



## Pilot Schools Fact Sheet

Pilot Schools are innovative K-12 public schools that are given the autonomy to create a culture that supports high expectations and achievement. While still a part of APS, Pilot Schools have increased control over budget, design of instruction, daily and yearly schedules and calendars, and staffing decisions. Pilot Schools will receive the same per pupil allocation as all Aurora Public Schools, but their greater autonomy will allow the schools to be flexible in making decisions that best meet the needs of students and their families.

- Each pilot school will have a unifying vision with a clear mission and will hold themselves accountable for success.
- Pilot Schools' demographics will be expected to reflect their neighborhoods and will reflect the district's demographics.
- Teachers and staff retain the same salary and benefits and seniority rights as any teacher in APS. Staff members will get to choose to work in a Pilot School.
- Boston Public Schools opened the first Pilot School in 1995 as a way to increase student achievement by testing out and researching new educational innovations. Los Angeles Unified School District has recently opened Pilot Schools as well.
- In October 2007, both the Aurora Education Association and the Aurora Public Schools Board of Education approved the plan to create a Pilot School program in APS.
- William Smith High School became a Pilot School in August 2008 (conversion school). Fletcher Primary and Fletcher Intermediate School for Science and Technology were approved in November 2008 (conversion to two separate schools within the same facility). Horizon Uptown School was approved in 2010 (scheduled to open in 2012).
- All Pilot Schools share four essential features, or **SAGE**:
  - **S**mall Size – Pilot Schools can be no larger than 500 students to ensure low student-to-classroom teacher ratios that take into account the actual teacher load. Larger schools will need to create separate schools within an existing facility. Each school will have its own staff and budget with a different programmatic focus.
  - **A**ccountability - In exchange for increased autonomy, Pilot Schools will be held to higher levels of accountability. Pilot Schools will be expected to demonstrate significant increases in student achievement within three years. For example, student performance on state tests such as CSAP and ACT must exceed the district averages.
  - **G**overning Autonomy - Pilot Schools have maximum control over these areas so they can create innovative education programs. Although they must follow state and federal laws, Pilot Schools will have the ability to be flexible about how staff is employed and the daily and yearly calendar and schedule for students and staff.

- **Equity** - Neighborhood Pilot Schools will reflect the demographics of the neighborhoods they serve. District-wide Pilot Schools will enroll students who are representative of the district as a whole. Pilot Schools will not be able to screen students based on student achievement.
- APS supports three types of Pilot Schools:
  - *Conversion schools:* These are existing APS school that choose to become Pilot Schools. These schools must be no larger than 500 students and must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of currently licensed staff members at the school.
  - *New, start-up schools:* New schools developed through the pilot process will receive the same allocation for furniture, computers and supplies as any new school within the district.
  - *Conversion of a separate school within the same facility:* If a large school has a significant number of staff members interested in becoming a Pilot School, they can convert part of an existing facility to a Pilot School. This allows existing schools that do not fit within the small size guidelines of 500 students to create a Pilot School at the site as long as they have the support of two-thirds of licensed staff. This will create another school within the same facility. Each school will have its own faculty and budget with different programmatic focus.
- A Joint Steering Committee oversees and supports Pilot Schools. The committee is composed of the Aurora Education Association president, an AEA designee, the superintendent (or designee), a district-level representative from the Division of Instruction, three teachers selected by AEA, three administrators selected by School Executives of Aurora and one classified representative selected by the Classified Employee Council.
- Each Pilot School will have a Governing Board that will hire and evaluate the principal (with final approval by the superintendent) and approve the annual budget. Using a shared decision making model and guided by the school's vision and mission, the Governing Board makes decisions relating to class size, schedule, length of school day and school year and the amount and type of professional development for teachers at the school.