



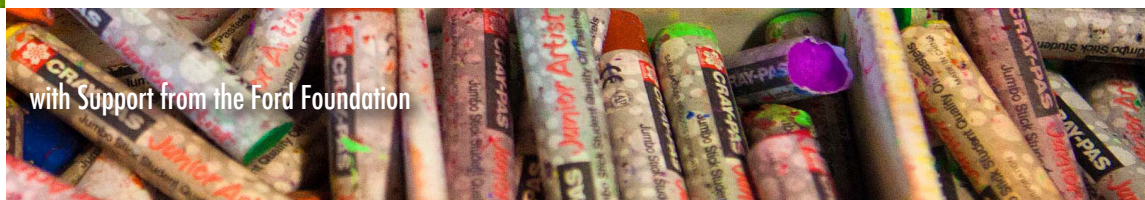
TRANSFORMING CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION THROUGH NEW TEACHER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

 **GENERATION**
SCHOOLS NETWORK

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Executive Summary

Successful and meaningful education reform requires not just the buy-in of teachers, but their embrace of a more significant role in the classroom and in the lives of students. Reform must happen where the “rubber meets the road”—at the point of connection between individual teachers and students, making it a grassroots exercise.

The Generation Schools Network™ (GSN) Model benefits teachers while it simultaneously improves personalized classroom instruction, offers relevant college and career preparation, and meets the social/emotional needs of students, all without requiring teachers to work more hours or teach more classes.

GSN accomplishes this by:

1. Shifting human resources from nonteaching functions to teacher positions
2. Repurposing class time to offer personalized instruction
3. Redefining the teacher’s role
4. Providing teachers significant daily collaboration time and annual personal development opportunities.

In this paper, we explore the challenges faced by today’s teachers and discuss how the GSN Model’s emphasis on teachers and their roles offers a clear path to a new paradigm in education.

Those who chose the teaching profession because of a passion for making a difference in the lives of students will undoubtedly embrace an enhanced role and welcome the opportunity to have significant influence on the trajectory of individual students. The GSN Model offers teachers a role designed to make the profession more satisfying and fulfilling, allowing for greater stability in the school environment.

Transforming Classroom Instruction through New Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

The Challenge

Excellent and engaged teachers are the key to a quality education.¹ “When students were asked about their best teachers, the common attributes were teachers who built relationships with students, teachers who helped students to have different and better strategies or processes to learn the subject and teachers who demonstrated a willingness to explain material and help students with their work.”²

For decades, reformers, philanthropists, and scholars have attempted to create meaningful and lasting improvements in education, focusing on the experience of teachers. Some also have explored strategies to enhance relationships between teachers and students—reducing teacher to student ratios and offering additional meaningful and relevant curricula.

For the most part, the reformers have assumed this can only be accomplished by increasing the size of the staff and/or requiring teachers to work longer days, weeks, or years. These models are expensive and often disregard teacher contracts. Unfortunately, still other reforms have been built on the assumption that teachers are commodities that can easily be replaced when they are burned out, creating schools that are supposedly “teacher-proof.”

Many of the well-intentioned reforms intended to support teachers and help them be most effective stagnate because they do not challenge the conventional education model and its long-held assumptions about how to allocate student and teacher time, organize classes, distribute administrative duties, deliver instruction, and measure achievement. This school model served society well when half of the students could easily find work to support themselves and their families even without completing high school. Obviously, society and the economy have changed, but the old education model and the role of teachers remain largely the same.³

Today’s high level challenge for education is to prepare all students for careers and/or post-secondary education. The new system must be teacher-focused within a structure that empowers and enables motivated teachers to make a bigger difference for their students’ benefit and their own fulfillment.

GSN has met this challenge in its Brooklyn Generation School in New York City and West Generation Academy in Denver by changing school structures, bypassing seemingly insurmountable roadblocks, and fundamentally rethinking key elements such as time allocation, deployment of teacher skills, and the delivery of supportive resources. GSN recognizes that administrators cannot simply demand more of teachers; thus the GSN Model offers teachers more as well.

This paper explores the challenges faced by today’s teachers in a typical school and then discusses the ways the GSN Model supports teachers—helping good teachers become great and great teachers become deeply satisfied in their profession.

Factors	GENERATIONS 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 advisory 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 Classic Education Model: Teacher Perspective

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Education has placed great emphasis on the development and recruitment of excellent teachers. The need for high-quality professional educators has been underscored in statements by Education Secretary Arne Duncan as well as President Obama.⁴ Still, conventional school systems nationwide are structured in ways that treat teachers like workers rather than qualified professionals entrusted with the education of our nation's children.

New teachers often find little or no support when they begin their careers. Roughly half of them have less than 12 weeks of classroom experience before they are put in charge of a classroom. Nearly 20 percent of new teachers have no classroom experience at all,⁵ even though they tend to start their careers in the most challenging schools and districts, serving students with a wide range of abilities from low-income, minority, and urban populations.

Many of the teachers who persevere find themselves frustrated and constrained by traditional systems. Even seasoned teachers with extensive classroom experience and familiarity with school administration policies and procedures face obstacles to job satisfaction. Few schools offer meaningful opportunities for teachers to collaborate with or learn from colleagues. Even fewer expect their teachers to work with colleagues in other specialties. They seem to be valued only for the time they spend in classrooms with students, and not for their efforts to effectively collaborate with colleagues and thoroughly prepare for classroom instruction.

It is no wonder that 20 percent of new teachers in urban classrooms leave each year.⁶ Researchers estimate that over one million teachers move in and out of schools annually, and between 40 and 50 percent quit altogether within five years.⁷ According to data from the New York State Department of Education, charter schools in New York City lose far more teachers every year than their traditional school counterparts. In some schools, more than half of faculty turn over from one school year to the next, according to NYSED school report cards.⁸

There is a high cost to teacher turnover—monetary estimates for twenty urban areas in the U.S. range from \$4,400 per position in Hartford, Connecticut to more than \$115,000 in New York City.⁹ These are resources that clearly could be used more productively in a system with a stable teaching force.

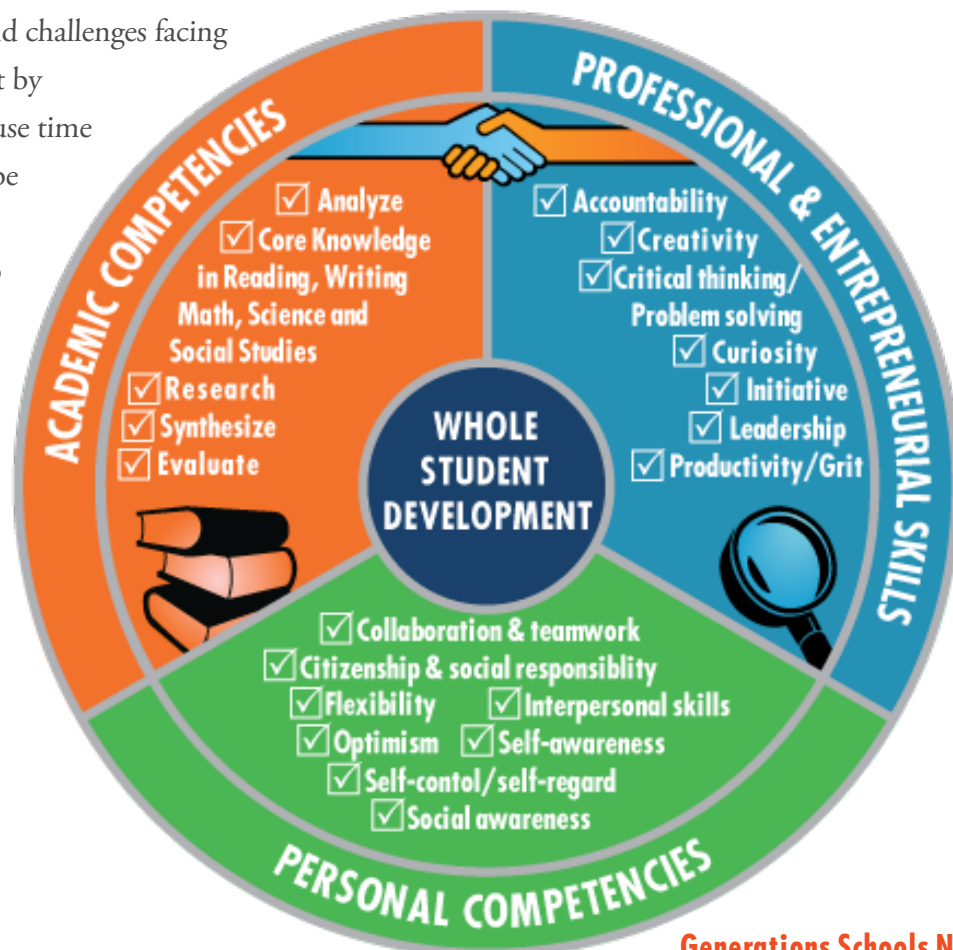
It should be noted that some high-impact, rigorously academic charter school models seem to accept high teacher burnout and turnover, reflecting the “teacher-proof” school approach mentioned earlier.

“Meanwhile, across the charter sector, research has confirmed that teachers who shoulder demanding workloads—often ranging from 60 to 80 hours a week—burn out. According to Torres’s 2013 study, a teacher with an unmanageable workload faced a 370 percent greater risk of leaving than a less-burdened peer.”¹⁰

Additionally, in the conventional school setting, teachers and specialists seem to be pitted against each other, competing for student time. For example, a special education teacher or language acquisition specialist may pull an individual or small group of students out of another class to provide mandated services. Conversely, the specialist may be working with a group pulled from several classes, and must adjust whenever any one of those classes schedules a pre-emptive activity that keeps one or more students from attending the specialized class. Meanwhile, and in both cases, the students who need the most help and continuity of instruction fall behind, hindered by the system set up to support them.

High stakes testing has complicated matters further. Since teachers are evaluated based on student test data, they have little incentive to engage in professional activity not directly related to the specific classes they are teaching—even activity that would improve long-term outcomes for students. When teachers are organized into discipline-based departments, primarily in middle and high school, they are incentivized to view themselves as teachers of a given content area, rather than as a teacher of students.

These are the realities and challenges facing most teachers today. But by rethinking how to best use time and talent, schools can be re-structured in unconventional ways that help teachers better meet the needs of students and improve student outcomes. The GSN Model offers a proven alternative that is, in fact, better serving both students and teachers.



Generation Schools Network's Enhanced Teacher Role

The GSN Model reflects the fact that most teachers are well rounded professionals with a variety of skills and interests. The Model recognizes that teachers have a great capacity to meet the needs of the whole child when teachers work together and when they are individually empowered to bring a wide range of skills and capacities to the school environment.

The GSN Model increases and improves a teacher's interaction with students without increasing overall staff size and associated costs. All GSN teachers have dual assignments designed to better meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. This new role is accompanied by supportive resources that enhance teacher fulfillment and career satisfaction.

Teaching Teams: Foundation, Studio, and Intensives Teachers

Most Generation Schools instructors are hired as Foundation Course teachers assigned to a grade-level team. Their primary responsibility is to teach the core Humanities and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses—the year-long sequences that provide the fundamental concepts, content, and skills all students require. Whenever possible, the school hires Foundation teachers with dual certifications in Special Education (SPED) or English Language Learner (ELL) so that these areas

of expertise are represented at all grade levels. Foundation teachers teach two sections of the same Foundation Course and augment these morning classes with an afternoon Studio Course.

A Studio Course teacher's primary role is to lead classes that meet students' differentiated needs and provide other enriching elective course experiences. These might be year-long

Foundation Courses

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

classes (such as physical education, foreign languages, and advanced science or math) or short-cycle courses designed to address a niche issue for a targeted group of students (such as a deficit in math or literacy skills). Foundation teachers may teach a Studio Course tied to their Foundation Course content. For example, a Humanities teacher may teach an art history Studio class to support and broaden the context of his or her Foundation Course for students ready for deeper content.

Those hired specifically as Studio Course teachers also have a secondary assignment related to one or more 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 a group of the school's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and SPED compliance. An ELL instructor might teach three

Studio classes in the afternoon and support ELL students in a morning Foundation class. Other administrative duties could include student recruitment, event planning, and technology support. As a result, the GSN Model requires fewer nonteaching staff members, freeing up resources to hire more teachers.

A College and Career Intensives teacher's primary role is to teach grade-level, month-long, project-based courses that guide students in exploring and preparing for college and careers in high growth industries. This often includes excursions outside the building that provide a critical link between academics and preparation for post-secondary education and the workforce. This teacher's secondary and related role is to serve as a college/career counselor. College and Career Intensives teachers also typically plan and run the annual "Smart Start" orientation week for students and support teachers and administrators on the days devoted to comprehensive testing. Here again, resources are shifted from professional administrative positions (guidance counselors) to teaching positions.



“In our 2012 national survey on teacher learning, we asked educators to identify their single most powerful professional learning experience of the past 12 months. The number-one choice by a large margin was “co-planning with colleagues,” cited by 22% of respondents. Coming in second, chosen by 13% of respondents as their single most powerful professional learning experience, was “meeting regularly with a collaborative inquiry group.”

National Center for Literacy Education.
Remodeling Literacy Learning Together: Paths
to Standards Implementation

	FOUNDATION Teachers	STUDIO Teachers	INTENSIVES Teachers
PRIMARY Role	Teach 2 core Foundation courses each morning.	Teach 2 core Foundation courses each morning. Teach 3 Studios each afternoon (electives, other courses, mandated services, etc.)	Teach Intensive courses focused on college and career readiness. Each lasts for one month.
SECONDARY Role	Teach one Studio course each afternoon, or provide mandated services.	Provide administrative support (attendance, scheduling, IEP compliance, etc.)	Provide Smart Start support to launch the school year and college and career guidance throughout the year.

GSN teachers are pulled together into grade-level teams. The team structure fosters collaboration by creating a core group of teachers who serve the same students, albeit in different subject areas. Each team not only shares common planning time, but also participates as a group in scheduled professional development programs. In this way, teachers of different subjects come to know each other and their shared students at a depth not possible in schools relying solely on subject-area (department) groupings.

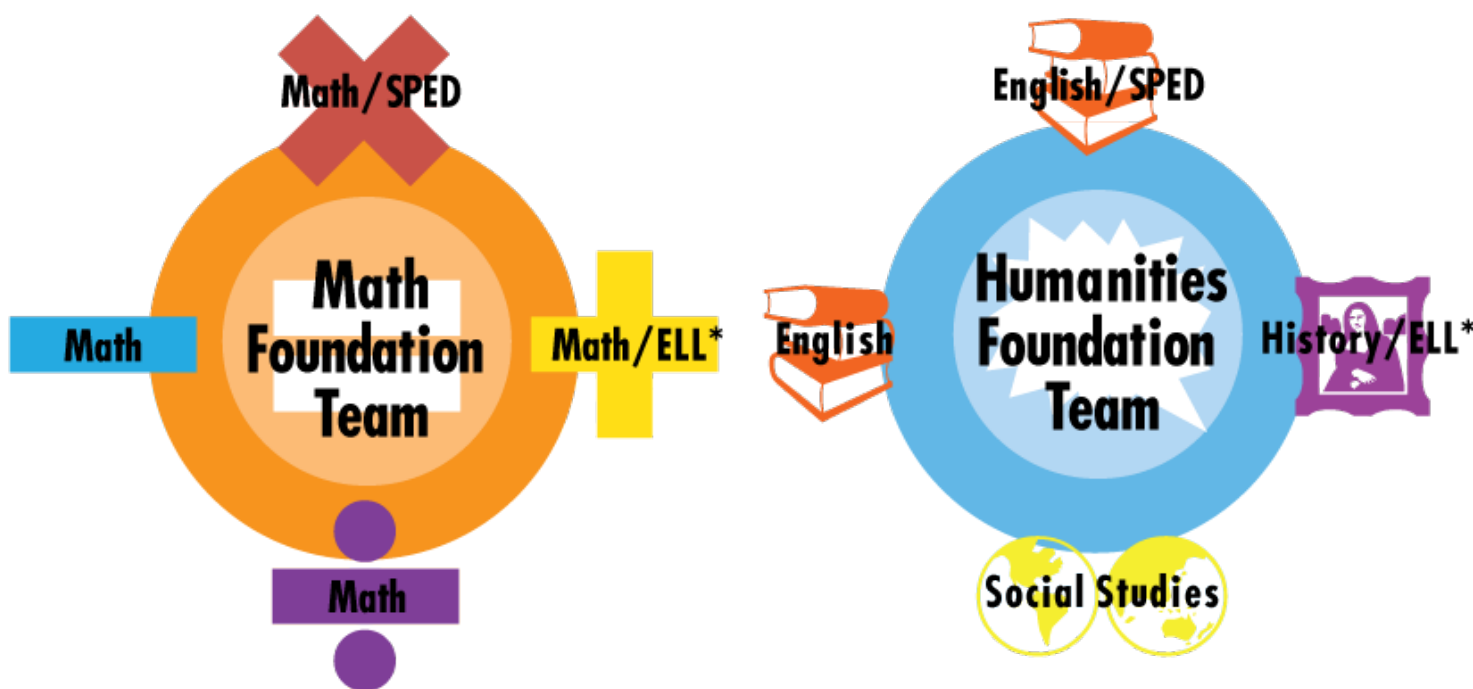
Team Response to Intervention

This team orientation is critical to the success of Generation Schools’ response-to-intervention (RTI) system, which has proven to be remarkably effective in identifying student challenges and enabling teachers to provide targeted assistance. Students undergo a benchmark assessment at the beginning of each year followed by interim assessments on 6-8 week cycles. This allows for timely interventions through Foundation and Studio courses and the use of skillware, directed instruction, and student grouping to best meet students needs.

Once a week, on a scheduled “data day” during collaboration time, teachers meet to review student skillware data, interim assessments, and other information that can help identify needed interventions. At Denver’s West Generation Academy, this approach has shown impressive results: 80% of students entering the school in 2012 were five or more grade levels behind. By the end of the first year, that number was cut in half. At the conclusion of the second year, the gap was virtually eliminated.

Thus, the GSN Model solves the challenge of reducing class sizes within the scope of existing budgets by reducing the number of administrative positions and increasing the number of teachers while shifting to a grade-level team orientation. But how does the Model support the needs of teachers in the context of their expanded role?

Grade Level Teacher Team



Professional Development and Teacher Collaboration

Generation Schools’ approach is rooted in an appreciation of teaching as a demanding and highly complex profession requiring a significant breadth of competencies. Research shows that teachers typically make more than 1,500 education-related decisions every day.¹¹ Indeed, studies find that teaching is more complex than most other professions—those most similar in terms of complexity and skill set are psychologists and social workers.¹²

Educators recognize that teaching is an art. At the same time, they embrace a growth mindset, recognizing that there are many component teaching skills that can be taught and learned. For new teachers to become good, and for good teachers to become great, schools must be deliberate about the support and professional development they provide. The GSN Model encompasses the complementary support structures of professional development and peer collaboration to help teachers develop enhanced techniques and skills.

Teachers in conventional schools cite the lack of adequate collaboration time as a leading cause of dissatisfaction.¹³ The GSN Model fosters an environment in which knowledge and learning strategies can be shared with peers on an ongoing basis. Grade-level teams have time scheduled each day for team collaboration. They learn from each other and build on their strengths while reflecting on their plans and performance and their students’ work. As a team, the teachers review formal and informal performance data, plan units and targeted interventions, communicate with colleagues and families, and group and regroup students.

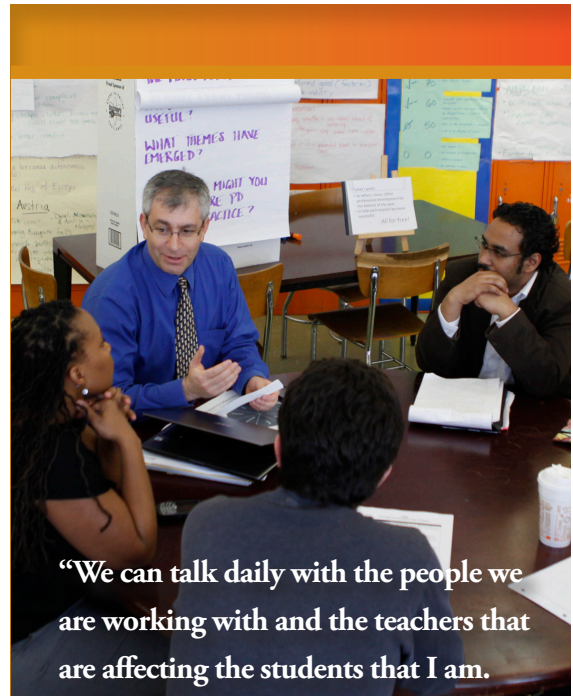
Students	Foundation Teachers	Studio Teachers
FOUNDATION COURSE 18-22 students 90 min.	FOUNDATION COURSE 18-22 students 90 min.	COMMON PLANNING TIME FOR EVERY StudioTEACHING TEAM 120 min.+
FOUNDATION COURSE 18-22 students 90 min.	FOUNDATION COURSE 18-22 students 90 min.	60min. Administrative Duty
LUNCH + Advocacy GROUPS 75 minutes	LUNCH + Advocacy GROUPS 75 minutes	LUNCH + Advocacy GROUPS 75 minutes
STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.	STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.	STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.
STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.	COMMON PLANNING TIME FOR EVERY FOUNDATIONTEACHING TEAM 150 min.	STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.
STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.		STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (optional for students & staff)		STUDIO COURSE 30 students 75 min.

Of course it is not enough to simply set aside time for collaboration and learning. Just as allotting more classroom time for students is not beneficial unless it is used effectively, scheduling time for teacher collaboration will have limited value unless there is a structure that generates authentic interaction focused on student outcomes and teacher development. Generation Schools offers teaching teams the tools and structures to facilitate constructive daily collaboration.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Integrated Unit Planning	College/Career Support & Planning	Data Review & RtI/SPED Support Planning	Reviewing Student Work to Choose High Quality Exemplars	Advocacy/Advisory Planning

The GSN Model’s school year creates up to 20 days of professional development and collaborative time for every teacher each year. The school year begins with a “boot camp” for teachers new to the GSN Model where they learn the basics of the system and come to understand the inherent differences from a conventional school setting. All teachers take part in Summer Institute, a forum for intensive learning and discussion involving every faculty member. Scheduled for the two weeks prior to the start of school, Summer Institute provides teachers the opportunity to collectively reflect and plan for the coming year and also learn about school-wide or district initiatives.

In addition, teachers have month-long breaks twice throughout the school year while students at that grade level are participating in College and Career Intensives. Three of the weeks are vacation time and one week is a professional development period spent with colleagues focusing on training and preparation. As a result of this teacher schedule, the school year can be extended to 200 days for students—20 more than the national average—without having to extend work time for teachers.



“We can talk daily with the people we are working with and the teachers that are affecting the students that I am.

We are really a team. It allows us to help students connect the dots between different subject areas and engage in deeper analysis.”

*Tara Leach,
Brooklyn Generation School*

Annual Schedule

- Vacation
- Professional Development - all teachers get at least 20 days of job embedded PD a year
- Foundation & Studio Courses/Teacher Instruction
- College & Career Intensives/Teacher Instruction

Students: 200 School Days

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

Teachers: 180 School Days

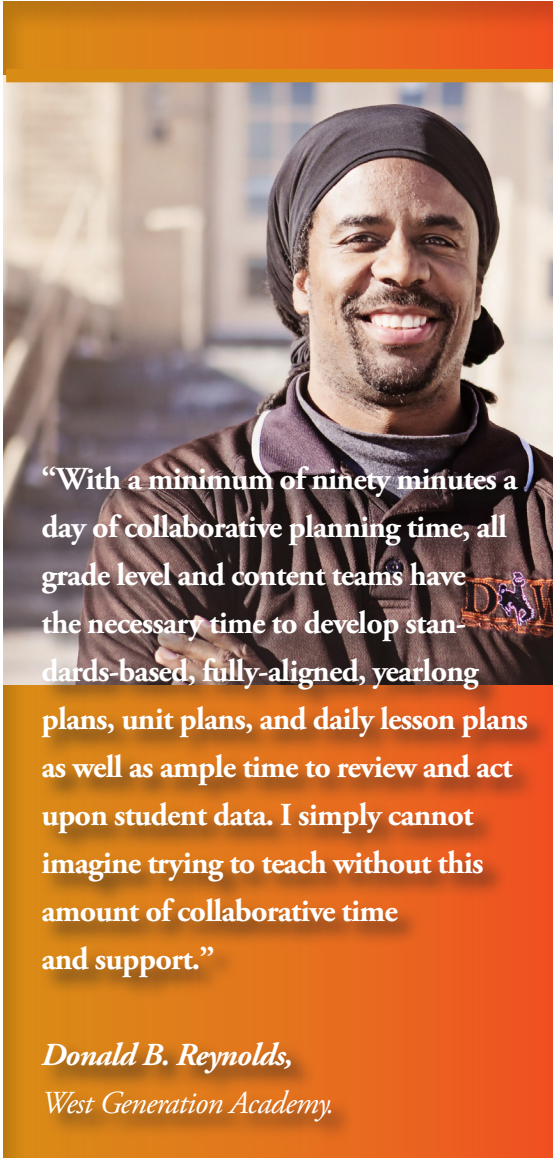
Role	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Mar	Jun	
9th grade	Full School Vacation												
10th grade													
11th grade													
12th grade													
Intensives													

- Note: 1) 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.
- 2) A side agreement with the United Federation of Teachers in New York and an Innovation Plan in Colorado allows for this schedule.

Taken together, the GSN Model’s collaborative practice and professional development features accelerate teacher progression and reduce the time needed to master the basics of teaching. It is generally accepted that it takes about three years for new teachers to become comfortable in their teaching role and effectively manage their classroom environment. At Generation Schools, teachers often demonstrate that level of competence and comfort by the end of their first year or the middle of the second, due in large part to the mid-year breaks and the professional time they share with colleagues. These teachers are more likely to remain in teaching for the long term.

Grade Team Leadership

As mentioned, the GSN Model organizes teachers into grade-level teams and Studio Course teams. This structure provides the opportunity for natural leadership talent to emerge since the grade team leader is not necessarily the most senior teacher, but the educator with the greatest desire and capacity to lead the group.



The leaders facilitate the daily work within the team and, along with the administration and Generation Schools support staff, plan for the professional development weeks that occur twice during the year. Individually and collectively, grade team leaders:

- Determine annual team priorities based on student data
- Create a weekly schedule of activities using defined protocols and based on the needs of the students and teachers
- Maintain an awareness of grade level student data and coordinate on-going RTI planning for the grade level
- Foster communication between grade-level teams and between the teachers and administration
- Coordinate implementation of school and district initiatives
- Ensure team completes daily work, monitors progress and reports out
- Facilitate team exploration and implementation of emerging best practices
- Support further alignment between the school’s operations and the GSN Model.

In short, the grade team leaders accept a career-enhancing opportunity for professional growth. As they grow in their skills as teachers to better meet the needs of their students, they are also preparing to shift to an administrative role if they choose, either within a GSN school or later in their careers.

To be sure, Generation Schools asks more of its teachers, but not in terms of days and hours. Rather it calls on teachers to tap into additional skill sets such as collaboration, teamwork, mentorship, problem-solving,

and leadership—functions that are valued in corporate America as well as nonprofits. The GSN system not only encourages these activities, it provides the guidance and time necessary to meaningfully engage in them. GSN firmly subscribes to the belief, so well stated by Bolman & Deal (2013) that: “Empowerment includes keeping employees informed...encouraging autonomy and participation, redesigning work, fostering teams, promoting egalitarianism, and infusing work with meaning.”¹⁴

Teacher Support in the GSN Model

The GSN Model for secondary education represents a striking contrast to a traditional school model with respect to the roles and responsibilities of teachers.

STRUCTURE	TRADITIONAL TEACHING	GENERATION SCHOOLS MODEL
Student Load	TRADITIONAL TEACHING 175 students daily (secondary)	GENERATION SCHOOLS MODEL 75 students/day
Class Load	5 classes daily	3 classes daily + Advocacy
Classroom Assignments	Teachers assigned a classroom	Classrooms utilized for multiple classes and purposes
Staffing	Teachers are hired for a subject or grade	Three different teaching teams hired for different teaching roles and staggered throughout the day and year to increase instruction time for students
Planning Time	Teacher planning periods scheduled various times throughout the day making collaboration challenging and often requiring paying substitutes to cover for teachers to allow for collaboration time or having an early dismissal or late start	Teacher teams have up to 2 hours of common planning time daily to apply data, group students, plan instruction and receive coaching
Teacher Teams	Teachers sometimes collaborate by grade or subject but largely function as an independent unit	Teacher teams consist of content experts, dual certified ELL and SPED teachers and paraprofessionals who all meet daily to address challenges, create opportunities and take responsibility for instruction
Professional Development	2-3 days per year, often district mandated, best teachers pulled out of the classroom to serve as instructional coaches	20 days per year, and up to two hours a day. The best teachers can remain in the classroom with students, serve as grade team leaders and support the professional growth of their colleagues

For motivated teachers, the benefits of the GSN system are evident. Teacher skills are more broadly utilized and each instructor is put in a position to make a profound difference in the education of a manageable number of students.

As mentioned, the GSN Model has been launched in New York City and Denver in two public secondary schools judged by their respective school districts to be persistently failing institutions. Since then, each has demonstrated tremendous improvement based on multiple measures, including graduation rate, student attendance, test scores, student growth, and college preparedness.

Much of this success can be attributed to the way teachers in the two schools have embraced change and relish the opportunity to take a larger role in the academic and long term success of their students. Both the overall design and the day-to-day operation of Generation Schools set teachers up to succeed in their expanded role through:

- Attention to professional development
- Emphasis on collaborative practice
- Development of professional learning communities
- Dedication to recognizing and utilizing the varied talents and interests of teachers
- Creation of a staffing model that provides the flexibility to accomplish all of these things.

Feedback from GSN teachers related to job satisfaction and their work environment has been favorable. In a 2013-2014 survey of the West Generation Academy teachers:

- 85 percent stated that they “liked working in this school”
- 88 percent felt safe in speaking to the principal regarding school issues
- 70 percent felt they had a voice in decision making at the school
- 73 percent believed they had a voice in creating and implementing the vision of the school



In a 2013 survey of West Generation Academy teachers, more than 90% of the respondents agreed that the staff members “effectively collaborate with each other.”

Challenges and Lessons Learned

By nature, fundamental transformation nearly always entails uncovering and overcoming obstacles. The GSN schools in Denver and Brooklyn have faced some common challenges related to the re-orientation of teacher roles and responsibilities.

Preparing School Administrators and Districts

It is essential that district and school administrators understand the Model and especially how its new, transformative role for teachers differs from the current norms and policies at the district and state level. Further, they should be advised on creative tools to bridge the differences—tools such as labor side agreements and innovation plans. This type of preparation is critical because these leaders will be responsible for facilitating, overseeing, and evaluating school and teacher performance.

Devising New Systems

The traditional education systems in place at both the district and state level can become so entrenched they can unintentionally obstruct significant reform. Teacher evaluation processes are a good example of this.

Educators typically are judged based on the academic performance and progress of their students, with the underlying assumption that a teacher works with the same students over an entire year or semester. Because the GSN Model is designed to put student needs first, a teacher's ongoing involvement with one particular student is not a given. As discussed above, real-time data from skillware and continuous classroom observation make it possible to group and regroup students according to their particular education needs throughout the year in core Foundation Courses. Therefore, schools and districts must adjust criteria to evaluate teacher performance in this type of fluid environment.



Providing Ongoing Support for Teachers

As noted, thorough and thoughtful preparation of teachers and administrators is essential to lasting reform. In order to avoid the rubberband effect, Generation Schools teachers require ongoing support as they implement new:

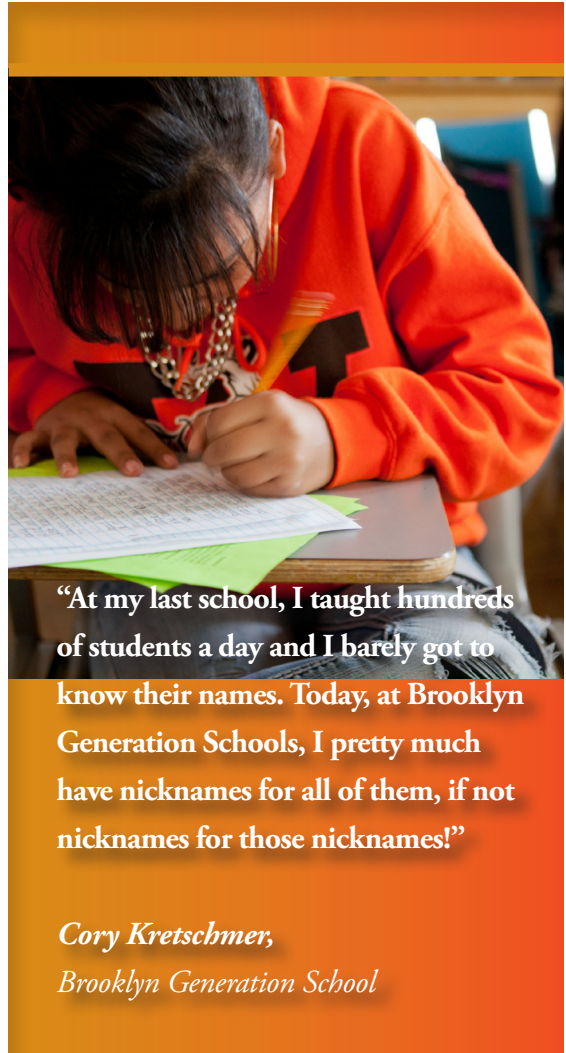
- Teaching techniques including a blended, rotational model
- Ways of accommodating SPED and ELL needs
- Applications for technology in the classroom
- Systems of collaboration
- Integration of subject matter into Humanities and STEM courses.

For teachers to become excellent in these areas, regular training and reinforcement is crucial. Without it, they may instinctively revert to old systems and practices better supported by state and district systems. The staff at Generation Schools Network play an ongoing role in guiding, advising, and equipping educators in the implementation of the GSN Model.

Training Teachers for Differentiation

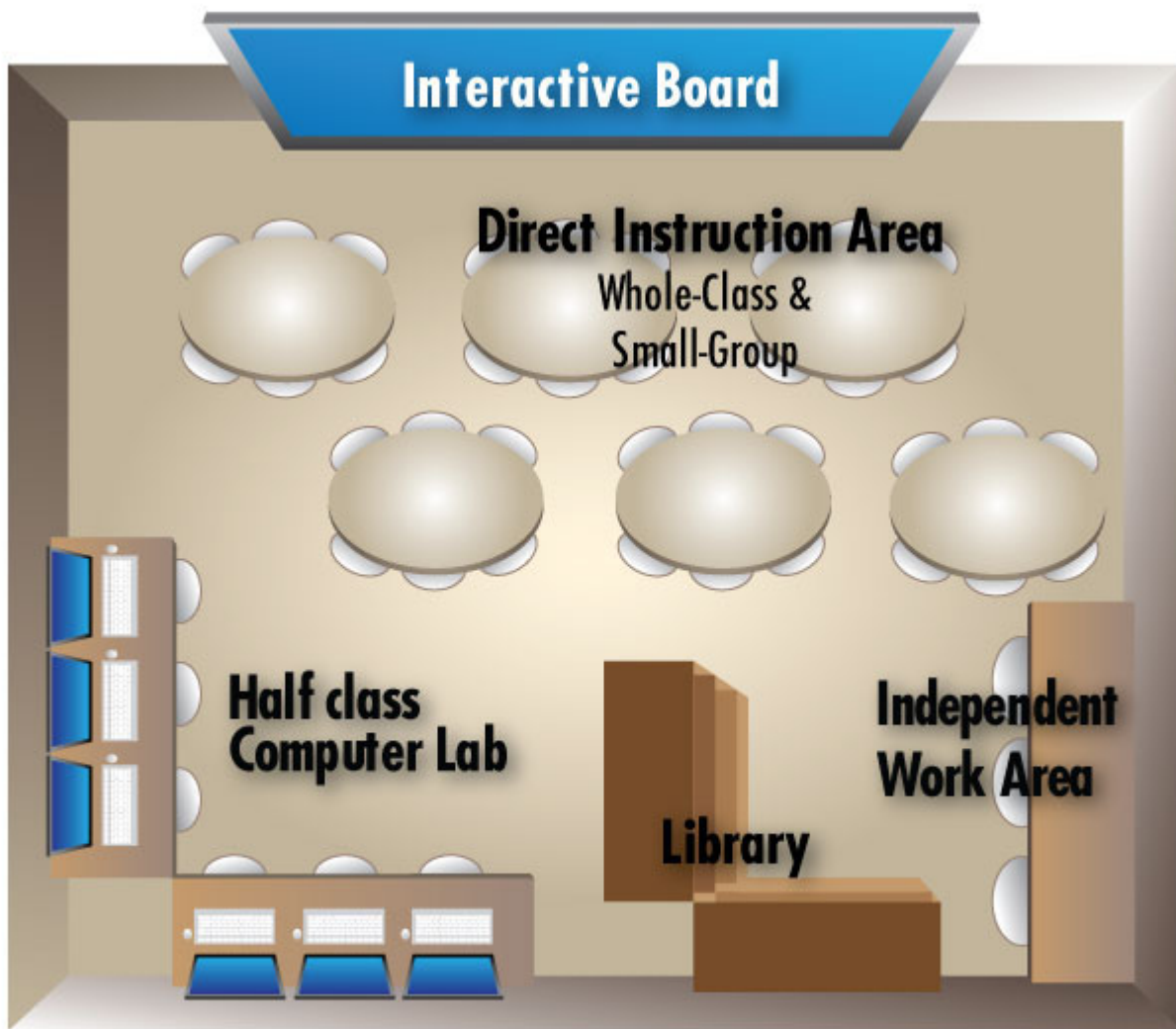
Traditional teacher education prepares instructors for a learning environment in which they will teach a large number of students en masse in classes that remain largely the same in student composition over a school year or semester. Where students have exceptional needs, instructional differentiation is typically accomplished through pull-out services or separate class groupings (such as SPED) based on tracking systems that cluster students by achievement level.

In contrast, a Generation Schools classroom focuses instruction on the individual student rather than the class as a whole. For the model to be implemented successfully, teachers must have a solid understanding of and practical preparation for differentiation in the classroom and be prepared to initiate a blended rotational model that offers a truly personalized learning experience for students.



“At my last school, I taught hundreds of students a day and I barely got to know their names. Today, at Brooklyn Generation Schools, I pretty much have nicknames for all of them, if not nicknames for those nicknames!”

*Cory Kretschmer,
Brooklyn Generation School*



Refining Recruitment and Applicant Evaluation Techniques

Even with the best support and intentions, not every teacher will be successful within the GSN Model. This does not represent a deficiency with specific teachers or a weakness in the Model. Instructors who are not comfortable with extensive collaboration or who prefer defined, hierarchical professional relationships will likely struggle in a Generation Schools environment. GSN is developing and refining hiring and evaluation criteria to better align applicant teacher personalities and talents with the unique opportunities the GSN Model offers.

Conclusion

Education researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that the most important factor affecting student outcomes is the quality and effectiveness of their teachers. Regardless of whether the system is traditional or progressive and whether the locale is rural or urban, having effective and motivated teachers is critical to ensuring U.S. students can compete on the world stage.

School reforms that simply ask more of teachers without offering new means of support are not sustainable or replicable. By realigning the roles and responsibilities of teachers and other school staff, the GSN Model delivers more individualized student attention, while providing teachers a more collaborative and supportive environment.

In many ways, the GSN Model extends human resource best practices from the corporate world into school settings:

- Taking a holistic approach to day-to-day assignments
- Using frequent results-focused evaluation
- Fostering team support and accountability
- Offering opportunities for professional development
- Promoting and recognizing leadership skills.

And similar to the private sector, this all must be accomplished in a setting that creatively allocates fixed resources to maximize the organization's impact.

GSN offers an improved, replicable education model that accomplishes what has eluded many reformers up until now: a system that delivers greater, educational impact without additional funding. The lynchpin holding the GSN Model together is the corps of teachers operating in a supportive team environment who are not defined by their classroom but, rather, by working together to meet the unique needs of their students.

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