ENROLLMENT AND CAPACITY PLANNING PROCESS

Q. What is the status of enrollment and capacity in Aurora Public Schools?
A. Due to enrollment growth over the last seven years, Aurora Public Schools is experiencing capacity challenges at several schools throughout the district. Approximately three-quarters of all APS schools are at 90 percent of standard capacity, and nearly one-third of schools are at or above 90 percent of total capacity (including mobile classrooms on site). District staff has engaged the APS Board of Education and stakeholders for more than two years on a variety of options and solutions to address this challenge.

Q. What options has APS considered to address projected enrollment and capacity challenges?
A. APS has strategies in place to meet capacity and academic program needs through the 2016-17 school year. To address enrollment and capacity challenges for future years, APS has engaged stakeholders to learn their views on the following options:
2. Close some school-based preschools and evaluate expanding preschool opportunities at APS Child Development Centers.
3. Convert kindergarten from full-day to half-day sessions at some schools.
4. Consider operating overcrowded high schools with alternative schedules or split sessions.
5. Maximize existing space by moving electives such as technology, art and music to carts or offer as after-school options.
6. Increase average class size and add paraeducator support as needed.
7. Adjust the district budget to use General Fund dollars to purchase mobiles, make minor space modifications and fund the most critical maintenance repairs.
8. Authorize additional Certificates of Participation (COP) to fund new school construction, building additions and/or mobile classrooms.
9. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, implement a year-round calendar to add 25% capacity at overcrowded schools.

Q. What opportunities did stakeholders have to provide feedback on the enrollment and capacity options?
A. Beginning in spring 2015, APS held a series of open houses and meetings to collect community feedback on the nine options to address school overcrowding and academic program needs. As part of the process, APS collected feedback via open
house and online surveys from nearly 1,100 stakeholders. In addition, we have continued our community outreach and encouraged stakeholders to share their views with the APS Board of Education.

Q. What recommendations regarding enrollment and capacity did the APS Leadership Team present to the Board of Education?
A. The APS Support Services team presented enrollment and capacity information and recommendations to the Board at its Oct. 6 and Oct. 20 meetings. In addition to continuing to address capacity through existing budget resources, APS asked the board to provide direction on which recommendations should be implemented.

Q. What direction did the Board provide regarding the enrollment and capacity recommendations?
A. The Board directed staff to begin a planning process to address projected enrollment growth and academic program needs beyond the 2016-17 school year. In determining next steps, the Board considered feedback from nearly 1,600 parents, students, staff and community members gathered from April through September 2015. The recommendations include:

- Continue community engagement efforts with all stakeholders.
- Continue to address the most critical facility and enrollment capacity needs from the Support Services Capital Projects budget.
- Deploy additional mobile classrooms at overcrowded schools as needed.
- Direct the Long Range Facilities Advisory Committee (LRFAC) to present the five-year Facility and Technology Needs Report to the Board of Education by May 2016.
- Direct staff to explore the feasibility of placing a bond question on the November 2016 ballot to fund building improvements and new school construction. Provide staff direction regarding a bond question by August 2016.
- Direct staff to develop a process to potentially transition the following schools to a four-track year-round calendar beginning in July 2017: Aurora Frontier P-8, Aurora Quest K-8, Clyde Miller P-8, Edna and John W. Mosley P-8, Murphy Creek P-8 and Vista PEAK Exploratory P-8. Provide a progress report to the Board by June 2016.
- Direct staff to develop a process to potentially transition overcrowded high schools to alternative schedules or split sessions beginning in August 2017 or August 2018. Provide a progress report to the Board by June 2016.
As one of the next steps in the planning process, district staff will be convening a Calendar Committee in January 2016 to develop 2017-18 conventional and four-track year-round calendar options and evaluate the logistical aspects of implementing a year-round calendar.

YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR POSSIBILITY

Q. Why was a year-round calendar included in the recommendations to the APS Board of Education?
A. If the Board does not authorize a bond, or if a bond is not approved in November 2016, it is critical for APS to develop alternative options to accommodate future enrollment growth and academic program needs, including the possibility of transitioning overcrowded schools to a year-round (four-track) calendar. APS does not currently have a year-round calendar developed, nor do we have a process to transition schools from a traditional to a year-round calendar.

Q. Which schools are potential candidates for a year-round calendar?
A. APS may potentially transition the following schools to a four-track year-round calendar beginning in July 2017: Aurora Frontier P-8, Aurora Quest K-8, Clyde Miller P-8, Edna and John W. Mosley P-8, Murphy Creek P-8 and Vista PEAK Exploratory P-8.

Q. What was the rationale for selecting the six schools included in the recommendations as possible candidates for the calendar?
A. The rationale for considering a year-round (four-track) calendar for these schools is that the majority are already at 90 percent capacity or above and are located in the highest growth area in our district. A majority of these schools already have mobile classrooms on site. The reason for including Aurora Quest K-8 is to provide more opportunities for students in the Gifted and Talented program.

Q. How does a year-round (four-track) calendar differ from the traditional calendar currently used in APS?
A. Four-track year-round school is a strategy to expand capacity at crowded schools by using school buildings throughout the year. Students and teachers are divided into four groups or “tracks”. Each track is on a separate schedule with three of the four tracks in school at the same time. Students and teachers have four short breaks throughout the year instead of one long summer break.
Q. What are the benefits of a year-round calendar?
A. The main benefit of a year-round calendar is that it adds building space at overcrowded schools. Research shows that a year-round calendar can also reduce learning loss for some students due to shorter breaks between class sessions.

Q. What is the timeline and process for possible implementation of the calendar?
A. APS will form a planning committee in January 2016 to develop 2017-18 conventional and four-track year-round calendar options and evaluate the logistical aspects of implementing a year-round calendar. The committee will include parent and staff representatives from schools that have been identified as candidates for the year-round calendar. The committee will report back to the Board of Education in spring 2016. We will continue to keep all stakeholders updated and involved as we move forward with this process.