Aurora Public Schools

"APS CORE"

COMMUNITIES ORGANIZED TO REACH EXCELLENCE

APS TURNAROUND STRATEGY FOR CHALLENGED SCHOOLS

Call to Action

- In the 2013-14 School Year, the APS Board of Education directed Supt. Munn to develop and implement a strategy to address the growing number of schools identified on the state accountability clock. In addition, the district itself was identified on the clock.

- The administration began to identify areas of culture and capacity that needed realignment to the task of school turnaround.

    - "We must meet our students and community where they are and move forward together. Success requires us to adapt our tactics to reach every kid, every day." July 2013 memo to BOE

- The administration also implemented key components of a cohesive turnaround strategy.

Cultural Shifts

- New Chief Academic Officer.
- New P-20 leaders who oversee principals.
- New P-20 support teams for schools.
- Reallocation of $6.9 million to our new P-20 alignment.
- Transfer of more than $3 million from administrative budget into school budgets.
- New systemic decision-making process.
- New differentiated support structure to address organizational risks at each school.

Cultural Shifts

- Uniform job descriptions.
- New equity work to enhance culturally responsive teaching practices.
- New project management processes to ensure full implementation of the UIP, TIG/SIS Initiatives and Strategic Plan.
- New Principal and Assistant Principal selection program.
- New Strategic Plan – APS 2020: Shaping the Future.

Capacity Needs

- Building District Capacity
  - In order to implement a comprehensive school turnaround strategy, the district also began to build its capacity in the following areas:
    - Turnaround Leaders
    - Budget Flexibility
    - Staff recruitment, retention, and non-retention
    - Charter Authorizing
    - Innovation Experience
    - Physical Space
    - Philanthropic Relationships
    - Community Engagement
    - Turnaround Management

Capacity Needs

- Building District Capacity
  - In a short time we have taken significant steps to build capacity in most of these key areas:
    - Turnaround Leadership
      - Entered UVA Turnaround Leaders program – March 2015
      - Began Relay Leadership program – April 2015
    - Budget Flexibility
      - Implemented DSS framework – December 2013
      - Accelerated TE and budget allocation process – February 2015
    - Staff recruitment, retention, and non-retention
      - Implemented Principal and AP selection pool – January 2015
      - Paris retention program – January 2015
      - Proposed Hard to Staff schools – January 2015
    - Charter Authorizing
      - Signed MOU with CSI – June 2013
      - Changes to authorizing policy – August 2014
      - Creation of spring charter cycle – December 2014
    - Innovation Experience
      - Proposed ACTION Zones - March 2015

Capacity Needs

- Building District Capacity
  - Physical Space
  - Philanthropic Relationships
  - Community Engagement
  - Turnaround Management
    - District-level readiness analysis – December 2014
- **District leadership has recommended a turnaround and capacity building strategy by developing a series of innovation zones (Action Zones) across the district.**

The Work Comes Together

- These changes to culture and capacity have allowed APS to implement a turnaround strategy grounded in key principles:
  - Research-based.
  - Responsive to identified needs.
  - Rapid response.
  - Accountability.

Theory of Action

- Build the culture and capacity and provide the on-going supports to maintain schools at a strong performance level.

But, if schools do struggle...

- When we connect leaders, teachers and learners to strong communities of practice, those leaders, teachers and learners can identify and build upon assets to rapidly improve the school community.

APS C.O.R.E.

- APS identifies this systemic body of work as the Communities Organized to Reach Excellence or "C.O.R.E." program.

- C.O.R.E. schools are schools that are identified on the state accountability clock under SB-163.

- C.O.R.E. schools are identified to receive designated interventions, resources and other types of initiatives designed to address their specific challenges.

- Each intervention, resource, and initiative is meant to connect the leaders, teachers and learners with a community of practice in targeted areas.

- This approach aligns with the Core Beliefs set forth in "Shaping the Future".

Communities of Practice

- "Communities of practice" can be defined as a construct where people or organizations collaborate to share ideas, problem solve and innovate. (Wenger 1998)

- Communities of practice can exist in a literal sense or through creating community by connecting shared experiences, challenges or opportunities.

- Communities of practice require a culture of inquiry, evidence and innovation.

Communities of Practice

- While the names vary, several school districts have seen turnaround success utilizing communities of practice strategies:
  - Santa Fe Public Schools- created a series of Innovation, Acceleration and Transformation Zones to implement a community of practice model.
    - In initial year of implementation, increased overall reading proficiency (30.8% to 33.1%) and math proficiency (18.6% to 19.7%) within designated, chronically under-performing schools on the state assessment (Transformation Zone, 2012 to 2013)
  - Clark County Schools- created a Turnaround Zone to implement a system of connected supports and strategies.
    - Projected graduation rate increase of 20% across six HS turnaround zone schools.

Communities of Practice

○ Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools- implemented a public/private partnership known as Project L.I.F.T. designed to bring resources to its highest poverty schools.

  ✗ Early implementation studies show increase in climate, community engagement and academic indicators.

C.O.R.E. Timeline

- C.O.R.E. schools have a clear and predictable timeline for designation and implementation of strategies
- Goal:
  - To rapidly move out of designation and sustain improvement
  - To have conditions in place for Turnaround implementation or the successful engagement of a coherent school improvement strategy.
- Expectations:
  - Implementation of a Turnaround Strategy should yield identified results within two years.
  - Implementation of a School Improvement Strategy should yield identified results in one year.
- Designation identified via SPF. Designation removed upon demonstration of sustainability.

C.O.R.E. Timeline

- Year 1
  - Identified on the DSS for Targeted or Intensive supports
  - Engage educational audit
  - Develop school improvement plan with embedded performance targets
  - Consider staffing changes
  - Consider for turnaround leadership program
- Year 2
  - Identified on the DSS for Targeted or Intensive supports
  - Engage educational audit
  - Develop school improvement plan
  - Consider staffing changes
  - Implement Turnaround Leadership Team
- Year 3
  - Recommendation made for school improvement or turnaround strategy
- Year 4
  - School Improvement-monitor benchmarks
  - Turnaround-planning and design year
- Year 5
  - School Improvement-recommendation for turnaround strategy
  - Turnaround- restart

Examples

- **Arkansas E.S. -**
  - 13-14 – Turnaround SPF Yr 4
    - Implemented DSS supports
    - Made staffing changes
    - Engaged school audit
    - Revised school improvement plan
  - 14-15 – Improvement SPF

- **Crawford E.S.-**
  - 13-14 – Priority Improvement SPF Yr 3
    - Implemented DSS supports
    - Leadership change
    - Engaged school audit
    - Revised school improvement plan
  - 14-15 – Improvement SPF

Examples

- Iowa E.S.-
  - 13-14 – Priority Improvement SPF Yr 1
    - Implemented DSS supports
    - Increased leadership support
    - Engage educational audit
  - 14-15 – Performance SPF

- **Of eight schools identified on clock in 13-14, three were removed and four others demonstrated significant gains.**

Ongoing work

- In 2014-15, 13 new schools were identified by the accountability clock. All schools have been engaged in Year 1 activities on the C.O.R.E. Timeline. timeline.

- Year 2 schools have engaged in Year 2 C.O.R.E. Timeline strategies. One Year 2 school is being considered for a turnaround strategy.

- Year 3 school has implemented a school improvement strategy.

- Year 4 and 5 schools have been recommended for school turnaround.