



Friendship Aspire Academy
Public Charter School
ARKANSAS



FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE
LAB SCHOOLS
for DYSLEXIA

Charter Amendment Request Presentation

friendshipaspire.org

Pursuing Excellence



• Presenters

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Friendship Education Foundation

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Friendship Aspire Arkansas



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What We Seek to Do?



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- Converting the Friendship Lab School for Dyslexia from a private school to a charter school and integrating it into the Friendship Network;
- Continuing the current school design, grade span, and operations of Friendship Lab School for Dyslexia;
- Requesting a district-wide enrollment cap increase of 135 students to accommodate the addition of a new Friendship Lab School for Dyslexia campus, serving grades K-8 with an estimated 10-15 students per grade;
- Seeking approval for an academic accountability waiver (letter grade) to accommodate the unique needs of the students served at the school.

Mission

The Friendship Lab School for Dyslexia is dedicated to providing a unique educational experience for students who struggle with dyslexia and language-based learning differences.

Our mission is to empower these students to overcome their barriers to learning and achieve grade-level proficiency. Through specialized teams of therapists and educators, we work collaboratively to create individualized learning plans that include academic intervention and supportive therapy services. Our ultimate goal is to help each student close the learning gap and transition back to their home school with newfound confidence and skills.



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Need



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- The Dyslexia Center of Utah reports that 70-80% of poor readers are likely dyslexic, with one in five students having a language-based learning disability, dyslexia being the most common. Over 40 million American adults have dyslexia, yet only 2 million are aware of it.
- The exact cause of dyslexia remains unknown, but researchers suggest that genetics, heredity, and brain structure and activity play a role. Dyslexia often runs in families, with about 40% of siblings and 49% of parents of individuals with dyslexia also experiencing reading difficulties.
- While dyslexics may struggle with reading, spelling, and writing, these challenges are not related to intelligence. They often excel in creativity, big-picture thinking, connecting ideas, and 3D visualization.

Need



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National approximations¹ coupled with Arkansas census data² indicate a **widespread need to support students with dyslexia**

We used 5 year census data estimates to determine an upper and lower threshold (5% - 12%) that approximates the number of **students grades 1-8** with dyslexia or signs of a language learning disability in Arkansas at **nearly 28,000 students**

37.8k (upper threshold)

27.8k (midpoint)

15.8k (lower threshold)

¹Katusic SK, Colligan RC, Barbaresi WJ, Schaid DJ, Jacobsen SJ. Incidence of reading disability in a population-based birth cohort, 1976-1982, Rochester, Minn. Mayo Clin Proc. 2001 Nov;76(11):1081-92. doi: 10.4065/76.11.1081. PMID: 11702896

²Source: United States Census Bureau

Benefits



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➤ Expanding Access to Specialized Education

- **Tuition-Free Model:** As a public charter, the school would eliminate financial barriers and ensure that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds can access specialized dyslexia education.
- **Equitable Opportunities:** Provide underserved communities with access to innovative, evidence-based instructional strategies tailored for students with dyslexia.

➤ Innovation in Public Education

- **Dyslexia-Focused Expertise:** Introduces a proven, specialized model for dyslexia education into the public school system, serving as a demonstration of innovative teaching practices.
- **Flexible Curriculum Design:** Maintains the ability to customize curriculum and teaching strategies while adhering to state standards, creating a model that can be replicated statewide.

➤ Scaling Impact and Building Community

- **Larger Enrollment Potential:** A public charter status allows the school to reach more students and families in need, amplifying its impact across the district or region.
- **Increased Community Engagement:** Creates stronger connections between the school, families, and the broader community through inclusive governance and transparent operations.

➤ Professional Development for Educators

- **Specialized Training:** Expands opportunities for educators to receive state-supported professional development in dyslexia intervention and differentiated instruction.

➤ Positioning for Future Growth

- **Model for Innovation:** Serves as a proof-of-concept for specialized charter schools, potentially inspiring additional state initiatives to address learning disabilities.
- **Statewide Leadership:** Positions the school as a leader in addressing dyslexia and other learning differences, enhancing the state's reputation for inclusive, high-quality education.

Benefits



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- Under the innovative educational model implemented, students have demonstrated measurable growth in both reading and math.
- This model emphasizes personalized learning pathways, evidence-based teaching strategies, and targeted interventions tailored to meet each student's unique needs.
- By fostering an engaging and supportive learning environment, students are improving their foundational skills, developing critical thinking tools and problem-solving abilities. This progress underscores the model's effectiveness in enhancing academic outcomes and preparing students for future academic and personal success.



Educational Model



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Our students benefit from a robust, research-based educational model tailored to address the unique needs of learners with dyslexia. Key components of this approach include:

- Highly Skilled Educators: Students receive instruction from teachers trained as certified dyslexia interventionists, ensuring expertise in evidence-based methods.
- Licensed Interventionists and Therapists: Students also benefit from services provided by licensed interventionists and therapists who specialize in dyslexia support.
- Comprehensive Assessment: The Wilson Assessment of Decoding and Encoding (WADE) is used to evaluate students' decoding and encoding skills, allowing for targeted and effective instruction.
- Specialized Curriculum: The Wilson Reading System, a structured literacy program, is utilized to provide explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction that meets the diverse learning needs of students.
- Onsite Wraparound Services: Occupational and speech therapy are provided onsite, offering a holistic approach to student support.
- Executive Function Development: Occupational therapists trained in executive functioning help students build critical organizational, time management, and problem-solving skills.
- Dyslexia-Specific Speech Therapy: Speech therapists trained in dyslexia methodologies employ strategies designed to enhance language processing and communication for students with dyslexia.

This integrated approach ensures that our students are supported academically, socially, and emotionally, enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential.

By the time our students leave The Lab School they will be:

- **Confident:** Our students have a **sense of self esteem**. They are confident in their abilities, aware of their unique gifts, **and know that they are capable of maximizing their full potential**
- **Prepared:** Our students are **adaptable**; they have the knowledge and skills needed to **read and thrive in their next setting**
- **Effective Communicators:** Our students are able to **express themselves verbally and in writing** with clarity and compassion
- **Kind:** Our students are able to **make others feel included, seen and valued**



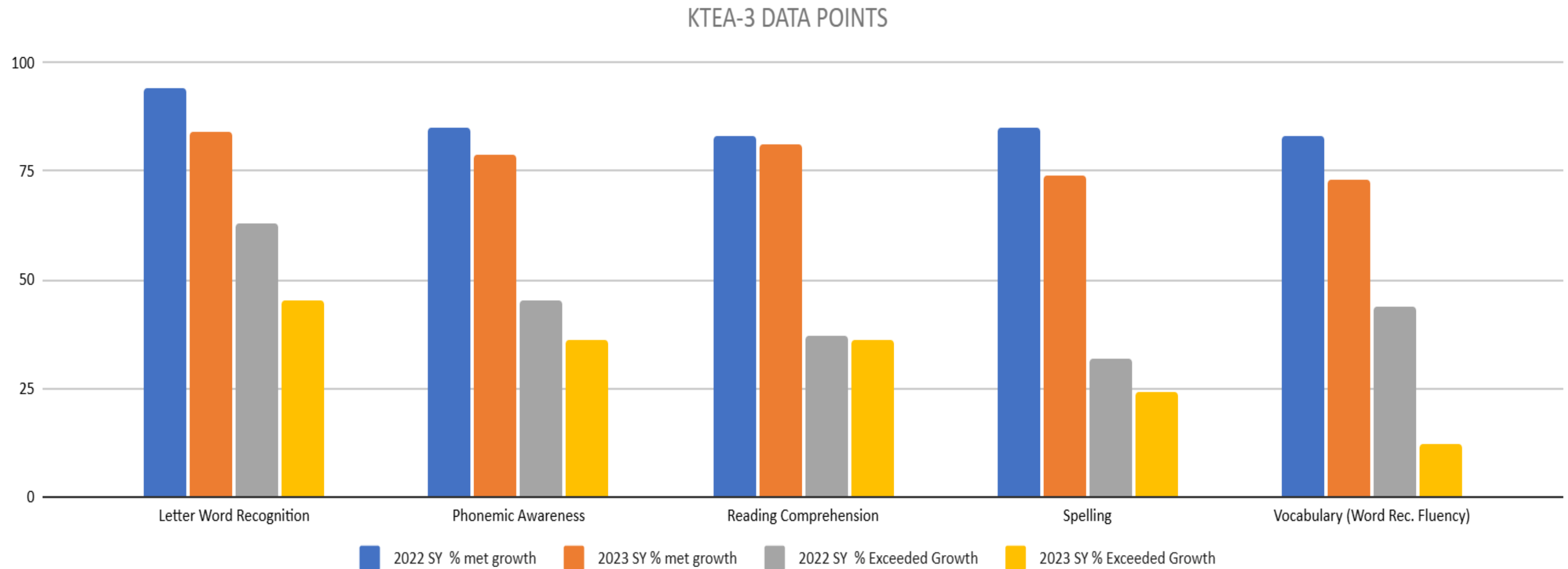
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Results

- 2024-2025 Winter NWEA MAP data:
 - 67% of students have demonstrated growth in reading since their fall assessment.
 - 79% of students have demonstrated growth in math since their fall assessment.

- KTEA-3 data:



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Results



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- The dyslexia intervention program at the Lab School has significantly boosted reading proficiency among participating students, with nearly all achieving at least one grade-level advancement in reading. Below is a summary of their impressive progress (23-24 SY):
 - Students starting at Kindergarten level:
 - Initial: 8 students
 - End: All 8 are now reading at the 1st-grade level.
 - Students starting at 1st-grade level:
 - Initial: 6 students
 - End: 2 are now reading at a higher 1st-grade level, and 4 have advanced to the 3rd-grade level.
 - Students starting at 2nd-grade level:
 - Initial: 8 students
 - End: 7 are now reading at the 3rd-grade level.
 - Student starting at 4th-grade level:
 - Initial: 1 student
 - End: Now reading at the 5th-grade level.

This data highlights the transformative impact of focused interventions, demonstrating the effectiveness of tailored support for students with dyslexia.

**Everyone
Grows
With
Friendship.**



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