



COST-EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR EXTENDING LEARNING TIME AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY IN K-12 EDUCATION

 **GENERATION**
SCHOOLS NETWORK

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Executive Summary

Education reform efforts typically are stymied by flat budgets and institutional resistance. Reformers struggle with how to reduce student-teacher ratios, present more diverse and relevant curricula, and add learning time—all without requiring more funding and asking for more hours from teachers. In this zero-sum situation, the answer may lie in reinventing the entire K-12 experience—creating a new format, not just making changes to the existing one.

Generation Schools Network™ has done precisely that. The GSN Model is more than a theory. It has been substantially implemented in two urban turnaround schools—in Brooklyn, NY at Brooklyn Generation School (grades 9-12) and in Denver, CO at West Generation Academy (grades 6-12). Cost-effective extended learning time has been achieved and positive results are significant and documented.

The GSN Model has been largely tested within the bounds of existing resources while increasing learning opportunities through reduced class size, integrated curriculum, additional learning time, and a significant focus on college and career preparation.

For teachers, there is no increase in the number of hours worked; however, those hours are used differently and will arguably be more fulfilling. Teachers are still accountable for every student they are assigned, but receive much more support through professional development, coaching, student achievement monitoring, and daily collaborative planning time. All of these efforts are focused on ensuring that teachers can deliver their best instruction every day maximizing the GSN Model benefits.

This paper describes the cost-effective GSN Model along with the most significant lessons learned as GSN has worked with stakeholders in both cities to put this bold plan into place to benefit students, families, teachers, and districts.

Background

Education reformers have long recognized the value of extended learning time and expanded opportunities for students – especially for those struggling to achieve academic and personal success. Historically, reform efforts have focused on garnering additional learning time through afterschool and summer programs. As the “more and better learning time” (MBLT) movement evolved, attention shifted to increasing class time by extending the school day and year. However, the challenge was, and continues to be, creating programs that do not require additional operating revenue.



Experience with the U.S. Department of Education’s School Improvement Grants (SIG) program illustrates this challenge. SIG funding has supported a variety of promising programs. Unfortunately, many were not sustainable when the three years of funding expired. A study conducted by the Center on Reinventing Public Education found that:

“According to their SIG proposals, schools planned to use nearly 90 cents of every SIG dollar for additional administrators and teachers to provide student behavioral support, electives, and lower class sizes; extra staff time for the extended day; and teacher time for professional development.... No school appeared to have a strategy for paying for the extra staff, extended days, and other expenditures once the SIG funds run out in three years.... Most principals were simply punting the sustainability issue to a later date.”ⁱ

In order for school reforms to be meaningful, it is essential that new programs are sustainable or can be modified to fit within existing funding. In other words, current funding must be utilized to drive long-term change.

Public schools and public school systems are complex with many interrelated and interdependent components. Each element must stand on its own and complement the others to create an optimal educational experience for students. It should come as no surprise then that addressing one program element at a school or within a school system will inevitably impact others.

Unfortunately, many reform efforts simplistically address one or several components without regard for the impact on the whole. For example, a reform that addresses only class size will require more teachers or fewer students. Financial realities make both of those consequences untenable.

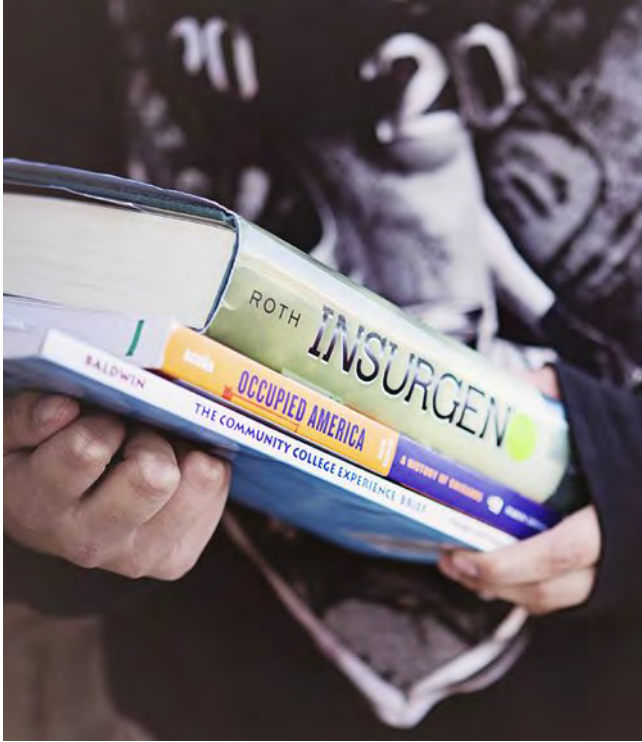
The traditional model of public schools is built on long-held assumptions and practices related to allocating time, organizing classes, distributing administrative duties, delivering instruction, and measuring achievement. The model was developed for an economy in which roughly half of students could find work that supported their families even if they did not complete high school, let alone obtain postsecondary education.

That economy no longer exists, but the old education model remains largely unchanged. The existing public education system is not “broken,” it is doing what it was designed to do—prepare roughly half of all students for higher education. As Harvard Innovation Education Fellow Tony Wagner states bluntly, “Schools haven’t changed; the world has.”ⁱⁱ

This paper explores the strategies that the Generation Schools Network™ (GSN) is putting in place to reinvent K-12 education. It is a cost-effective approach that accounts for all components of the education experience as it substantially extends learning time and expands opportunities.



The Generation Schools Network Model



The GSN Model significantly reinvents the K-12 education experience for students and teachers, delivering 30 percent more learning time through a longer school year and longer school day. The traditional daily and year-long schedule is significantly redesigned. In fact, all major elements of the education experience are broken down and then reconstructed in a way that not only devotes more time to Humanities and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, but offers an education experience that encompasses in-depth and sustained college and career guidance efforts, wrap-around health and wellness services, and teacher professional development. The total annual working time for teachers is the same as in a traditional school setting. Further, outside of transition and start-up expenses, it is possible for the program as designed to run at no additional cost to districts.

To accomplish this, the Model assigns new roles to teachers and administrators and implements new programs and practices—all with the goal of more effectively serving every student and supporting every teacher. This cost-effective alternative delivers more learning time, used in more targeted ways, to improve achievement (especially among those students who have long been underserved) and increase every teacher's opportunity for personal development, professional collaboration, and, hopefully, job satisfaction and longevity. This is critical in a system where nationally the students that struggle most are served by the least experienced teachers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Origins of the Model and early successes

The GSN Model had its origins in 1990 when founder Furman Brown began teaching in South Central Los Angeles in the first-ever corps of Teach for America. He received only a few weeks of training before entering the classroom and, although he was talented and motivated, he struggled to reach all of the students in his multilingual classroom. He was frustrated by the limited opportunity to develop professionally and learn and collaborate with other teachers. In time, Brown observed the inevitable high levels of teacher dissatisfaction, the resulting turnover, and many other consequences of a system that failed to provide students with the education and resources necessary for success. The experience motivated him to spend more than a decade developing and testing education reform strategies in a variety of settings.

Brown came to see the existing system as a Rubik's Cube® in which every action would affect the system in multiple and sometimes unanticipated ways. He realized that meaningful education reform required taking all the pieces apart and putting them back together in a way that created greater value for both students and teachers within existing budgets and the scope of teacher contracts. Over time, he developed a conceptual framework for public schools that casts off outmoded, often counterproductive practices and refined the strategies and practices that now define the GSN Model.

Jonathan Spear joined Brown to launch GSN in 2004 to put the Model on the ground. In collaboration with the New York City Department of Education, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), and other stakeholders, they launched Brooklyn Generation School in 2007 as part of the turnaround effort at the South Shore Educational Complex. Within the first few years, as they implemented critical elements of the Model, they observed significant gains in attendance, credits accumulated, and pass rates on the New York State Regents exams. These achievements attracted nationwide attention.^{iv} Remarkably, even though 80 percent of the students entering the program in the 9th grade were behind or significantly behind, after four years roughly 80 percent graduated high school and were accepted into college.

Subsequently, Generation Schools chose to pilot the program in Colorado due to the state's bold steps around education innovation and the fact that schools in Colorado had a per-pupil operating rate similar to the majority of states in the country. Brown partnered with Wendy Loloff Piersee to build a Colorado-based team, and in the fall of 2012, West Generation Academy opened, serving students in grades 6, 8, and 9 as part of Denver Public Schools' turnaround effort at the West High School campus. After just one year, data showed significant student academic growth and achievement, with students advancing an average of two grade levels in math. Additionally, the school's 9th graders were recognized as "high growth" in reading and writing on the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP). By the end of the first school year, the number of students who were five or more grade levels behind in math and reading was reduced by half, from 80 percent to 40 percent. See more detail on school implementation in Appendix I.

Primary elements of creating cost-effective extended learning time

The GSN Model incorporates several critical strategies that make the design cost-effective and sustainable. While some of these concepts have been applied in other settings, the Model is unique in the way these strategies complement each other, delivering significant results without additional funding. Detailed information on cost containment is available in Appendix II.

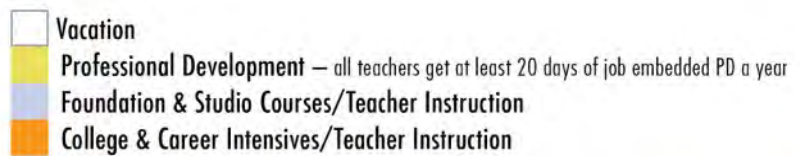
1. Staggered Teacher Time

In conventional schools, school days and years for teachers and students run contiguously. Although some traditional schools stagger teacher time within the course of a day to allow for an extended school day, the GSN Model takes this strategy further by staggering teacher schedules across the school year.

The Model divides teachers into grade-level teams for what are called Foundation Courses and Studio Courses with one additional team of teachers responsible for College and Career Intensives Courses taught at all levels. These three components are described more fully later in this paper.

Throughout the extended school year, the team of teachers responsible for College and Career Intensives instruction rotates from grade to grade, working with each grade twice a year for one month at a time. During the month their students are on the Intensives rotation, the Foundation and Studio Course teachers from that grade level do not have any primary responsibility for students. Instead, they spend one week in professional development and curriculum preparation before taking a three week vacation. After the month is up, they rejoin their classrooms as the College and Career Intensives team rotates to the next grade level.

ANNUAL SCHEDULE



STUDENTS: 200 School days

Grade	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
9th	Full School Vacation											
10th												
11th												
12th												

TEACHERS: 180 School days

Role	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
9th grade	Full School Vacation											
10th grade												
11th grade												
12th grade												
Intensives												

- Teachers have a one-month vacation in July. They also have two separate 4-week breaks throughout the school year, consisting of three weeks of vacation and one week of team planning and PD.
- A side agreement with the United Federation of Teachers in New York and an Innovation Plan in Colorado allow for this schedule.

In the course of the year, the College and Career Intensives staff members also have two months during which they are not working with students—during the first month of the year, when teachers are establishing routines and rituals with students, and during the month of high-stakes testing. Similarly, they use those two months for professional development, planning, and vacation. All of the students, meanwhile, have been in school nonstop, benefitting from a 200-day school year.

2. Revised Staff Roles

In the conventional school model, most instructors teach up to five classes in a day within a single discipline, supported by a staff of nonteaching professionals with a range of responsibilities outside of the classroom. Too often, in this setting, teachers compete for student time—for example, a special education teacher or language acquisition specialist may pull students out of other classes to provide these types of mandated services.

	FOUNDATION Teachers	STUDIO Teachers	INTENSIVE Teachers
PRIMARY Role	Teach 2 core Foundation courses each morning. Most teachers serve this role.	Teach 3 courses each afternoon (electives, other cores, mandated services, etc.)	Teach Intensive courses focused on college and career readiness. Each course lasts for one month.
SECONDARY Role	Teach one Studio course each afternoon; or provide mandated services	Provide school administration support each morning such as attendance support.	Provide Smart Start support to launch the school year and college/career guidance functions throughout the year.

The GSN Model reflects the fact that most teachers are well rounded professionals with a variety of skills and interests. The Model also recognizes that teachers have a great capacity to meet the needs of the whole child. Therefore, all teachers have dual roles. Their secondary, non-classroom roles are meaningful and purposeful and often involve teaching within a different context or drawing upon their other qualifications. The skills they bring (athletics, music, technology, art, debate, etc.) are essential and relevant to the success of the whole student. Assigning both traditional and non-classroom roles to each teaching professional reduces the need for nonteaching faculty members and allows for more interaction with students without increasing the staff size.

The majority of Generation Schools instructors are hired as Foundation Course teachers assigned to grade-level teacher teams. They teach year-long core Humanities and STEM course sequences that provide fundamental content, skills, and concept instruction at each grade level. Priority is given to hiring Foundation Course teachers with dual certifications in Special Education (SPED) and English Language Learner support (ELL) so that every Foundation grade-level team has teachers with this special training. Foundation Courses are typically clustered in the

FOUNDATION TEACHER TEAMS



At least two teachers on each Foundation Team are dual certified to provide Special Education and English language support services.

morning, allowing for reduced instructional ratios. Each Foundation Course teacher has a secondary role to teach a Studio Course.

Studio Course teachers provide a range of classes that meet students' differentiated needs. These may be year-long elective courses (such as physical education or foreign language), special short-cycle courses designed to address a niche issue (such as a deficit in literacy skills among a specific group of students), or concurrent-enrollment college courses. Those hired as Studio Course teachers also have a secondary assignment related to administrative tasks traditionally performed by nonteaching personnel.

For example, a Studio Course teacher with a SPED certification may teach Studio classes in that area and also manage the school's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and SPED compliance. An ELL instructor may teach three Studio classes in the afternoon and support the ELL students in a morning Foundation class. His or her administrative duties might include student recruitment, event planning, or technology support. As a result, the Model requires fewer nonteaching professional staff members and allows for hiring more teachers.

8 MONTHS

DAILY SCHEDULE

An improvement on the traditional school schedule

STUDENTS

Foundation Courses

Every morning

The year-long required courses ensure that each student has an academically rigorous foundation that prepares them for post-secondary success.

Each Foundation Course is taught by a team of teachers who have time daily to teach their sections and work collaboratively to address students' needs.

Advocacy Groups

Every mid-day

Every student is connected to a group of 8-12 students and a faculty advocate who connects with them daily to teach life skills, set goals, provide social and emotional supports and eliminate barriers to educational success.

Studio Courses

Every afternoon

Trimester-long courses that are scheduled in response to data and student need.

- Dual Language and Special Education Services
- Fine Arts, Music, and Foreign Language
- Misc. Electives
- Online Learning
- Concurrent Enrollment

2 MONTHS

KEY INNOVATION LINKS LEARNING TO LIFE

280 hours of college and career guidance



College & Career Intensive Courses

Courses combine school-based, rigorous instruction with real world, off-site experiences. Students explore careers in areas ranging from sports management and finance to bioscience and information technology. They meet professionals in numerous arenas and develop an understanding of the pathways and educational requirements necessary to enter these fields. Students also have the opportunity to visit colleges and technical schools so they can begin to see themselves pursuing post-secondary education.

The primary responsibility of College and Career Intensives instructors is to lead month-long courses to prepare students for life after high school—whether related to postsecondary education or the workforce. These teachers also fill the role of traditional college/career guidance counselors. Additionally, they plan and run the annual “Smart Start” orientation week for students and may support teachers and administrators during testing.

In a typical day, a Foundation Course teacher will teach two sections related to his or her Humanities or STEM subject and one Studio Course. A Studio Course teacher will teach up to four Studio classes in the afternoon and also fulfill an administrative assignment in the morning. College and Career Intensives Course teachers focus on their classes the entire day.

Daily, students take two extended-length Foundation Courses, an Advocacy class and up to four Studio Courses. (Described in greater detail below, the Advocacy program includes informal group meetings that address life issues and challenges). Twice in the course of the year, for one month at a time, each student participates in full day College and Career Intensives. These often include excursions outside the building that provide the critical links between academics and preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce.

3. Integrated Curricula

In the conventional school model, students must complete a minimum amount of classroom “seat time” distributed across disciplines. Thirty-six states have recognized that these types of requirements do not guarantee academic outcomes and have given districts and schools the autonomy to grant students credit based on academic proficiency instead of the amount of time spent in a classroom.^v

The GSN Model takes advantage of this in its Foundation Courses, offering an extended single Humanities subject area that combines English and Language Arts with History and Social Studies. For

example, it is advantageous to link American History with American Literature. Teachers may choose to collaborate to do the same with STEM courses, linking Science and Math while incorporating technology and engineering principles. Generation Schools teachers use their daily collaborative planning time to work together to create cohesive cross-curricular units and deliver a deeper, more comprehensive learning

Foundation Courses

HUMANITIES + English + Language Arts + History + Social Studies	STEM + Science + Technology + Engineering + Math
90 minutes	90 minutes

Foundation Courses offer a standards-based, integrated curriculum that weaves together subjects through a substantial theme or complex topic.

By immersing learners in integrated, thematic units, the GSN Model provides vibrant and relevant learning experiences across numerous subjects, which motivate and encourage students to transfer and retain knowledge, and conceptually understand topics. The learning environment is technology enabled to support project-based learning and provide leveled academic skillware to remediate and accelerate core skills.

experience for their students, enabling them to reinforce standards from multiple academic perspectives. This type of subject matter integration offers a more relevant and holistic learning environment that encourages students to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. The use of integrated curricula has been shown to improve student achievement more than compartmentalized subject training.^{vi} Additionally, integration aligns with the strategy of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC) assessment currently being adopted by a majority of the states.^{vii}

4. Designating Time for Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development

In conventional school settings, teachers often have little time for collaborative planning during the day, often leading to fragmented instruction for students. There are few professional development days during the year and, when days are offered, schools and districts typically must pay for substitute teachers or pay teachers for additional time. Many extended learning time grants are used specifically for this purpose.

Within the GSN Model, teachers, along with the entire school staff, begin the year with a two week Summer Institute that includes professional development, team building, and collaborative planning, preparing teachers for the launch of the school year. Summer Institute teaches and reinforces the school's unique strategies, expectations, and techniques. Sessions are often taught by experienced teachers most familiar with the Model and the students. During this time, administrators and teachers also work together to address and incorporate into practice any new district mandates.

Teacher professional development continues throughout the school year. As described above, Foundation and Studio teachers have two month-long breaks from the classroom during each school year while their students are in College and Career Intensives Courses. Three weeks are designated as vacation time and one week is devoted to targeted professional development and collaborative planning. Additionally, teachers have up to two hours set aside each day for well-structured collaborative planning using established protocols to achieve defined outcomes.

Each week, teachers review data, evaluate student work, adjust teaching strategies, expand blended learning practices, and prepare for their Advocacy sessions. Additionally, teachers participate in one or more Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with weekly sessions. Rather than requiring teachers to pursue continuing education on their own time, the PLC program schedules time for shared learning experiences and ensures the team is on track based on teacher observation and student achievement data. College and Career Intensive Course teachers have similar opportunities throughout the school year to participate in professional development opportunities and engage in collaborative planning.

5. Redesigned College and Career Guidance

Students in too many traditional schools receive very little meaningful college and career guidance. As noted, it can disrupt class time and often comes too late, when students may be disengaged and deadlines for considering, exploring, and applying for postsecondary opportunities are imminent. In this typical high school setting, the ratio of guidance counselors to students can be as high as 350:1.

The GSN Model prepares students for success in the 21st century through uniquely designed College and Career Intensive Courses. Twice a year, for one month at a time, students at each grade level participate in these classes, receiving college and career guidance while also exploring opportunities in high-growth career fields in their community. Students visit work sites, colleges, training centers, and laboratories whenever possible. They undertake project-based learning tied to both core academics and their chosen career field of study. During Intensives, students map out career pathways, interact with professionals, and practice the types of skills needed in high-paying jobs such as budgeting, negotiating, planning, presenting, researching, collaborating, and problem solving. This is especially critical for students from low-income families who are grasping the concept of preparing for a “career” versus a “job.”

Examples of some of College and Career Intensive Courses offered include:

- Fueling the Future: Careers in Traditional and Renewable Energy
- Building Champions: Careers in Sports Management
- iRobot: IT Careers for the Future
- Home Sweet Home: Construction Careers
- Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Careers in Transportation and Hospitality
- Money, Money, Money: Careers in Finance

The College and Career Intensives program is rooted in the community. Since local industry support is critical, the GSN Model encourages the formation of community engagement teams that include local industry professionals. These community members provide invaluable guidance to the College and Career Intensives teachers as they develop their curricula and to students at every grade level who need this real world information about essential skills.

6. Support for Health and Wellness

Whenever students are not in College and Career Intensive Courses, they meet daily for 30-45 minutes in small groups of 8-12 students led by a faculty Advocate. Every Foundation and Studio teacher leads an Advocacy, made up of students from his or her grade level. At these sessions, the teacher-Advocate helps students “check in,” set goals, and learn critical life skills. When necessary, he or she provides community referrals and generally serves as the first line of defense for eliminating external barriers to a student’s academic success. The Advocate also is the school’s primary point of contact student’s families—inviting them to school events, keeping them informed of the student’s progress, and being involved in any needed

problem-solving. This helps ensure that a student’s presence and progress, or lack thereof, is recognized every day and steps are taken immediately to keep students on track.

Benefits and Tradeoffs

All education reform models have their benefits and tradeoffs; the GSN Model is no exception. The fundamental structural shifts embodied in the Model create room for more classroom learning time, enhanced personalized student support, and a dramatically higher level of pertinent college and career guidance. From the teachers’ perspective, the model provides an environment in which they can learn from one another, align teaching strategies, and work together to address challenges they may be facing in helping students achieve.

Factors	GENERATION SCHOOLS	Conventional Models
Much more learning time	Up to 30% more 200 days per year (8 hours per day)	180 days per year (6 hours per day)
Remarkably small core class sizes	18-25	30-40
Exceptional college & career guidance	280 hours per year	1-2 hours per year
Daily small advocacy groups	30-45 minutes	None
Technology-enhanced learning	In-class mini-labs and more	Limited Access
Reduced student load for core teachers	75 or fewer students daily	175 students daily
Reduced course load for core teachers	3 classes per day	5 classes per day
Expanded common planning time	Up to 2 hours daily	Typically 45 minutes weekly
High caliber professional development	20 or more days per year	2-4 days per year

The value of making better use of facilities and teacher skills and resources can be measured in the tens of thousands of dollars. Even more significant is the value of creating new opportunities for hundreds of young students who would otherwise be left behind under the old education paradigm. This benefit can be measured over time in terms of reduced social supports and subsidies as well as increased earning potential. Of course, the Model entails tradeoffs. It is important to be explicit about them even if they are worth making.

Tradeoffs to Consider

1. *Teachers must adapt to new systems.* The practice of “swarming,” i.e., scheduling the majority of teachers for simultaneous Foundation Course sections, allows for the relatively small class sizes and strong focus on core subjects that are so critical to student success. However, the Model is only successful if the teams of teachers collaborate effectively to group and regroup students (for short-term subject matter support), plan lessons, integrate curricula, employ blended learning, adjust instruction in response to real time student performance data, and adopt a new model for SPED and ELL support.

In contrast to teaching methods in many traditional school settings, Generation Schools instructors should not deliver the type of one-size-fits-all instruction required in classrooms with 30 or more students. Along with having just 18 to 22 students in core courses comes the responsibility of knowing whether individual students are engaged and making daily academic gains. Teachers must adapt as conditions change and continually apply data to ensure that every student is moving forward.



The multiple roles for teachers discussed here and throughout this paper are thoughtfully designed to empower the faculty to focus on every student and the *whole* student. For that reason, districts and administrators must think differently about recruitment, selection, induction, and ongoing professional development. They should strive to hire teachers who relish these new opportunities, are truly reflective and eager to learn, and who can thrive in this demanding, collaborative environment.

It should be noted that today’s teacher education programs do not directly prepare teachers for the types of opportunities they will have at a Generation School nor for the multiple, complementary roles they will assume in that setting making the engagement of the external nonprofit organization critical to success.

2. *There are fewer nonteaching personnel.* Since financial and staff resources are concentrated on the classrooms and teachers, the GSN Model has fewer resources dedicated to nonteaching personnel. Much of this work is strategically distributed among teachers in the form of secondary responsibilities. This could mean, for example, that Special Education instructors may also manage a reasonable caseload of Individualized Education Plans. Studio Course teachers, whose mornings are devoted to collaborative preparation and administrative duties, may spend an hour each day planning school events, reaching out to parents, supporting testing, or tracking progress of ELL students. Notably, since the Model includes a team of teachers focused on college and career programming and guidance, there is no need for separate full-time college counselors. Overall, a sense of team and a commitment to support the success of every student and teacher is essential for all school personnel.

3. *Inter-grade flexibility for course-taking may be more difficult.* In a conventional high school setting, students have more flexibility to take classes with students in different grades since all grades are meeting on the same annual schedule. For example, a student with sufficient credits to be in the 11th grade may still need to complete a 9th grade core course, while another 11th-grader may be ready for a class that is usually offered to 12th-graders. It is more difficult to accommodate this with the GSN Model, since different grades shift into the College and Career Intensive Courses at different times throughout the year.

However, the Model offers other ways for students in this position to receive the instruction they need. While all students in a grade may have the same Foundation Courses, they can be scheduled for very different Studio Course sequences that offer more targeted or advanced instruction. Students also are given the opportunity to access college courses and other community-based education offerings. It is imperative that students understand the consequences of falling behind. Both students and teachers must share responsibility for the student staying on track.

4. *Administrative coordination of the entire faculty is challenging.* Throughout the year teacher teams cycle in and out of teaching, professional development, and vacation periods. At any given time, there are teams returning from vacation, renewed and reenergized, while others are finishing up their teaching and secondary responsibilities before taking the professional time for training and collaboration and the personal time to recharge. For most of the year, school administrators will not have the benefit of having all of the teachers together. Therefore, they must rely on a relatively complex communication process to reach and stay in contact with the entire teaching staff throughout the year.

Lessons Learned in Implementation



The GSN Model is designed to work in K-12 classrooms in a variety of urban settings. State and local regulations, district policies, employment contracts, and a suboptimal volume of students in the program may prevent the Model from being adopted in its entirety in any given location at any given time.

However, the vast majority of its provisions have been incorporated into GSN's programs in Brooklyn and Denver, in the context of two secondary school turnaround initiatives. GSN's experience in these cities clearly demonstrates that outstanding results are possible if the school founders, leaders, and administrators think outside the box and adapt elements of the Model to fit specific local needs and

circumstances. Of the many lessons learned by GSN in these implementations, the following are the most significant:

1. Teacher and Administration Buy-In is Critical.

Although the focus of the GSN Model is on student success, a strong case can be made that the shift from a traditional education system to the GSN Model impacts teachers more than any other stakeholder. Additionally, local labor agreements, state and district policies, and even school culture can affect the program's viability and scope of implementation. In both New York and Colorado, implementation of the GSN Model required the use of innovative, flexible solutions in scheduling teachers and rethinking job responsibilities. In both cases, compromises and solutions helped ensure that essential components of the Model were implemented. The programs benefitted from the input and cooperation of local teacher organizations, school and district leaders, and community partners.

2. The Model Must be Adapted to Local Funding Models.

School districts allocate staff and financial resources to individual schools in a variety of ways. Some are very transparent, using explicit formulas tied to fixed budgets for salaries and other items. Other districts allocate teacher lines instead of dollars for salaries; this obscures differences in education, experience, tenure, and other factors that affect salaries. Some districts distribute funds in lump sums while others allocate resources in silos with limited flexibility to shift funds across functional areas.

GSN has developed budgeting tools that can be adjusted to accommodate local funding and budgeting practices. In the course of implementing the program in the two locations, GSN explored options with district and school officials in order to implement as much of the Model as possible within the parameters set by local funding guidelines and formulas. Typically, the more transparent the budget and the more flexible the use of the funds, the higher the degree of model fidelity will be.

3. It May be Challenging to Reach Enrollment Targets.

At its core, school funding is a function of enrollment. The GSN Model can most often be achieved in a cost-effective way at an enrollment of 300-400 students, depending on per-pupil allocations and personnel costs within a district.

Since the Model allocates teachers to teams, including the College and Career Intensives team that works across grades, and given that teachers are assigned primary and secondary roles, the GSN Model may be more sensitive to under-enrollment and inconsistencies in enrollment than traditional schools.

Both Brooklyn Generation School and West Generation Academy are turnaround projects housed in buildings where students previously struggled and where enrollment was low. In Brooklyn, it took several years to build the community's confidence. The school has grown steadily over its seven years but has yet not yet reached targeted enrollment levels. Additionally, subsequent to implementation, districts in both locations adjusted enrollment targets to achieve equitable enrollment across schools sharing facilities, without taking into account the impact on Model implementation. These new

targets differed from those in the initial plans that the districts approved and have made it more challenging to achieve full implementation.

Thus, it has been critical to devote time and resources to promote the school and recruit students to reach enrollment targets and realize the full benefit of the Model. Until those targets are achieved, schools should thoughtfully determine how to implement as much of the Model as possible without getting boxed into traditional practices. The ideal scenario is for districts to invest in the Model during the start-up years and until the school reaches full enrollment, and encompassing the complete range of grades designated in the initial plan. This allows for administrators, teachers and students alike to practice the Model and reap its benefits even as the school grows.

4. Conventional Assessment Tools Can Lack Relevance.

Both GSN schools have delivered impressive results in terms of student achievement as measured by interim and skillware assessments at West Generation Academy and graduation and college acceptance rates at Brooklyn Generation School. However, large districts tend to use relatively static measures of accountability. Some of these “checked-box” types of metrics are not relevant in the context of the GSN Model. For example, districts often require full-time college/career guidance counselors to prepare students for college and career success. Such a metric obviously does not recognize the arguably higher level of support Generation Schools students receive in this area with the College and Career Intensives Course instruction.

Districts tend to evaluate teachers based on a cohort of students assigned to that teacher over the course of a year. However, one important feature of the GSN Model is the flexibility to group and regroup students among Foundation Course teachers as appropriate in order to drive individual achievement. There are many ways to evaluate teachers within the GSN Model, but an individual student’s achievement may not be indicative of any one single teacher’s performance in this environment but rather team performance.

GSN encourages districts to consider multiple metrics allowing for a more balanced report card that contains some static factors that apply to all schools and also some dynamic factors that can be used to better evaluate the unique elements of schools and the impact on students.

5. Districts Should Blend Funding Streams.

The GSN Model delivers longer school days and longer school years, which often replace the need for afterschool activities and summer school programs that are tacked on to traditional school schedules. Unfortunately, districts may have different funding streams or even different departments that support those afterschool and summer programs.

The GSN Model pulls much of this extended learning time and opportunity into the school day and year itself. If these afterschool and summer school pools of funds cannot be tapped, a GSN Model school will be at a funding disadvantage.

6. Practitioners Should be Wary of the “Rubber Band Effect.”

The GSN Model requires teachers and administrators to embrace fundamental changes from customary activities and policies. This can be a difficult leap, especially in situations where piecemeal, incremental adjustments have been the norm. However, these types of responses undermine the Model’s ability to deliver on its promise of improving achievement in a cost-effective manner.

This phenomenon has been evident at both Brooklyn Generation School and West Generation Academy. In spite of side agreements approved by all parties in New York and an approved Innovation Plan in Colorado, systems and practitioners tend to revert to what is usual and to what is known, understood, and supported by the larger system. It is critical that an outside partner such as GSN is in place to help maintain the constructive tension between the conventional ways and the Model. Such an outside partner can coach leaders and teachers on how to transition to the new practices and adhere to them.

An entity such as GSN also can assist in building bridges with multiple stakeholders. There is a real danger that influential outsiders, policymakers, parents, and even college entrance professionals will expect the school to operate and appear like any other school with traditional curricula and structures. People not intimately involved in working within the Model undoubtedly can get sidetracked by the differences, press for a reversion to the norm, and not appreciate the fact that the new school must remain fundamentally different to achieve its goals of supporting student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

7. Turnaround Settings and Co-Locations Present Specific Challenges.

The “rubber band effect” is most pronounced in early years. Schools targeted for transformation to the GSN Model typically have high rates of absenteeism, more than their share of serious disciplinary issues, and majority of students with significant academic deficiencies. The natural and understandable reaction is to designate full-time staff to address attendance, behavior and remediation issues. However, shifting staff resources in this way can quickly lead away from Model implementation. The Model’s success hinges on putting maximum teaching resources into the classroom. Each time a teaching staff position is re-designated for nonteaching duties, class sizes grow, attention to individual students is diminished and the prospects for success may be reduced.



Conclusion

In a 2010 report, the Bridgespan Group explored four challenges that prevent education innovation. The study's comments on innovation's financial models were very significant.

"Through this financial modeling exercise, we found a range of combinations that would both enhance personalization and be cost-effective. On the flip side, we also found that tinkering on the margins—adding one block of time of online learning or one block of small group instruction—wasn't feasible. It was only in more holistically reconstructing the school instructional model that we found approaches that were cost-effective. Interestingly, some of these have strong resemblances to the examples cited, such as Generation Schools and Kunskapsskolan."^{viii}

Elsewhere in the same report, the authors observed that "Rocketship, Generation Schools and Advance Path Academic, along with state virtual schools, are among the organizations we identified that have been able to implement a variety of innovation solutions—dealing with a range of issues—with budgets that are at or below prevailing public budgets."^{ix}

Transforming the GSN Model into reality has been a major endeavor. Flexible implementation within the context of district fixed per-pupil funding required significant consideration of the benefits and tradeoffs of reform. However, the model has been validated and the effort has been rewarded through improved student performance and teacher satisfaction in two separate turnaround settings.

Thus far, GSN reform efforts have been focused at the school level. Efficiencies and benefits undoubtedly would be enhanced with broader district-wide or even state-wide implementation and support. At the very least, greater flexibility within these jurisdictions would be a welcome step. Nonetheless, real and lasting

change has been accomplished under some of the most challenging circumstances and continues to be demonstrated by Generation Schools Network.

Early adopters of the GSN Model's strategies for cost-effective extended learning time are paving the way for future adopters. For extended learning time to advance as a nationwide movement, a strategic process of change must be embraced, to include:

1. Realizing that better is possible.
2. Changing outdated structures that are preventing students and teachers from achieving.
3. Providing coaching and technical assistance to equip leaders and teachers as they learn and apply new instructional practices that maximize the benefits of the new structures.
4. Changing teacher training systems, policies affecting school governance, and education funding structures.

These actions will pave the way for those who come after the early adopters—and at the same time reduce transitional costs and facilitate additional cost-effective implementations.

References

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- ⁱⁱ Wagner, T. (2010). *The Global Achievement Gap* (p. xxi). New York, NY: Basic Books.
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- ^{iv} Barrett, K., Hovde, K. H., Hahn, Z. L., & Rosqueta, K. (Winter, 2011). *High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality: Focus on High-Need Secondary Students*. University of Pennsylvania, Center for High Impact Philanthropy, School of Social Policy & Practice.
- ^v The Heartland Institute. (February, 2013). *Research & Commentary: Seat Time*. Chicago, IL: Slaphey, K.
- ^{vi} Hattie, J. (2008) *Visible Learning* (pp. 155-160). New York, NY: Routledge.
- ^{vii} Extensive information about Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, implementation, and the many components of the PARCC program are available through this site: <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-model-content-frameworks>.
- ^{viii} The Bridgespan Group. (June, 2010). *Next Generation Learning: Can We Crack Four Problems to Unleash Quality Education for All?* (Appendix A - unnumbered p. 12). New York, NY. Newstead, B., Wright, C. M., & Colby, S. J.
- ^{ix} Ibid. p.9.

Brooklyn Generation

One of Six Schools transforming the South Shore Educational Complex

The Generation Schools Model adds 30 percent more learning without increasing costs or teacher workload. The model creates room for revolutionary programming and curricula that prepares students for success—in school, work and life.



ENROLLMENT/STATS

LAUNCHED 2007

76 students in 9th grade

2013/2014

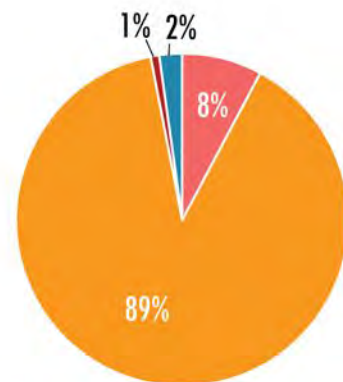
Current enrollment of 295 students in 9th through 12th grades, growing to serve 350–400 students in 9th through 12th.

- **121 graduates since inception**
- **83% attendance rate**

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 81% qualify for free or reduced price lunch
- 19% special education students

Latino/Hispanic
 Black
 White
 Other





160 DAYS

DAILY SCHEDULE

A broad range of opportunities prepare students to succeed.

FOUNDATION COURSES

Humanities including Social Studies and English, Math and Science

This is the core of our instructional program; these year-long courses prepare all learners with the academic skills and knowledge needed to succeed in high school, college and beyond. Courses are taught by a team of teachers, so that each teacher can focus on a smaller group of students. Foundation Courses include both Humanities and STEM

STUDIO COURSES

Every student has a variety of Studio Courses. These include additional required classes, electives and mandated services and remediation. Studio courses range from advanced sciences and technology, world languages to physical fitness. These are types of courses that motivate and support.

ADVOCACY COURSES

Four days a week every student is connected to an adult who focuses on life skills, social and peer supports.

KEY CHANGES

- 30% more learning time
- 40% smaller class size in core subjects
- Each teacher has a minimum of 90 and maximum of 150 minutes each day of planning and collaboration
- Extended 200-day year within teacher union contract

40 DAYS

KEY INNOVATION

280 hours of college and career guidance

BGS COLLEGE/CAREER INTENSIVE COURSES



Students have a number of opportunities while in high school to take college courses and earn college credits including *At Home in College* and *College Now* through CUNY, *Jumpstart* through Monroe College, and college math courses through Mercy College.

=SUCCESS

- **Doubled** the percent of the cohort graduating on time
- **Quadrupled** the Regents pass rates
- **90%** of the students in our first three graduating classes were accepted into college.

Brooklyn Generation School currently has:

- **Brooklyn Generation School graduates have attended competitive colleges and universities including** The Art Institute, Northeastern, St. Johns, Howard University, Monroe College and West Virginia University, Brooklyn College, Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, and State University of New York schools.

★ 2012/2013 RECEIVED SOLID B OVERALL PROGRESS REPORT FROM NYC DOE ★

West Generation Academy

A DPS Public School with Innovation Status on the West Campus

The Generation Schools Model

adds 30 percent more learning without increasing costs or teacher workload. The model creates room for revolutionary programming and curricula that prepares students for success—in school, work and life.



More time to learn the skills to succeed is a game-changer for at-risk kids.

ENROLLMENT

LAUNCHED 2012

360 students in 6th, 8th, and 9th grades

2013/2014

460 students in 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th grades

2015/2016

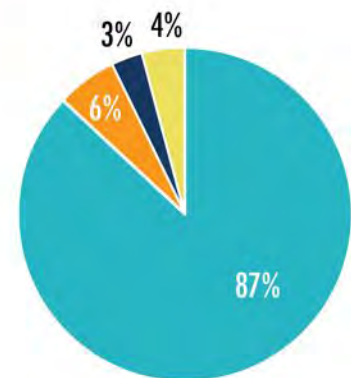
840 students projected enrollment, 6th through 12th grades

MY FUTURE IS BRIGHT

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 99% Free and reduced price lunch qualification
- 37% English language learners
- 14% Special education students

Latino/Hispanic
 Black
 White
 Other



Generation Schools Network™ • generationschools.org

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 455 Sherman Street, Suite 120 • Denver, CO 80203 • 720.452.3600



8 MONTHS

2 MONTHS

DAILY SCHEDULE

An improvement on the traditional school schedule

STUDENTS	TEACHERS
Foundation Course 18–22 students 90 minutes <i>Humanities</i>	Foundation Course 18–22 students 90 minutes <i>Math</i>
Foundation Course 18–22 students 90 minutes <i>Math</i>	Foundation Course 18–22 students 90 minutes <i>Math</i>
Advisory Groups 45 minutes	Advisory Groups 45 minutes
Lunch 45 minutes	
Studio Course 30–35 students 45 minutes	Studio Course 30–35 students 45 minutes
Studio Course 30–35 students 45 minutes	Common Planning Time for every Foundation teaching team 135 minutes
Studio Course 30–35 students 45 minutes	
Studio Course 30–35 students 45 minutes	
Extracurricular Activities (optional for students and staff)	



KEY INNOVATION

280 hours of college and career guidance

WGA COLLEGE/CAREER INTENSIVE COURSES



- 50% of high school students have taken at least one concurrent enrollment college course
- 2014/2015 West Generation Academy is slated to be an **Early College High School**. Students can graduate with a two-year associate degree. **Pathways will include Medical Administration, Business Administration, Human Services, and STEM.**

= ACADEMIC GROWTH

- **2012/2013**
Students grew on average **two years in math**
Students grew on average **one year in reading**
Recognized as a high-growth high school in reading and writing TCAP 2013
50% reduction in students five or more years behind in math and reading
- **2013/2014**
Students on track for **two years growth in math**
Students on track for **1.5 years growth in reading**
Students have read over 2,700 books as of early February, four times the number read all of last year. Reading comprehension is at 82% which is among the highest in schools using Accelerated Reader.

★ **RECOGNIZED WITH THE 2ND HIGHEST STUDENT ENGAGEMENT RATE IN DPS** ★

Appendix II

Typical Urban High School

Revenues		
Based on Enrollment	392	\$3,249,625

Expenses		
Leadership Team & Support Staff		
Principal Instructional Leader	1	\$139,165
Assistant Principals	2	\$224,526
School Secretary	2	\$80,000
School Aides, Admin	2	\$50,000
Community Associates	2	\$50,000
	9	\$543,691

Faculty/Teachers By department		
Social Studies	4	\$272,572
English	4	\$272,572
Math	4	\$272,572
Science	4	\$272,572
Special Education / ICT Staff	2	\$136,286
English Language Learners' Supports	1	\$68,143
Reading Specialists	1	\$68,143
Foreign language	1	\$68,143
Art	1	\$68,143
Physical Education	1	\$68,143
Music	1	\$68,143
	24	\$1,635,432

Wellness and Preventive Team		
Guidance Counselor	1	\$93,874
Parent Coordinator	1	\$35,000
School Aides, Preventive	1	\$25,000
College Advisor	1	\$93,874
	4	\$247,748

Additional Staff, Out of the Classroom		
Athletic Director	1	\$68,143
Dean	1	\$68,143
IEP Manager	1	\$93,874
Attendance Teacher	1	\$68,143
Professional Developers	1	\$68,143
Librarian	1	\$68,143
	6	\$434,589

Other Than Personnel Expenses		
Program Resources, Supplies, Equipment		\$250,000
		\$250,000

Additional Supports		
District		\$34,000
Partnerships: programmatic, PD		\$100,000
		\$134,000

Total Staff	43	
Total Expenses		\$3,245,460
Total Revenue		\$3,249,625
Revenue less Expenses		\$4,165

Generation Schools Model

Revenues		
Based on Enrollment	392	\$3,249,625

Expenses		
Leadership Team & Support Staff		
Principal: Instructional Leader	1	\$139,165
Assistant Principal, Instruction	1	\$112,263
Assistant Principal, Wellness	1	\$112,263
School Secretary	2	\$80,000
School Aides, Admin	1	\$25,000
Community Associates	1	\$25,000
	7	\$493,691

Faculty / Teachers		
<i>Foundation Course Teachers</i>		
12th Grade	4	\$272,571
11th Grade	4	\$272,571
10th Grade	4	\$272,571
9th Grade	4	\$272,571
Special Education / ICT Staff	4	\$272,571
<i>Studio Course Teachers including ELL</i>		
Senior Courses	2	\$136,286
9 - 11th Grade	5	\$340,715
<i>Intensive Course Teachers</i>	5	\$340,715
	32	\$2,180,572

Wellness and Preventive Team		
Guidance Counselor/Social Worker	1	\$93,874
Parent Coordinator	1	\$35,000
School Aides, Preventive	1	\$25,000
<i>College advisement provided by Intensives staff, above</i>		
	3	\$153,874

Stipends, Supporting Classroom-Based Staff		
<i>Out of classroom supports provided by staff above in their secondary role.</i>		
Grade Team Leaders, College and Career Director		\$25,000
		\$25,000

Other Than Personnel Expenses		
Program Resources, Supplies, Equipment		\$250,000
Extended Year Added Operational Costs		\$10,000
		\$260,000

Additional Supports		
District		\$34,000
Partnerships: programmatic, PD		\$100,000
		\$134,000

Total Staff	42	
Total Expenses		\$3,247,137
Total Revenue		\$3,249,625
Revenue less Expenses		\$2,489

Different districts assume different revenues and expenses at the school level. This assumes that mandated services such as OT and PT are paid for centrally.

Revenues and expenses that would be the same regardless of the model are not necessarily included here.



Want to learn more about Achieving Cost-Effective Extended Learning Time and Expanded Opportunity in K-12 Education?

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