

# The Inspire Spotlight

Newsletter of Inspire: A Shalom Afterschool Initiative

December  
2016

## Inspire by the Numbers

20

Average Daily  
Attendance this  
semester

12

First Languages  
spoken by  
students this year

86

Home Visits  
conducted this  
semester



## Elections 2016

The candidates stood behind opposing podiums, talking at length about what they would do if elected. She fought for the less fortunate while he fought for a new kind of leader. The divide amongst the viewers of the debate was tangible. The candidates had worked so hard to get to this point, and yet only one of them could be elected.

Meet Abdifatah, the first-ever Inspire Student Advisor!

During the weeks leading up to the U.S. Presidential Election, Inspire students were immersed in elections. They studied the presidential election process, American political parties, the 2016 presidential candidates, and the issues. Then they translated all that they'd learned into running the first ever elections for Inspire Student Advisor. During the primaries they caucused - standing in different corners of the room trying to convince their classmates to join *their* candidate. The two primary winners, Dao Chhei and Abdifatah, then ran impressive campaigns throughout the following weeks. Dao Chhei ran on the platform of providing "better" snacks (a.k.a. more dessert!), creating opportunities for more free time, and ensuring all students got a ride home every day. Her slogan was "Eat, Play, Drive." Abdifatah, on the other hand, ran a campaign focused on field trips and fun holiday activities - all of which he planned to finance through fundraisers. His slogan was "Have control, but with a leader." Abdifatah and Dao Chhei's supporters helped them create entertaining commercials, billboards that covered our hallways, speeches that they delivered to the masses, and social media

Meet Abdifatah, the  
newly elected Inspire  
Student Advisor!



Continued on next page...



**INSPIRE**  
a shalom afterschool initiative

## [Elections 2016 continued...](#)

campaigns to update others on their work. And of course no election is complete without a debate.

One clear difference between our election campaign and the one you probably watched (or perhaps avoided) on television this year? Neither one of our candidates spoke poorly of the other. They challenged each other, asked questions of each other, and pushed their own platforms; but they never attacked or demeaned the other candidate. It was refreshing to see mutual respect, coming from middle schoolers no less, in the midst of the combative debates and hateful rhetoric we were seeing on TV.

Despite their many differences, Inspire students came together in their election process and afterwards in support of their newly elected leader. Although they are from eleven different countries and have a vast array of ideas about the change they want to see both in the world and at Inspire, the Student Advisor election process *brought them together*. In fact, our attendance shot through the roof the weeks of the elections!

In contrast to one of the most divisive presidential elections in U.S. history, the Inspire Student Advisor elections unified our students. This is possible because Inspire is a place where we work hard to foster togetherness, to celebrate diversity, and to give a voice to students who don't often have a voice. When students were asked recently whether they feel like they belong at Inspire, 79% unequivocally said that they did, in contrast to only 19% who said they feel like they belong at their public middle school. In the same survey, 92% of students said that coming to Inspire helps them to make friends with people who are different than them. When students feel like they belong -- and when they develop *friendships* with students who speak different languages, have different ideas, and come from different cultures -- *this* is what breeds unity.

So what do these refugee students think about Donald Trump as our President-Elect? It turns out Inspire is a microcosm of society -- there is a vast diversity of responses to the elections. Some students are glad; others are terrified; some simply don't really care at all. On one side of the spectrum, a religiously conservative student from Burma is happy that a Republican is president; on the other side, a South Sudanese student expressed fear that she would be sent back to her war-torn homeland.

Students have a variety of responses to Donald Trump as U.S. President-Elect. However, Inspire students know, regardless of who is President of the United States and what his refugee policy might be, that when they walk through our doors they will be welcomed with open arms, their diversity will be celebrated, and that they belong. Thanks to our volunteers and supporters, we're able to offer our students this space of belonging, and together bring hope to our corner of the world.



*Above: Grace, with her voter registration list in hand, is ready for election day!*



Search "[Inspire Shalom Inspire Elections for Student Advisor](#)" to view our newscast about our elections. (Or click the hyperlink if viewing the PDF version.)

*Left: Candidates face off during the debates.*

# We're excited to have introduced many new program elements this school year.



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1) Ngo tells her family about her typical day at Inspire during our first annual **Open House** in October. Inviting families into our space helps them better understand their kids' education and lives. 2) Students bake naan with Ms. Noor to share with others (who cooked their own dishes) during our first annual **Thanksgiving Feast**. 3) Eight Inspire students received scholarships from the Audobon Society to participate in the **Atlanta Urban Ecologists Program**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month, students discover the fascinating, rich ecology of Metropolitan Atlanta through opportunities for hands-on field experiences, conservation, and citizen science. 4, 5, 6) We've introduced 3 new enrichment activities this year: **Fiber Arts** (led by Ms. Noor, a Master Weaver); **Comics** (led by Mr. Van Jensen, whose work you may know from The Flash comic series!), and **Outdoors** (led by Ms. Noor, B.A. in Outdoor and Experiential Education). Students are experiencing a rich array of new things this year!

This holiday season, as you contribute to the organizations that matter most to you,

## please consider a tax-deductible donation to the students of Inspire.

- \$1,600 sponsors one student's holistic development at Inspire for the entire year.
- \$250 nourishes all 26 students with healthy, substantive snacks for one month.
- \$75 provides one student with supplies for academic and enrichment activities for the year.

## How to Donate

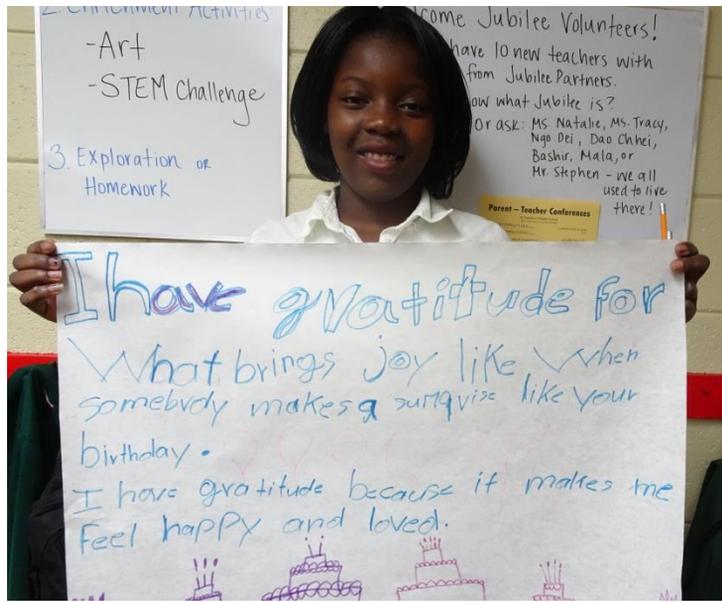
**ONLINE:** [www.rally.org/shalominspire](http://www.rally.org/shalominspire)

**CHECK** (our preferred method): Make checks out to "New Church Development Commission" and write "Inspire" in the memo line.

Mail checks to:

New Church Development Commission  
1024 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30306

**SUPPLIES:** Check out our [amazonwishlist](#) to donate specific items we need by searching "[Inspire: A Shalom Afterschool Initiative.](#)"



To Volunteer, Email:  
[inspireshalom@gmail.com](mailto:inspireshalom@gmail.com)

To See Photos, Visit:  
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[www.shalominternationalministry.com/inspire-spotlight-newsletter](http://www.shalominternationalministry.com/inspire-spotlight-newsletter)

## A Note from Ms. Natalie

This summer there was a frenzy of activity in our back hallway at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Supporters near and far answered our request in our May Newsletter to help us furnish a new room for this school year. Church partners donated unused tables; white boards purchased by friends from afar were delivered to our door; neighbors dropped off boxes full of supplies. As you can see in the pictures on the left, our new and updated rooms are *an incredible gift* to the program and to our students. **Thank you** for helping to make it happen!

With deep gratitude,  
*Natalie J. Schucker*

Natalie Schucker  
Program Coordinator



Above: our new Homework Room  
Below: our new Exploration Room