

## Handout 1.1

### ***What is ASPIRA?***

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is the only national nonprofit organization devoted to the education and leadership development of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth. ASPIRA takes its name from the Spanish verb *aspirar*, "aspire."

Since 1961 ASPIRA has pursued its mission of empowering the Latino community through the development of its youth. All of ASPIRA's goals and activities spring from one basic belief: Puerto Ricans and Latinos have the collective potential to move their community forward.

ASPIRA looks at Latino youth and sees this potential: leaders waiting to emerge. With community-based offices in large cities of six states and Puerto Rico, ASPIRA's 1,000 staff members work with over 50,000 youth and their families each year to develop that potential. These are our "***Aspirantes***"---those youth who will become educated, committed leaders for the community's future benefit.

Since its founding, ASPIRA has provided a quarter of a million youth with the personal resources they need to remain in school and contribute to their community. Most mainland Puerto Rican leaders today were encouraged by ASPIRA during their adolescence.

### ***ASPIRA's Mission***

To empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth.

### ***ASPIRA's Goals***

To ensure the success of that mission, ASPIRA's goals focus on developing the education and leadership potential of Hispanic youth by encouraging them to be aware of the socioeconomic conditions, needs, and potential of their community; by fostering a commitment to use their skills to further the development of their community; by promoting community-based research and advocacy; and by supporting the Puerto Rican culture and preserving the native Spanish language.