



March 31, 2021

Dear Aim High Community,

On behalf of Aim High's Board of Trustees, and with deep appreciation for his extraordinary leadership over the last 35 years, I am writing to inform you of Alec Lee's decision to retire as Aim High's Executive Director at the end of this calendar year.

Alec and his co-founder Eleanor McBride started Aim High in 1986 to provide joyful summer learning experiences for middle school students from low-income communities. The program model is backed by research that identifies middle school achievement as critical to students' college and career readiness. Aim High's focus on summer also addresses achievement and opportunity gaps by combatting students' learning loss between school years.

Over the last 35 years, Alec has led Aim High's growth from serving 50 students at a single site in San Francisco to serving almost 2,500 students at 18 sites across the Bay Area in every direction, as far as Napa and Tahoe-Truckee. Through it all, Alec has centered Aim High's work on its CORE values: Community, Opportunity, Respect, and high Expectations (the "h" is silent, as many of you have heard throughout the years).

Fundamental to Aim High's longevity, growth, and depth of impact on its students is the organization's culture of continuous improvement. Alec has led a constant quest to understand what is working well and what Aim High can do better. He asks hard questions and seeks outside evaluation to ensure that the Aim High magic is real and that the organization is sustainable and strong.

Under Alec's leadership, Aim High has received the Excellence in Summer Learning Award from the National Summer Learning Association twice (!) the only organization to ever do so. In 2012, Aim High was honored by the San Francisco Foundation as a recipient of the Community Leadership Award. In 2016, Alec was recognized by the Obama Administration as a Champion of Change in the field of summer learning.

Last year, in an extraordinary pivot, Alec led the successful launch of its first distance learning program, Aim High at Home – created in response to the stay-at-home requirements of COVID-19 and born from the ethos that summer matters, no matter what. With Alec's calm and steady leadership paving the way, Aim High reimaged academic and enrichment opportunities for a virtual world, and maintained the safe, inclusive and nurturing communities it has provided for more than three decades.

Alec's life's work in the Bay Area is set to make its mark far and wide. Summer will be a critical piece of the COVID-19 recovery effort for years to come, and Aim High has a lot to contribute to the effort. In addition to focusing on learning loss recovery, our nation is now beginning to appreciate that social and emotional learning is a vital complement to academic instruction. This is something that Alec, a former teacher himself, has always known – that middle schoolers learn best when they feel seen and heard in classrooms that are inclusive, joyful, relevant and engaging.

Alec has positioned Aim High well for its next chapter and The Board of Trustees is honored and humbled to begin the search for his successor. More information about the search process, including our search consultant, Koya Partners, and our search committee, can be found [here](#).

The new Executive Director will be stepping into an organization that has all the key pieces in place to build upon Alec's legacy. These include an incredible staff, a highly professional board, a strong financial base, a fine-tuned curriculum, and a stellar reputation.

Over the next nine months, Alec will continue to actively lead Aim High, preparing to open its doors this summer to thousands of middle school children and focusing on strategic priorities to provide a smooth transition for our next Executive Director. I know all of you will join me and Aim High's Board in expressing our appreciation to Alec in the coming months. Please stay tuned for opportunities to thank Alec and to celebrate his leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William F. Mellin".

William F. (Bill) Mellin  
Aim High Trustee and Board Chair