 5.1** provides data for the charter school based on the Financial Performance rubric sections provided by ADE Finance (1. Essential Financial Readiness, 2. General Financial Readiness, 3. Financial Sustainability).

Table 5.0 – **Performance Metrics’ Category Definitions**

| Category | Meets | Does Not Meet | Falls Far Below |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i> | Greater than 8% | Between 8 – 6% | Below 6% |
| <i>Days Cash on Hand</i> | Greater than 60 days | 30 – 60 days | Less than 30 days |
| <i>Operating Margin</i> | Equal to or greater than 1 | Between 1 – 0.05 | School demonstrates a negative Margin |
| <i>Unrestricted Fund Balance</i> | Greater than or equal to 8.33% | Between 8.33 - 7.33% | Less than 7.33% |
| <i>Enrollment Stability</i> | Greater than or equal to 90% | Between 89 – 80% | Less than 79% |
| <i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i> | Yes , clear signs of the board meeting, discussing, and acting on quarterly reviews and/ or addressing financial issues. Also, a fiscal audit has been performed each operational year and is discussed within the board. | | No , there are clear gaps in board meetings, no clear discussion, and/or acting on quarterly reviews. Also, there are clear gaps in fiscal audits being performed. No clear actions or discussion have been undergone |

Table 5.1 - **3-year Financial Performance for CMO (Friendship Academies)**

| Color Legend | Meets | Does Not Meet | Falls Far Below |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | 2023 – 2024 | 2024 - 2025 | 2025 - 2026 |
| <i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i> | 7.97% | 7.23% | 8.7% |
| <i>Days Cash on Hand</i> | 28.81 | 26.34 | 32.21 |
| <i>Operating Margin</i> | - 0.01 | -0.02 | 0.01 |
| <i>Unrestricted Fund Balance</i> | 7.89 | 7.21 | 8.82 |
| <i>Enrollment Stability</i> | 100 | 82.98 | 87.5 |
| <i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i> | No Board Minutes | No Board Minutes | No Board Minutes |

Financial Data (3-years)

Table 5.2 - 3-year Financial Data for the CMO (Friendship Academies)

| Topics | 2023-2024 Actual | 2024-2025 Actual | 2025-2026 Budgeted |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Beginning Balance</i> | \$983,046.90 | \$870,402.81 | \$845,139.90 |
| <i>Revenue</i> | \$10,914,413.99 | \$11,682,261.80 | \$11,719,832.00 |
| <i>Expenditures</i> | \$11,027,058.08 | \$11,707,524.71 | \$11,545,869.73 |
| <i>Ending Balance</i> | \$870,402.81 | \$845,139.90 | \$1,019,102.17 |
| <i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i> | 7.97% | 7.23% | 8.7% |

Section 6: Operational Performance Review

This section reviews the charter school’s compliance with applicable laws, enrollment and recruitment practices, and school improvement plans. The data assists in ensuring accountability and allows ADE to support continuous improvement in charter schools. Additionally, the information aids ADE’s Charter School Office in deciding whether to recommend that the Charter Authorizing Panel renews the charter contract.

School Compliance Summary

Currently, the charter school does not have any standing flagging actions and is compliant with the ADE Standards for Accreditation. The school provided a School Improvement Plan that included two goals and plans for achieving each goal.

Charter School Board

Board meeting agendas and minutes are very difficult to find on the charter school’s website. Finding the State Required Information was challenging. There is a small vertical link “Explore” on the left side of the website that lists Board of Trustees meeting schedule & minutes; when selecting that link, the only schedules are for 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023. Minutes posted are for June, July, September, October, and November 2022 and January 2023.

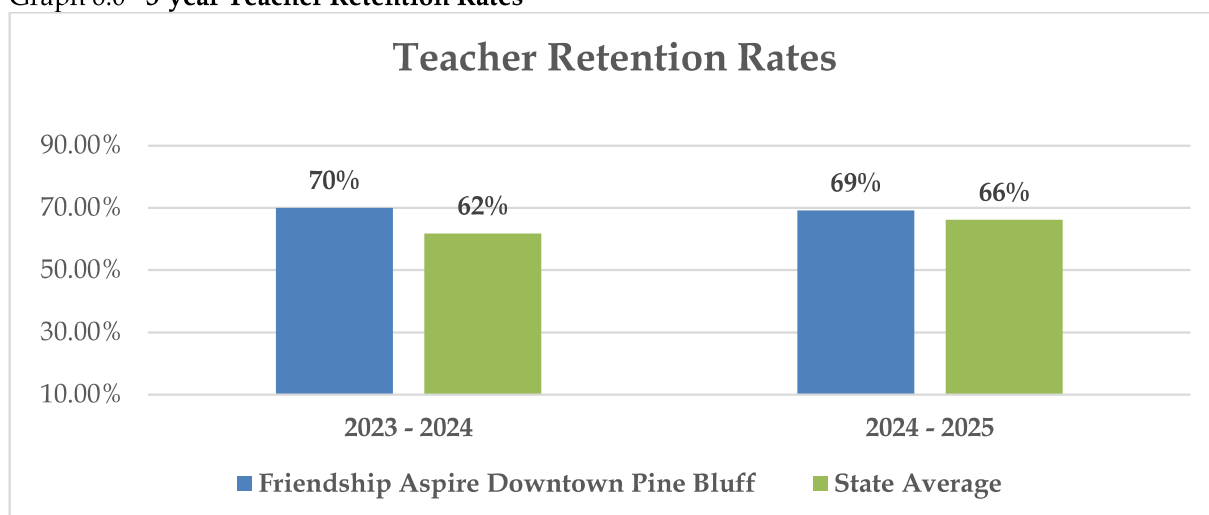
Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan

The staff recruitment and retention plan for the charter school is not easily found on their website (see explanation under Charter School Board section). The recruitment and retention plan was created and submitted in 2022. The goals and action steps lack specificity, nor is there evidence of plan execution or success.

Teacher Retention Rates

Graph 6.0 shows 3-year teacher stability for the charter school compared to the state average. Teacher stability is defined as the percentage of teachers who return to the school from the previous school year. There was no data available for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

Graph 6.0 –3-year Teacher Retention Rates

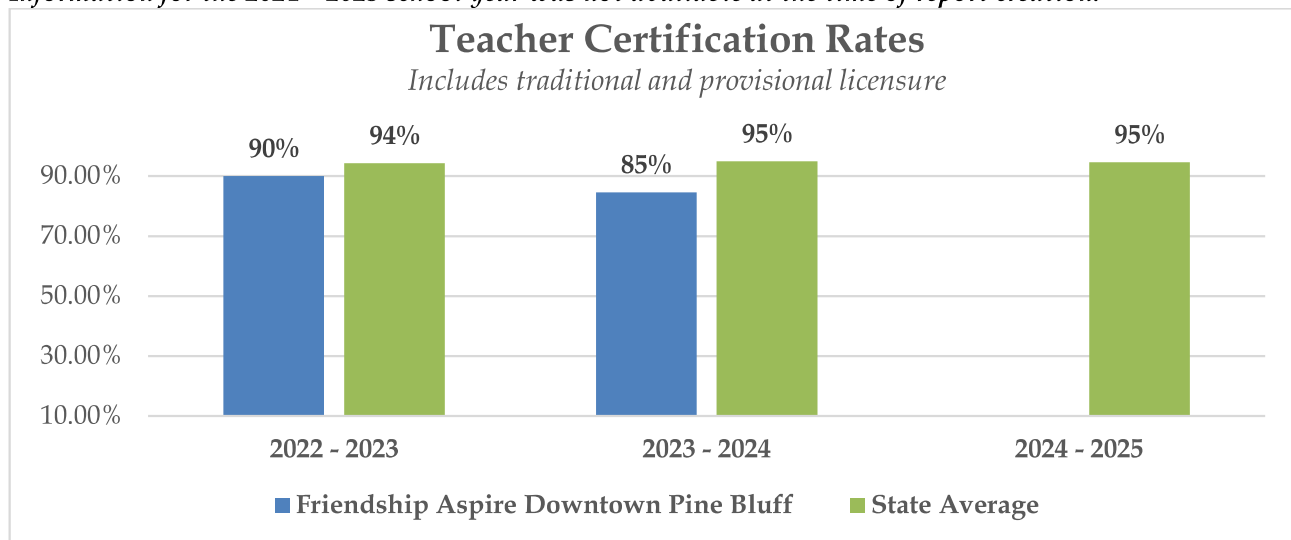


Teacher Certification Rates

Graph 6.1 provides the charter school's percentage of certified teachers compared to the state average. Understanding the percentage of credentialed teaching staff can be informative when discussing performance outcomes and teacher training needs.

Graph 6.1 – Teacher Certification Rates

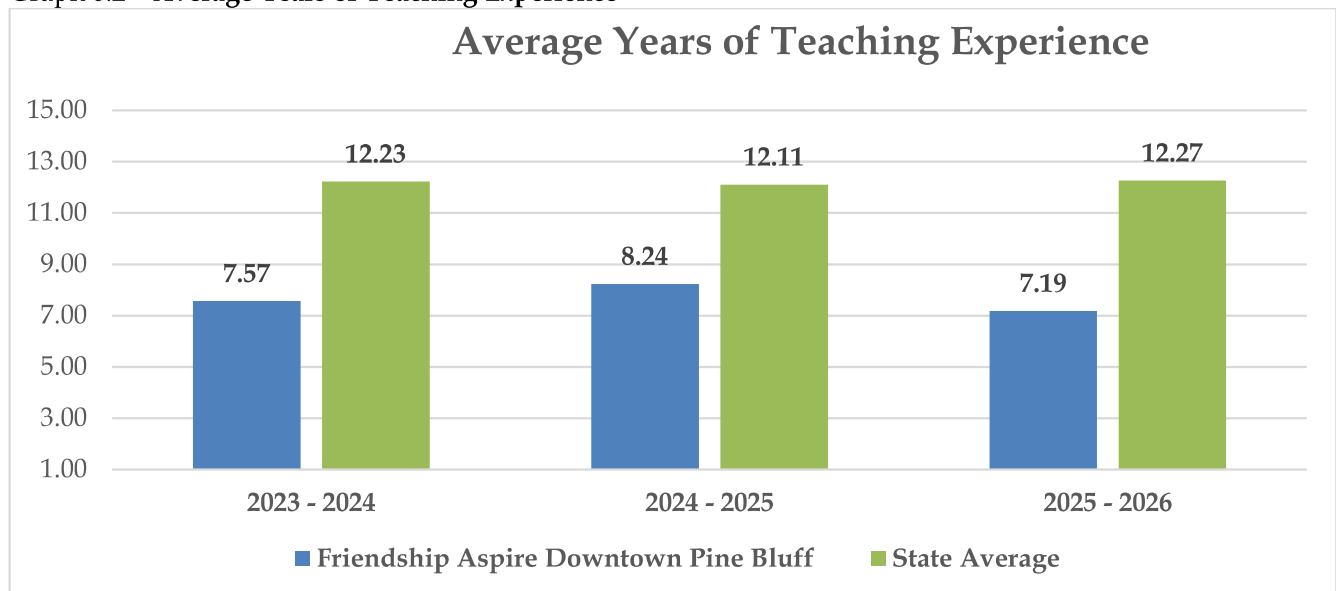
Information for the 2024 – 2025 school year was not available at the time of report creation.



Average Teaching Experience

Graph 6.2 presents the charter school's average years of teaching experience compared to the state average.

Graph 6.2 – Average Years of Teaching Experience



School Improvement Plan

The Friendship Aspire Academy Downtown School Improvement Plan outlines targeted goals to improve academic outcomes and strengthen family engagement during the 2024–2025 school year. The plan sets a measurable academic objective—to increase student proficiency in reading and mathematics by 10%—and anchors this goal in research-based strategies such as structured PLCs, weekly data meetings, implementation of evidence-based curricula, and ongoing professional development. These actions are aligned with the stated theory of action that strong instructional systems, supported by leadership, will lead to measurable student growth.

In addition to academic improvement, the SIP emphasizes family engagement as a key lever for student success. The goal requires every homeroom to achieve an 80% participation rate in at least one campus event, supported through a series of structured family activities and workshops spanning the school year. Monitoring tools such as sign-in sheets and surveys are designated to document family involvement and guide future planning.

The plan also incorporates an evaluation framework focused on collaborative planning, consistent instructional blocks, and fidelity checks to ensure that instructional strategies and curriculum are implemented as intended. While the plan presents clear goals and relevant action steps, it would benefit from more detailed progress-monitoring procedures, defined interim benchmarks, and greater specificity in roles and responsibilities. Overall, the SIP provides a coherent structure for instructional improvement and community engagement, offering a foundation for measurable schoolwide progress.

Section 7: Executive Summary

Academic Performance

Friendship Aspire Academy Downtown Pine Bluff continues to struggle academically, as evidenced by repeated *F* letter grades in 2022–2023 and 2024–2025, after briefly improving to a *C* in 2023–2024. Achievement outcomes on the 2024–2025 ATLAS assessment fall well below state averages across English, math, science, and reading. Growth data further shows that the majority of students are not meeting expected growth targets – only **18.6% in ELA** and **4.65% in math** reached the “Meeting Standard” range. The school was unable to generate growth scores for its lowest 25% of learners due to insufficient data, indicating additional concerns about assessment participation and reporting. Attendance, though similar to state averages in some years, has not demonstrated consistent improvement, and chronic absenteeism nearly doubled between 2023–2024 and 2024–2025.

Financial Performance

The school exhibits ongoing financial instability across multiple key metrics. Despite modest ending fund balances (7.23%–8.7% of revenue), the school has **fewer than 30–32 days of cash on hand** for two of the last three years, falling short of ADE’s threshold of 60 days. Operating margins were negative in 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, recovering only marginally in the 2025–2026 budget projection. Enrollment stability declined sharply from 100% in 2023–2024 to lower ranges in subsequent years. The financial oversight section is of particular concern: **no board minutes were available for any of the three years reviewed**, preventing verification of required fiscal monitoring or board action. Overall, the profile indicates financial risk and a need for strengthened fiscal governance and controls.

Operational Performance

While the school meets the minimum standards for accreditation, significant operational weaknesses remain. The publicly available website lacks essential transparency regarding leadership structure, board membership, meeting agendas, and minutes beyond early 2023. This gap undermines compliance with Arkansas charter accountability requirements. Teacher retention and certification data suggest instability and lack of experience, with multiple years showing incomplete or missing data. The staff recruitment and retention plan is outdated (last revised in 2022) and lacks clear implementation evidence or measurable outcomes. Although the school submitted a School Improvement Plan with two primary goals, the SIP provides limited detail on progress monitoring, interim targets, and role-specific accountability.

Recommendations to Address Deficiencies

Academic Recommendations

1. **Strengthen instructional systems** by implementing consistent data-driven instruction cycles, including weekly data analysis protocols aligned to ATLAS benchmarks.
2. **Adopt targeted intervention frameworks** for the lowest-performing students, including scheduled Tier II/Tier III support and progress monitoring every 2–3 weeks.
3. **Increase assessment participation and fidelity**, ensuring the availability of complete growth data across all student groups for state reporting.

Financial Recommendations

1. **Reestablish fiscal oversight protocols**, including public posting of monthly/quarterly board minutes documenting financial review and budget monitoring.
2. **Increase days cash on hand** by implementing expenditure controls, reducing non-essential spending, and developing a cash reserve plan.
3. **Address negative operating margins** through better alignment of staffing and programs with enrollment realities, and by increasing ADA funding through improved attendance.

Operational Recommendations

1. **Improve governance transparency** by updating the website to include board members, contact information, meeting agendas, meeting schedules, and minutes for all required years.
2. **Revise and relaunch the staff recruitment and retention plan**, incorporating measurable goals, timelines, and strategies to increase stability and certification rates.
3. **Enhance family and community engagement systems** to support enrollment growth and reduce chronic absenteeism.