

NORTHSIDE ACHIEVEMENT ZONE OPPORTUNITIES... GUARANTEED!



The Mission

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) collaborative of schools, organizations, and institutions seeks to align resources and opportunities in a targeted geographic area of North Minneapolis in order to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all children and youth (0-18) and promote educational achievement and life success.

The Inspiration

Inspired by the success of the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City, community organizations began gathering in late 2007 in Minneapolis to form a collaborative effort that would guarantee opportunities, support, and education for all children growing up in a designated zone on the Northside most impacted by crime, violence, and poverty. NAZ aims to translate and apply to the Northside the key components and the promise of the Harlem Children's Zone.



The Need and the Response

As a whole, Minnesota has one of the greatest achievement gaps in the nation, as exemplified by these stark realities:

—Minnesota has the 2nd largest gap in the nation between African-American and white students on the 4th grade reading score.”

—Low-income students in Minnesota are becoming less likely to make it to college. In 1993, Minnesota ranked first in the percentage of low-income students enrolling in college, at 48 percent. However, the state fell to 11th in 2003-04, with just 33 percent participation. There is no place where the realities of the achievement gap hit harder than in North Minneapolis.

With North Minneapolis in its focus, the City of Minneapolis identified youth violence as a public health issue in 2008. Within their “Blue Print for Action to Prevent Youth Violence,” they identified North Minneapolis as a critical focus area with the worst indicators for disparities.

The City recognized that youth violence is a public health epidemic that requires a holistic, multi-faceted response. The Blueprint identifies a series of critical processes needed to counteract youth violence utilizing a preventative approach, much like the idea of inoculating against disease. The important components of this inoculation strategy include: connecting youth to trusted adults, early intervention, and unlearning a culture of violence. NAZ's broad, comprehensive, preventative approach mirrors these strategies.

Indicator	Inside the NAZ Boundaries 2008
Square Blocks	Approximately 255
Population	17,600
Households w/Children	5,464
Children	7,525
Children in Poverty	43% (2,851)
Overall Poverty	31%
Unemployment Rate	26%

The NAZ Geographic Zone

The Zone was based on a variety of indicators, assets, and needs on the Northside. Three main indicators served as criteria in drawing the Zone's boundaries: 1) presence of Hennepin County probation clients, 2) families receiving financial assistance through MFIP, and 3) police calls.



THE PLAN

NAZ is designed to harness the strength and capacity of organizations, and implement those services in partnership with families in the Zone. Local schools, mentoring programs, family support organizations, health services, and even holistic programs like art and worship organizations will all begin working in coordination with each other and families around a shared achievement plan for kids in the Zone. Where one program ends, another is there to pick up the process of supporting Northside kids from birth to college.

Together they will:

- Envision their schools, organizations, and institutions as vehicles to deliver opportunities to children, youth, and families
- Revolutionize the way schools, mentoring programs, and family support organizations relate to the community they are serving
- Coordinate with families around a shared achievement plan for kids in the NAZ
- Work in Coordination Teams to promote organizational networking, strategic coordination, and shared planning
- Work towards new level of transparency and accountability standards for organizations with a “NAZ-tested Seal of Approval”
- Help families successfully navigate through a NAZ Connect, an interactive opportunity network

—Take a geographic approach that will allow impact to be brought to scale.

—Take a family and child focused approach will re-align organizations to focus resources on success for kids and families in the Zone rather than focus on organizational outcomes.

Year One Goals include:

- Research and select a shared web-based network tool for use by families and organizations in the collaborative
- Develop a comprehensive asset map to coordinate resources and opportunities in the Zone
- Initiate 6 to 8 Coordination Teams based on organizational focus areas to begin creating strategic coordination, replication, etc
- Begin outreach as part of the communication and messaging plan, as well as input strategy
- Develop a communication plan including key messages and determine multi-tiered approach to message delivery
- Create a resource development plan to identify capacity needs of organizations in collaborative
- Identify an evaluation plan, driving principles and strategies around evaluation, and identify evaluation players
- Create shared consensus within collaboration for development of NAZ-tested seal of approval.

OUTREACH, & ENGAGEMENT

The long-term engagement goal will be to infuse meaningful, positive messaging to families in the Zone to break the cultural barriers to achievement. As members of the collaborative begin thinking of themselves as vehicles to deliver opportunities to kids, we will simultaneously craft and deliver to families a shared message that kids from the Northside CAN go to college and have the same opportunities for success as the rest of the region. Kids in the Zone will begin hearing this message from their pre-schools, will see it on posters and billboards, will have it brought door-to-door by their neighbors, and will hear it repeated through any program, school, or service provider throughout their lives on the Northside.

More Information

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