

# GENERATION SCHOOLS NETWORK

## WEST GENERATION ACADEMY

TRANSFORMING THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL MODEL  
TO HELP DISTRICTS DO MORE WITH CURRENT RESOURCES

“More than 90 percent of America’s children attend public schools managed by districts and governed by teacher contracts. It’s critical that our nation pursue transformational innovation in districts as well as outside them.”

WENDY PIERSEE, GENERATION SCHOOLS NETWORK

### KEY FEATURES:

- ✓ Turnaround School
- ✓ Station Rotation Blended Model
- ✓ Extended Learning Time
- ✓ College & Career Readiness

### AT A GLANCE:

**Start Date:** Fall 2012

**Grades Served:** 6-12

**Location:** Denver, CO

**Operator:** Generation Schools Network

**Operator Type:** Nonprofit

**School Type:** District

**Setting:** Urban

**Students at Start:** 350

**Students at Capacity:** 1,050

### MODEL TOOLBOX:

**Learning Management System:** Collaborize Classroom

**Student Information System:** Infinite Campus, provided by district

**Assessment Tools and Approaches:** STAR Reading, STAR Math

**Digital Content Providers:** Khan Academy, Reading Plus, ALEKS, “Accelerated Reader”

**Hardware:** NComputing-driven classroom mini-labs

West Generation Academy, a new turnaround school launched by Generation Schools Network on the site of Denver’s West High, includes many hallmarks of next-generation blended design. School days are longer to expand learning time. Classrooms are designed for rotations; in a single, 90-minute period, students might move from direct instruction to individual work on personalized digital content or to collaborative, small group work. Data tools provide real-time feedback to students and teachers. Digital tools help students “catch up” or dig deeper into their interests.

And yet, Generation Schools is not merely committed to redesigning the academic model in school. It’s also committed to creatively “redeploying” a school’s existing resources to personalize learning for students, support teachers, transform college and career guidance, and increase learning time—all without adding to school costs and while operating within key parameters of teacher contracts.

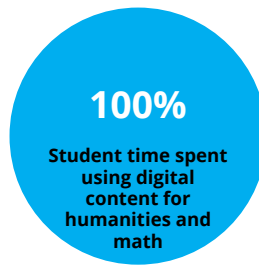
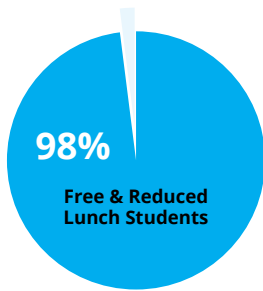
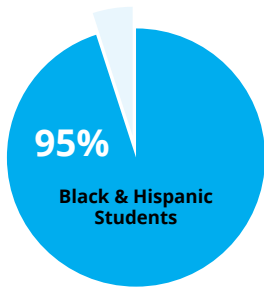
West Generation Academy stu-

dents, for example, benefit from a longer school year (200 days versus the standard 180-day calendar year) and from longer school days (8 hours per day). To increase access without adding to the budget, the Academy staggers teacher vacations to keep the amount of “working days” the same and offsets longer teaching days with shorter training days, essentially trading “time for time.”

Core class sizes are small; math and humanities classes have 18 to 25 students. Content experts might teach a core course in English or math as their primary role, while also teaching a larger studio class (an elective or additional core course) as a secondary role.

Generation Schools Network also thinks creatively about supporting students outside the classroom. In addition to a school guidance counselor and psychologist, the Academy enlists a team of teachers to provide college and career courses throughout the year. Twice each year for a full month, students participate in a rigorous, credit-bearing course that challenges them to set life goals

*“Generation Schools is committed to creatively ‘redeploying’ a school’s existing resources to personalize learning for students, support teachers, transform college and career guidance, and increase learning time — all without adding to school costs and while operating within key parameters of teacher contracts.”*



**BLENDED SUBJECTS:**  
Math, Humanities

## BY THE NUMBERS:

Year 1 public revenue per pupil: \$5,383

Year 1 expenses per pupil: \$6,205

Year 4 revenue per pupil: \$5,190

Year 4 expenses per pupil: \$5,132

Years to sustainability: 2

and explore life beyond the campus through college visits, listening to guest speakers, or participating in technology-based research studies. Each course is designed to encourage students to sharpen their ability to negotiate, communicate, solve problems, and manage projects.

This model has already shown positive results in New York, where Generation Schools Network launched Brooklyn Generation School in 2007 on a campus once described as “unsalvageable.” Eighty percent of the

school’s first graduates were accepted into college, and the number of students graduating on time doubled.

West Generation Academy builds on that model but in a vastly different region. The push west reflects Generation Schools Network’s stated goal to scale innovation and systemic transformation across urban schools at varied per-pupil revenue allotments to demonstrate that, with the right partnerships, dramatic change can occur in a district setting.

In addition to opening new schools, the organization partners with and supports existing district schools in whole-school redesigns and supports knowledge sharing across affiliate networks to encourage the diffusion of best practices and proven approaches.

The goal, according to school leaders, is to ensure that innovative practice and change occurs not just outside the system, but within it as well.

## MODEL SNAPSHOT

Key Advantages	Generation School’s Signature Model	Conventional School Model
Expanded learning time	Eight hours per day, 200 days per year	Six hours per day, 180 days per year
Smaller class sizes in core courses	18–25	25–35
Technology-enhanced learning	Half-class mini-labs in every core class	Limited access
Extensive common planning time	More than two hours each day	Typically, 45 minutes per week
High-caliber teacher training	More than 20 days per work year	One to three days per work year
Key data tools to inform instruction	Real-time responsive	Too often limited/delayed
Fewer classes for teachers to teach	Three classes per day	Five to six classes per day
Far fewer students per teacher	75 or fewer students daily	150 or more students

Smaller classes and expanded learning time in the Generation School’s model are made possible by creative redistribution of resources that keep costs low.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

School URL: <http://westgenerationacademy.dpsk12.org/>

Operator URL: <http://www.generationschools.org/> | Contact: Wendy Piersee, [wendy@generationschools.org](mailto:wendy@generationschools.org)



**NEXT GENERATION  
LEARNING CHALLENGES**

[nextgenlearning.org](http://nextgenlearning.org)