

Aurora  
Public  
Schools

**ACTION ZONE 1  
DESIGN PLAN**

In January 2015, the Aurora Public Schools Board of Education adopted a new strategic plan titled *APS 2020 Shaping the Future*. *Shaping the Future* envisions a district where *Every Child Shapes a Successful Future*.

In furtherance of *Shaping the Future*, APS leaders have proposed that APS create up to three areas of innovation zones, called Aurora Community-based Transformation, Innovation and Opportunity Network, or A.C.T.I.O.N. Zones, across the district. This document serves as the design plan for ACTION Zone 1.

#### Proposed Design Theme

Because the APS community values the diversity and unique abilities of students, APS must provide adaptable and responsible foundations for learning. As a result, APS proposes that ACTION Zone 1 be designed to improve outcomes for the entire student body. To do this, this zone would provide specific support to leverage the assets of the growing refugee and immigrant community. Refugee and immigrant students and families have unique strengths and priorities in APS. They also help APS expand strategies for providing all students with the opportunity for acquiring career and college readiness skills, developing language skills and enhancing cultural understandings.

In schools where APS has significant concentrations of refugee and immigrant students, APS has unique opportunities to partner with private, philanthropic and community organizations. These partnerships would enhance professional development, cross-disciplinary training for socio-emotional needs, cooperation and engagement with families and targeted work related to culturally responsive teaching methods. By having a core staff within a community of schools develop these specialized and valuable skills, APS could increase academic achievement for entire school and zone populations. The schools could also showcase the international experiences of families and communities. APS has the ability to utilize an environment that would be the envy of most prestigious universities.

#### Proposed Schools

At present, APS has five schools that have a significant concentration of refugee students (“significant”= greater than 10%) and a significant immigrant student population: Aurora Central High School, Aurora West College Preparatory Academy, Boston K-8, Crawford Elementary School and Sable Elementary School. All or some subset of these five schools should be considered for ACTION ZONE 1.

#### Aurora Central High School Profile

Aurora Central is a comprehensive four-year high school. Aurora Central is home to the successful “Aurora Lights” program, which leverages its’ proximity to the Anschutz Medical Campus to provide students with an opportunity to explore careers in the Biomedical Health Sciences fields.

Aurora Central has been identified on the state accountability clock and by the APS Board of Education as a school that must undergo restructuring to improve achievement.

- ✓ Aurora Central has 2,188 students in grades 9-12.
- ✓ Aurora Central has 189 staff members.
- ✓ Aurora Central’s student population is 0.8% Native American, 8.1% Asian, 16.5% Black, 66.8% Hispanic, 5.2% White, 0.4% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 2.3% two or more races.

- ✓ Aurora Central students are: 43.2% English Language Learners, 4.3% Gifted/Talented, 14.6% SPED, 75.9% Free or Reduced Lunch.
- ✓ 10.33% of Aurora West's student population is composed of students from refugee families.

### Aurora West College Preparatory Academy Profile

Aurora West is a 6-12 College Preparatory Academy and is organized into three distinct phases:

**The Foundation Years- Grades 6 and 7:** Students develop the skills they will need to succeed in high school and a four-year institution of higher learning. During the Foundation Years, students mature both intellectually and personally. They are immersed in a learning community that is grounded in academic rigor, the joy of learning and the value of each individual student.

**The Pre-Collegiate Years- Grades 8 and 9:** Eighth-grade students can begin to take courses for high school credit and ninth graders can elect to take Honors and Advanced Placement courses that further develop their capacity for success in college and in life.

**The Collegiate Years- Grades 10-12:** Students in grades 10 through 12 are empowered to learn the content knowledge, skills and habits of mind required to become college-educated men and women in a changing world. Beginning in tenth grade, qualified students may begin taking classes from the Community College of Aurora and earning college credit for their coursework. Students have the opportunity to graduate from Aurora West with concurrent degrees: a high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from the Community College of Aurora.

- ✓ Aurora West has 1,290 students in grades 6-12.
- ✓ Aurora West has 111 staff members.
- ✓ Aurora West's student population is 0.5% Native American, 11.6% Asian, 8.9% Black, 72.3% Hispanic, 5.1% White, 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 1.5% two or more races.
- ✓ Aurora West students are: 47.9% English Language Learners, 4.8% Gifted/Talented, 10.1% SPED, 86.1% Free or Reduced Lunch.
- ✓ 12.9% of Aurora West's student population is composed of students from refugee families.

### Boston K-8 Profile

Boston is a K-8 school that is situated in "original Aurora" and is considered a neighborhood school, drawing more than 90% of its students from the surrounding neighborhoods. The school serves a large immigrant and refugee population, and while the school's rich cultural diversity makes it unique, it also presents challenges. Boston has been identified as a priority improvement school entering year 4 on July 1, 2015, and a Title I focus school.

- ✓ Boston has 465 students in grades K-8.
- ✓ Boston has 57 staff members.
- ✓ Boston's student population is 0.5% Native American, 16.9% Asian, 14.0% Black, 62.8% Hispanic, 3.8% White, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 1.8% two or more races.
- ✓ Boston students are: 66.2% English Language Learners, 0.7% Gifted/Talented, 7.7% SPED, 87.6% Free or Reduced Lunch.

- ✓ 18.88% of Boston's student population is composed of students from refugee families.

### Crawford Elementary Profile

Crawford is an elementary school that is situated in "original Aurora" and is home to a very large immigrant and refugee student population. Crawford is one of the few schools in APS to have a site-based health clinic to support students and their families. The school is also home to several community-based organizations that offer after-school enrichment opportunities such as tutoring, outdoor education, fitness and English classes for parents.

- ✓ Crawford has 734 students in grades P-5. Crawford is a preschool site.
- ✓ Crawford has 72 staff members.
- ✓ Crawford's student population is 1.4% Native American, 21.3% Asian, 13.4% Black, 59.2% Hispanic, 3.4% White, 0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 1.4% two or more races.
- ✓ Crawford students are: 73.4% English Language Learners, 1.5% Gifted/Talented, 8.2% SPED, 89.4% Free or Reduced Lunch.
- ✓ 24.11% of Crawford's student population is composed of students from refugee families.

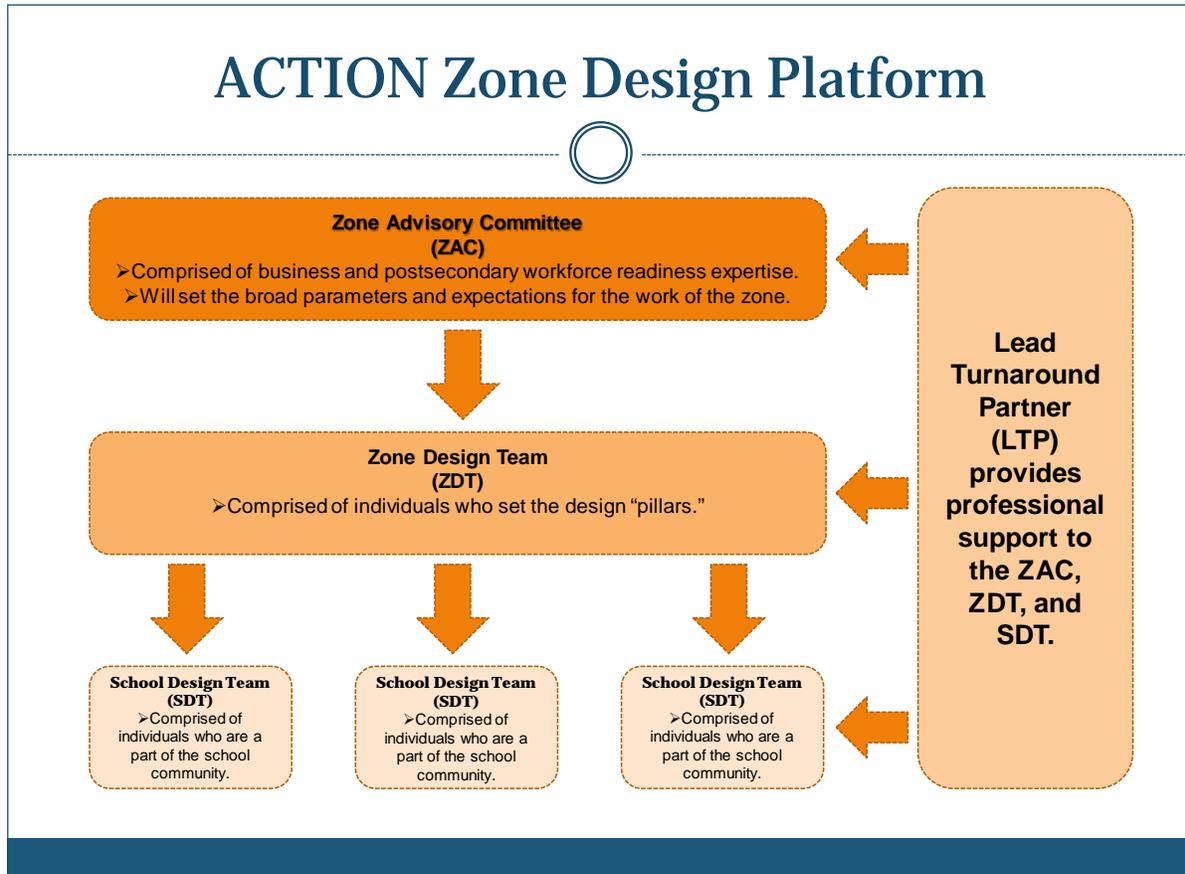
### Sable Elementary Profile

Sable is an elementary school that is situated in "original Aurora" and is home to a large immigrant and refugee student population. Sable is a school that has several community-based organizations that offer enrichment opportunities for parents and students.

- ✓ Sable has 537 students in grades P-5. Sable is a preschool site.
- ✓ Sable has 68 staff members.
- ✓ Sable's student population is 1.0% Native American, 6.7% Asian, 18.8% Black, 60.2% Hispanic, 8.0% White, 2.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 3.3% two or more races.
- ✓ Sable students are: 64.5% English Language Learners, 0.8% Gifted/Talented, 12.7% SPED, 84.5% Free or Reduced Lunch.
- ✓ 11.17% of Sable's student population is composed of students from refugee families.

## Design Process

In order to engage broad buy-in and to access innovative strategies, the design process will draw upon school, community, district and private resources. Roles and responsibilities will be as follows:



### Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP)

APS will engage an outside entity to bring expertise and capacity to the design process. The LTP will be responsible for the day-to-day logistics of coordinating the design work and will be expected to support the work of the design partners.

The LTP will be expected to bring national expertise that can complement the local context for Zone 1.

## ACTION Zone Design Platform



- **Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP)**
  - Engaged in Summer 2015 and their work will be ongoing.
    - × **Group outcomes:**
      - The LTP will be responsible for the day-to-day logistics of coordinating the design work and will be expected to support the work of the design teams.
      - The LTP will be expected to bring national expertise that can complement the local context for Zone 1.

### Zone Advisory Committee (ZAC)

The ZAC will be comprised of people and/or organizations that bring business and postsecondary workforce expertise. It is expected that members of the ZAC will have clear connections to the Zone 1 community.

The ZAC will be responsible for making the innovation zone proposal to the APS Board of Education. The ZAC will act as strategic advisors and will set the visionary framework for Zone 1 and the postsecondary workforce outcomes that will serve as benchmarks for the zone design.

## ACTION Zone Design Platform



- **Zone Advisory Committee (ZAC)**
  - This group will convene in Summer 2015 and will meet 4-6 times.
    - × **Group outcomes:**
      - Set the vision of the innovation zone work by making sure the goals and priorities of APS 2020 Strategic Plan: Shaping the Future are at the center of the design platform.
      - Design the philosophical framework for the Zone.
      - Engage the broader Aurora community around leveraging resources that work towards improving educational outcomes for the Zone.

### Zone Design Team (ZDT)

The Zone Design Team will be comprised of building and community stakeholders. The ZDT may also bring in outside people or organizations with relevant expertise and will also work with the LTP as described above.

The ZDT is expected to set the “design pillars” for Zone 1. The design pillars should address the major components of the zone and the common features that all schools in the ACTION Zone would share. At a minimum, the ZDT should address the four major innovation areas of people, time, programs and money.

## ACTION Zone Design Platform

- **Zone Design Team (ZDT)**
  - This group will convene in August and will include representation from each building as well as community representation.
    - × **Group outcomes:**
      - Set the “design pillars” of the ACTION Zone.
      - Propose a variety of models and options for collaboration among Zone schools.

### School Design Teams (SDT)

The SDT will be composed of building stakeholders, including parents, and at the high school level, students. The SDT will design the school-level plans that are responsive to the parameters set by the ZAC and ZDT.

## ACTION Zone Design Platform



- **School Design Team (SDT)**
  - This group will convene in August and will include internal stakeholders of the school community.
    - × Group outcomes:
      - Facilitate the “design pillars” of the school community.
- Recommendations of the SDT and ZDT will be presented to and evaluated by the ZAC.

## Innovations

The design partners are expected to be bold. Collectively, they should consider what structures, programs, governance models, etc. will best serve the Zone 1 community. To the extent that a waiver from state law or district policy will facilitate that outcome, it should be specifically identified in the design plan.

According to guidance from the Colorado Department of Education:

*Developing the innovation plan requires schools to identify (1) “innovations,” or new approaches that are intended to increase the school’s ability to achieve its mission, and (2) the specific waivers from district policy, collective bargaining agreement provisions, and/or state laws and regulations that are required to give the school the ability to implement the innovations.*

The major areas of innovation are expected to fall within four categories: people, time, programs and money.

Possible areas of innovations may include, but are not limited to the following:

- School staffing, which may include changes in teacher-student ratios and leadership structure, the addition of site-based special service providers, or the ability to use online providers;
- Curriculum, instruction and assessment, which could include the use of a site-based curriculum or the use of formative and interim assessments that differ from those used by the district;
- Class scheduling, which could include the use of block schedules, extended school days, or extended school years;
- Accountability measures, including expanding the use of a variety of accountability measures, such as graduation or exit examinations, student portfolio reviews, competency-based pathways, or student and parent accountability contracts;
- Provision of services, including special education services, services for gifted and talented students, services for students for whom English is not the dominant language, educational services for students at risk of academic failure, expulsion or dropping out, and support services provided by the Department of Human Services or county social services agencies;
- Use of financial and other resources, which could include providing more site-based control over resources or allowing for purchasing of staff according to “real” cost rather than average cost and/or using private vendors for certain services in lieu of receiving them from the district;
- Faculty recruitment, preparation and professional development, evaluation, and compensation, which could include the ability to conduct one’s own recruitment and hiring processes, design of professional development, use of peer-based evaluation, or implementation of a site-based pay incentive program;
- School governance and the roles, responsibilities and expectations of principals in innovation schools or zones; and
- Preparation and counseling of students for transition to higher education or the workforce. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Guidance for implementation of the Innovation Schools Act” August 2013, ver. 1.3.

Innovation schools commonly request waivers from state law provisions, which are automatically waived for charter schools:

<b>Statutes Automatically Waived for Colorado Charter Schools</b>	<b>Scope of Statutes/Waivers</b>
Section 22-9-106, C.R.S.	Section outlines local school board duties concerning performance evaluations for licensed personnel. Waivers from this statute allow charter schools to use their own method for evaluation of licensed personnel.
Section 22-32-109(1)(f), C.R.S.	Section outlines local school board duties concerning selection of personnel and pay. Waivers from this statute allow charter schools to select their own personnel and determine payment.
Section 32-110(1)(h), C.R.S.	Section outlines local school board powers concerning termination of school personnel. Waivers from this statute allow charter schools to terminate personnel according to their own policies.
Section 22-32-126, C.R.S.	Section outlines employment requirements for principals and authority of principals. Waivers from this statute allow charter school's governing body to determine employment requirements for principals and responsibilities of principals.
Sections 22-63-201 through 203, 22-63-206, 22-63-301 through 302, and 22-63-401 through 403, C.R.S.	These sections from the Teacher Employment, Compensation, and Dismissal Act may be waived to allow charter schools to hire unlicensed teachers, to operate free from teacher employment contracts, to employ teachers as at-will employees, and to determine compensation for teachers.

The design partners should consider how each waiver is necessary for effective plan implementation.

#### Timeline

<b>June 2015</b>	<i>LTP engaged ZAC formed and begins meeting</i>
<b>July</b>	<i>ZAC and LTP set design parameters</i>
<b>August</b>	<i>ZDT and SDT formed ZDT set design pillars</i>
<b>September – November</b>	<i>SDT do design work ZAC and ZDT meet to refine work</i>
<b>November – January 2016</b>	<i>Plan finalized Plan presented to stakeholders for approval</i>
<b>February</b>	<i>Plan presented to APS Board of Education</i>
<b>April</b>	<i>Plan presented to the State Board of Education</i>
<b>June 2016</b>	<i>Begin plan implementation</i>