

# Financing Expanded Learning Time in Schools



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A Look at Five  
District Expanded-  
Time Schools

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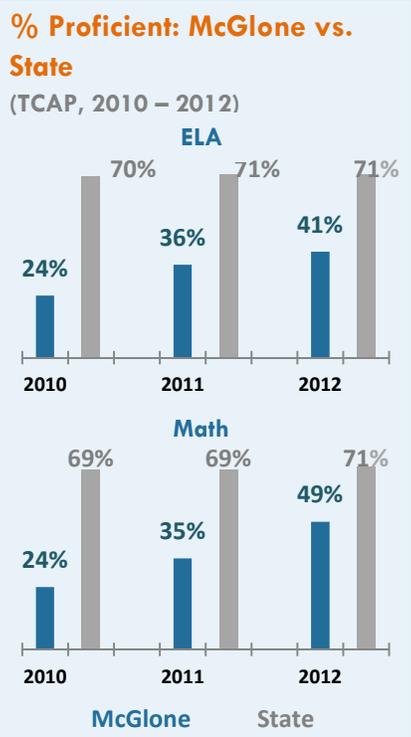
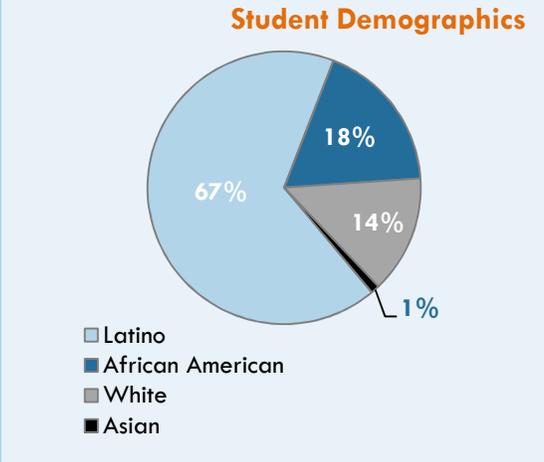
# McGlone Elementary School

Denver, CO

## A longer day and year as part of a comprehensive school turnaround plan

In 2010, McGlone Elementary School, located in Denver, Colorado, embarked on an ambitious and comprehensive effort to turnaround the school's academic performance. A key element of the school's turnaround strategy has

been to expand learning time for its students by nearly 250 hours per year. Serving 600 mostly high-poverty students, McGlone has made significant progress in just two years. From 2011 to 2012, the school saw double-digit gains in the number of its third- and fourth-grade students scoring proficient or advanced on both math and English language arts (ELA) state standardized tests. These gains put McGlone in the top 1 percent of schools in the state of Colorado for growth performance.\* McGlone is part of the Denver Summit Schools Network, a group of ten "turnaround schools"—those identified as chronically underperforming



\* Colorado's growth measure compares students' year-to-year growth in test scores with the scores of students who scored similarly on state tests in previous years.

and targeted for substantial overhaul to boost student achievement and improve culture—that have been partnering with Blueprint Schools Network, a national nonprofit organization that works closely with schools and districts to implement and monitor its research-based Blueprint school reform model.\* One of the key strategies of the Blueprint framework is more time for learning, and, at McGlone, Blueprint has infused private funds into the school budget to cover most of the costs of the expanded schedule—estimated to be \$560,400, or \$934 per student. To reallocate funds from the existing school budget, Blueprint also has worked with the McGlone principal in an effort to leverage the school’s status as a Colorado Innovation School. With this status as part of its whole school reform plan, McGlone was granted greater autonomy in areas such as curriculum and instruction, staffing, budgeting, the use of time, and professional development. As they strive to implement a sustainable expanded-time model, McGlone’s leaders have blended both existing resources and new outside resources to deepen and broaden learning time for their students.

### McGlone’s Expanded-Time Model

As part of its turnaround strategy, McGlone Elementary has both added days to its calendar and lengthened its daily school schedule. In the 2012 – 2013 school year, the model (which has been adjusted slightly each year) included 9 more days of school and 1 additional hour for students each day, producing a total of 243 additional hours per year for all students. As shown in the schedule (page 25),

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\* Blueprint’s model for school reform centers on five key strategies: 1) Excellence in leadership and instruction, 2) Increasing instructional time, 3) Fostering a no-excuses culture of high expectations, 4) Frequent assessments to improve instruction, and 5) Daily tutoring in critical growth years. This framework is derived from ongoing research on common practices of schools capable of closing the achievement gap between low-income students and their higher-income peers (Dobbie and Fryer, 2013). Blueprint was founded to implement these practices within traditional public schools.

McGlone’s students are in school from 8:00 AM to about 4:00 PM, five days a week.

At McGlone, expanded time makes possible intensive daily tutoring for students, new and augmented professional development opportunities for teachers, and more enrichment opportunities aimed at building student engagement and promoting a college-oriented school culture. These three components of the program are described below:

#### *Intensive daily tutoring for students*

McGlone’s tutoring program is a signature element of the Blueprint model and a core ingredient of the school’s turnaround strategy. The school’s fourth graders receive tutoring in math, while third graders have ELA tutoring. As the schedule also shows, McGlone’s fourth graders receive math tutoring

**The split class/tutoring block allows all students, even those who are on track, to receive more personalized instruction to accelerate progress.**

during either the first or second half of their 100-minute math block. Students are divided into two groups, so that one group participates in tutoring as the other works with the classroom teacher in a more conventional math lesson. Midway through the math block, the two groups switch places. Meanwhile, McGlone’s third graders have an extended ELA block that is organized much the same way as the fourth-grade math block, with half the class’s students alternating between a tutoring session and an ELA lesson taught by the classroom teacher. The split class/tutoring block allows all students, even those who are on track, to receive more personalized instruction aiming to accelerate their progress. Classroom teachers work with only half their students at a time and tutors work with no more than two or three students at a time, allowing for much more individualized academic support.

All McGlone’s tutors are recruited, trained and supported by Blueprint. The tutoring program is part

of the organization’s year-long fellowship that is designed to attract individuals who are interested in gaining teaching experience and making a difference in the lives of children by building close relationships and supporting their educational development. McGlone has two tutor coordinators on staff (one for math and one for literacy) to supervise and train the tutors and to ensure that the program is implemented effectively and coordinated with the school’s academic goals and curriculum.

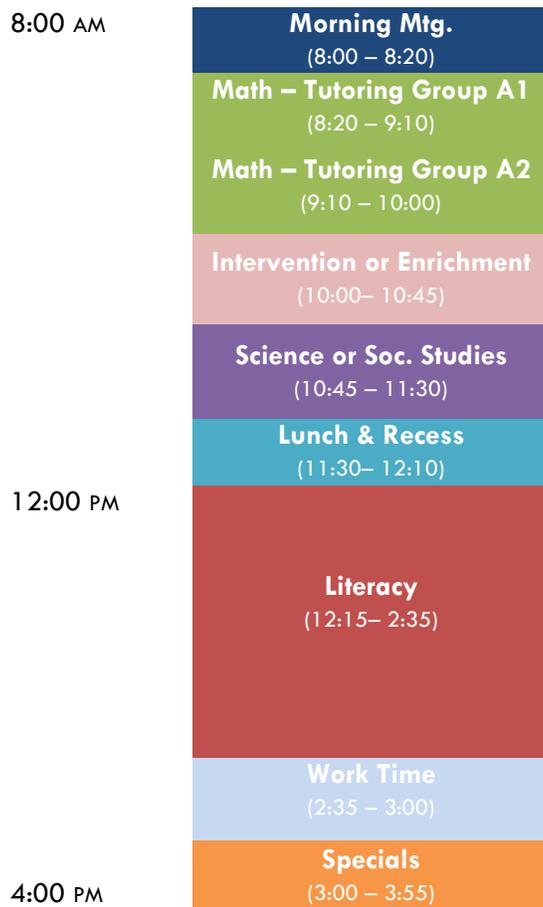
**Additional professional development opportunities**

Along with providing opportunities for students, McGlone’s longer school day and year also allow for deeper and more consistent professional development for faculty. One day every week, teachers stay an additional hour following student dismissal to participate in professional learning. Each teacher also has at least one hour of common planning time during the school day, which is spent in systematic data-team

meetings, facilitated discussion regarding instructional practices, and/or team planning.

To further expand planning time, McGlone has hired a science enrichment specialist who teaches science in the fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms several times a week, giving those classroom teachers at least one additional weekly planning period. Moreover, McGlone employs several teacher leaders who teach half-time and work the other half-day as instructional coaches, helping to improve pedagogy across the school. Further, as part of the lengthened school year, the school has instituted four additional professional development days, two of which are spent at an off-site retreat with an aim toward strengthening staff cohesion and building content understanding.

**ELT Schedule**



**ELT Schedule  
Club Day**



To advance its turnaround efforts, McGlone also has used private funds to make a significant investment in technology, including funding professional development for teachers to help integrate technology into the curriculum, supplying interactive whiteboards for teachers, and securing 1:1 laptops for fourth- and fifth-grade students.

### ***Enrichment opportunities to build student engagement and promote a college-oriented school culture***

Because of their longer day and year, McGlone students also benefit from more enrichment opportunities. One day each week, all students participate in an hour-long club of their own selection. Club choices—ranging from garden club to ballet, debate, and crochet—are taught by teachers and by community partners. Through the new activities they offer, these weekly clubs build student engagement in school and encourage students to form positive relationships with caring adults. Pursuing similar aims, McGlone also starts the day with a morning meeting—a hybrid homeroom and advisory period—that focuses on teaching core school values and generating interest in college and career pathways.

### **Costs and Funding**

To compensate classroom teachers for their additional hours worked, McGlone issues a common stipend. Specifically, McGlone's 34 teachers receive a flat \$5,000 annual remuneration, resulting in a total cost of \$170,000 for the school. Based on the district average teacher salary of \$50,000, this stipend means McGlone's teachers are receiving about a 10 percent increase in pay. However, because the school's teachers work roughly 300 more hours per year (or 20 percent more) than their peers at other district schools, their rate of compensation is not directly proportional to the increase in hours. On a percentage basis, the increase in pay is roughly half the increase in time.

At \$320,000, McGlone's tutoring program is the largest cost component of the school's ELT model. These costs include the salaries for eight tutors and

two tutor coordinators. Tutors receive \$25,000, and tutor coordinators are paid \$60,000. As presented in Table 4.1 (page 26), the total cost of the expanded learning time components, including the teacher stipends and compensation for the tutors and tutor coordinators, is about \$560,400 (which calculates to \$934 per student or \$3.84 per student hour).

Private grants secured by the Denver Public Schools working with McGlone's partner, Blueprint Schools, provide the primary source of funding for the school's expanded learning time model. In fact, the program would not be possible without the district's partnership with Blueprint Schools, which has helped McGlone educators implement the school's turnaround model

### ***McGlone's Innovation School status, with the autonomy it affords, has been instrumental in enabling the principal to leverage existing resources.***

and its expanded-day, expanded-year approach. In addition to supporting the district's efforts to raise \$365,000 to cover the program's costs, Blueprint provides significant technical assistance and monitoring feedback to the school. So, while community partners provide a few enrichment activities on an in-kind basis, the estimated value of these services is not available, and they do not, in any event, comprise a large part of the overall costs.

Beyond the philanthropic contribution and the in-kind services of community-based partners, McGlone principal Suzanne Morey covers approximately \$195,000 of the reading tutoring portion of the program by drawing from the school's per pupil allocation from the district. McGlone's Innovation School status, with the autonomy it affords in scheduling and budgeting, has been instrumental in enabling Morey to leverage existing resources. For example, Innovation status permits McGlone to opt out of paying for certain district services and to use the savings elsewhere. In one case, the school chose a new math curriculum, which was different from the district-sponsored curriculum, thereby enabling the principal to avoid what the district charges for annual

curriculum updates and direct the savings towards other priorities. Innovation status also enables Morey to base budget on McGlone’s actual salary costs, rather than budgeting on district average salaries, as typically occurs in this (and indeed in most) districts. “Budgeting on actuals” allows the principal to direct her resources with more precision. Because the principal is able to allocate existing funds to the ELT program, the true out-of-pocket costs of its operation, over and above the school’s regular allocation of funds from the district, is actually only \$365,200 (about \$610 per student or \$2.50 per student hour). (See Table 4.2, page 27.)

### Implications for Sustainability

Given that the relationship between Blueprint and McGlone is time-limited—Blueprint and the district have committed to an initial partnership lasting three years—the long-term sustainability of McGlone’s expanded-learning schedule will likely require identification of new resources. The district is already

beginning to make progress in this area. In response to the impressive results achieved by tutoring programs at McGlone and other Blueprint network schools in Denver, Denver residents approved a 2012 local ballot measure to pay for additional instructional supports. This measure includes a \$15.5 million allocation that has allowed the math tutoring program to expand to an additional 39 schools beginning in the fall of 2013. This funding, which demonstrates how a district can quickly scale effective programs, will provide ongoing support for a key component of McGlone’s ELT program.

Sustainability for teacher stipends is likely to be the greatest challenge for Principal Morey. She is, however, optimistic about her ability to raise these funds. And while McGlone’s Innovation School status has given the principal considerable latitude in organizing and spending her resources—people, time, and money—to support the school’s strategic priorities and unique needs, Morey also must continue to identify opportunities to leverage other resources.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**Expenditures for McGlone’s Expanded Day**

Cost Category	Amount	Notes
<b>Instructional Salaries</b>	\$170,000	\$5,000 stipends for 34 teaching staff
<b>Admin Salaries</b>	\$0	N/A
<b>Other staff Salaries –</b>		
<b>Math Coordinator/tutors</b>	\$160,000	Coordinators are paid \$60,000 (1 for each subject) Tutors are paid \$25,000 (4 for each subject)
<b>Reading Coordinator/tutors</b>	\$160,000	
<b>Total Benefits Amount</b>	\$70,400	Benefits for reading and math coordinators and tutors; district benefits rate is 22%
<b>Contracted Services</b>	\$0	N/A
<b>Supplies and materials</b>	\$0	N/A
<b>Facilities</b>	\$0	N/A
<b>Transportation</b>	\$0	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$560,400</b>	

**TABLE 4.2**  
**Funding Sources for McGlone’s Expanded Day**

Funding Type	Description of Funding	Amount	Timeframe
<b>Local/District</b>	Existing school budget covers salaries/benefits of the reading coordinator and reading tutors	\$195,200	Ongoing
<b>Private Funds</b>	Blueprint Schools Network partnered with Denver Public Schools to raise private funds to cover:		Time-limited—the relationship with Blueprint is for 3 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34 teacher stipends</li> </ul>	\$170,000	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salaries and benefits for 1 math coordinator and 4 math tutors</li> </ul>	\$195,200	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 560,400</b>	

A further challenge facing this school is high teacher turnover. Teacher turnover—which can be quite costly for schools and districts—was 40 percent at McGlone after the first year in turnaround status (2010 – 2011). The causes of the turnover are unclear, but Principal Morey expressed some concern that in conjunction with the high expectations for accelerating student performance and the higher degree of accountability that is part of the turnaround model, the longer school day and year may be hard on teachers. To help address turnover, Morey set up weekly coaching sessions for every teacher, eliminated all supervisory duties for teachers (like recess and lunch), and she is planning to implement more evenly spaced short vacation breaks to help teachers to recharge. The principal is optimistic that turnover will be lower in subsequent years, due to these changes, along with improved hiring practices and a greater focus on celebrating success.

and year by raising private funds and also by leveraging public policy that supports school innovation and improvement. Moreover, by hiring and training a cadre of tutors and by expanding teacher schedules, McGlone is able to offer students approximately 240 more hours of learning time per year—representing 20 percent more time than what is offered in other Denver Public Schools—for roughly \$930 per student, or less than a 14 percent higher per pupil cost. This cost-to-time ratio, coupled with the school’s first-year academic growth, makes McGlone a promising model for other schools and districts that are seeking to expand learning time for their students. Recognizing the significant role of Blueprint Schools in facilitating and financially supporting McGlone’s revamped schedule and innovative academic approach also suggests that without the support of a similar partner, schools may find the model challenging to implement.

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Notwithstanding these challenges, McGlone’s story provides an example of how a turnaround partner—in this case, Blueprint Schools Network—can help a school to successfully implement a longer school day