

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT (SIG) PRACTICE: MAXIMIZING LEARNING TIME

MCKAY HIGH SCHOOL ♦ SALEM, OREGON

Low student test scores and challenging new state graduation requirements¹ prompted the principal at McKay High School (McKay) to use SIG funds to extend learning time for students who need help to graduate. McKay's strategy is to offer multiple graduation pathways for students both inside and outside the regular school day. These pathways include academic workshops, tailored Saturday tutoring programs, and summer school classes that provide credit-recovery opportunities and English language instruction.

THE STRATEGY: Offering Multiple Pathways to Graduation Inside and Outside the Regular School Day

McKay's principal developed a plan to offer students a wide variety of extended learning opportunities—some mandatory activities during the regular school day and some optional activities held after school, on weekends, and in the summer—to help faltering students meet the state's new, rigorous graduation requirements. This strategy:

- Includes mandatory intensive reading, writing, and math workshops for students who need extra help to meet state graduation requirements.
- Provides Saturday Academy programs with small-group tutoring, English language instruction for English Learners (ELs), and access to online credit-recovery courses.
- Offers intensive summer school experiences, including a transitional program for incoming freshmen, credit-recovery opportunities for students who have failed core academic classes, and English language instruction.

Reading, Writing, and Math Workshops. Reading, writing, and math workshops are open to all McKay students; however, students who do not meet proficiency on state assessment tests in English language arts (ELA), writing, and math are required to participate in a workshop focused on their weak area. Reading, writing, and math workshops are regular one-semester classes taken in addition to traditional English and math classes. The workshops replace electives, such as applied art or music. Students can repeat a workshop as often as needed until they demonstrate mastery of the state standards. Workshops include the following:

McKay High School at a Glance

SIG Model: Transformation
Start of SIG Implementation: 2010–11
Locale: City, Midsize
Grades: 8–12
Enrollment: 1,824
Free or Reduced-Price Lunch: 85%
Racial/Ethnic Composition: 61% Hispanic, 25% White, 4% Asian, 3% Other, 2% Black, 1% American Indian
English Learners: 11%
Students With Disabilities: 11%

Student Outcomes	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Reading % proficient	49%	72%	78%
Math % proficient	37%	63%**	72%
Graduation rate	*	75%	70%

Note: Percentages for English Learners and students with disabilities are from the Civil Rights Data Collection and may be based on a different total enrollment of students than the enrollment figure reported by the Common Core of Data.

* Four-year regulatory adjusted cohort graduation data were not reported by states prior to school year (SY) 2010–11; therefore, no graduation rate data are indicated for SY 2009–10.

** Data are not comparable to prior year.

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- *Reading Workshop.* In the reading workshop, teachers spend the first 20 minutes of class presenting reading strategies and techniques related to reading comprehension and vocabulary. Students spend the remaining time reading books or other texts that are in their proximal zone of development based on their Lexile reading score.² Students read passages and practice the skills taught by the workshop teacher. McKay created libraries in each reading workshop classroom so that students have access to books and magazines that match their reading levels.
- *Writing Workshop.* In the writing workshop, students progress through a sequenced curriculum practicing sentence construction, then paragraph construction, and finally essay writing. Teachers present strategies based on the Six Traits of Writing model developed by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. As an extension of the workshop class, all students spend a few minutes in their third-period classes studying a sample sentence and working together to correct and improve it.
- *Math Workshop.* The math workshop has a similar structure to the reading and writing workshops. Math teachers use short lessons that target specific state standards. They include content that appears on the state math test but that students may not have learned in their regular math classes. For example, students who are still taking Algebra I can learn concepts taught in more advanced math classes, such as geometry and statistics.

Many students enrolled in these three workshops. With SIG funds, McKay hired three additional writing and math teachers and four additional English teachers to staff the workshops. Teachers of elective courses, who have fewer class periods to teach, became support staff in the reading workshops.

Saturday Academy. Although McKay offered Saturday school before SIG implementation, those Saturday sessions had no specific academic objective; they were just a way for students to make up class time missed during the week. The infusion of SIG dollars allowed the school to formally structure Saturday learning.

Administrators redesigned the Saturday Academy to include three specialized programs: a language program for ELs with low levels of English proficiency, a tutoring program, and computer sessions with open access to online credit-recovery courses:

- *Language Academy.* The signature feature of Saturday Academy is the Language Academy, which is designed to meet the language proficiency needs of McKay's large EL population. EL students who score a 1 or 2 out of 5 on the state's English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment can receive 30 additional hours of English language instruction—three hours of Saturday instruction for 10 weeks. Although attendance is optional, students who attend each of the 10 sessions can earn .25 credits toward the state-required 24 credits to graduate. In groups of about eight per teacher, Language Academy students work on a structured curriculum focused on the four domains of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) tied to the state ELP standards. The Language Academy is offered once each semester.
- *Scots Scholars Tutoring.* The Saturday Academy offers an open-forum, drop-in tutoring program similar to the school's afterschool tutoring program. Named after the Royal Scots school mascot, the Scots Scholars Tutors are available in the school library for four hours on Saturday mornings to help students with homework or school projects.
- *Credit Recovery.* Any high school student in the district, with the permission of his or her school guidance counselor, can register to use McKay's computer lab on Saturdays for an online credit course through the district's virtual school. Students work independently and can choose from a wide variety of core academic and elective courses in math, English, science, social studies, computer science, business, health, and world languages. The Saturday Academy program gives students access to computers and library resources and is

especially valuable for those students who may not have computer access at home or may not be able to fit a course they need into their regular school schedule. Registered students also can take the courses anytime on non-school computers.

Saturday Academy is open to all McKay students. School administrators and staff advertise the academy through school intercom announcements, newsletter announcements, hall posters, and regular automated phone calls to students' homes to let parents know about the program. Teachers also encourage students who are not mastering state standards to participate in tutoring services. With the exception of those seeking credit in the Language Academy, attendance is voluntary and fluctuates from week to week. The assistant principal in charge estimates that an average of 80 students participate each week, with more students attending toward the end of each semester. Attendance peaked at 280 students on one weekend in the 2012–13 school year.³ McKay provides transportation and meals, both breakfast and lunch, to participating students.

To staff the Saturday school, McKay hired six regular school-day teachers and four instructional assistants as well as a supervisor to oversee logistics.⁴ Students from local community colleges and universities—such as Willamette University, Corban University, Western Oregon University, Oregon State University, and Chemeketa Community College, including some McKay alumni—volunteer as tutors.

Summer School Programs. Summer school is optional and open to all incoming and current McKay students. Four hours a day, five days a week, for five weeks, McKay students take credit-bearing courses that help them to get on track and stay on track to graduate. A student can earn one full credit or more. SIG funds support half the cost of summer school. The remaining funds come from sources such as the U.S. Department of Education's High School Graduation Initiative. The summer school program includes a transitional program for incoming freshmen, credit-recovery opportunities for students who fail to pass core academic classes, and English language instruction for ELs.

- *Summer Transition Program.* The Summer Transition Program (STP) is open to all incoming ninth-grade students; however, students scoring below proficiency on the state tests or who have shown other signs of struggling in core academic classes, such as receiving a low grade, are recruited. In the first few years of the program, McKay guidance counselors reviewed student transcripts to determine which students would benefit from summer school. Now that the program is well established, students are aware of the opportunity and choose to participate on their own. STP enrollment increased from 130 students in summer 2011 to 215 students in summer 2013. Incoming freshmen enroll in reading, writing, math, and career classes as an introduction to high school work. These classes help students develop the skills needed to master critical ninth-grade standards in reading, writing, and Algebra I by reteaching eighth-grade standards that students must build on to succeed in ninth grade. The career class component was designed to stimulate student engagement by connecting academic content to students' future career goals. The career class teaches practical job skills, such as how to write a résumé and interview for a job.
- *McKay Academy Institute.* The McKay Academy Institute is a credit-recovery program through which students earn the credits they need to pass a core class they failed during the year. The program is designed specifically to help students who failed ninth- or 10th-grade English, ninth- or 10th-grade history, biology, physical science, Algebra I, or geometry. It is open to all students who need extra credits. The McKay Academy Institute has small classes, typically 15–20 students per teacher (compared with 30–35 students per teacher during the regular school year). In summer 2013, 121 students enrolled.
- *English Language Learner (ELL) Academy.* The summer program includes a language academy similar to the Saturday Language Academy but with 100 total hours of English language instruction. Approximately 85 students enrolled in the ELL Academy in summer 2013.

For the most part, McKay summer school classes are taught by English, math, and EL teachers who work in the school during the regular school year. For example, a ninth-grade English teacher will teach ninth-grade summer school English. If McKay teachers are not available, McKay administrators will interview and hire additional teachers from the district. Sometimes teachers are hired from feeder middle schools.

CHALLENGES

Extended learning time requires additional resources. Although McKay was unable to maintain all of the elements of the extended learning time after SIG funding ended, McKay administrators have been able to maintain critical pieces of the plan, such as the academic workshops and summer school program, with Title I and general school funds. For example, McKay reduced the length of the Saturday Academy from 10 to three weeks.

CONCLUSION

McKay High School increased the learning time offered throughout the day, on weekends, and during the summer to support student needs in meeting state graduation requirements. Although some opportunities are mandatory based on student test performance, many extended learning opportunities are voluntary. McKay's increasing enrollments in extended learning time programs highlight the need to support students through a variety of learning opportunities.

SOURCES

Data for the tables on page 1 are from the following sources: School at-a-glance data are from the NCES Common Core of Data (2011–12); SIG information is from SIG-Awarded Schools (2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13) located at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>; students with disabilities and English Learner student percentage enrollment data are from the Civil Rights Data Collection (2011–12); and student outcomes data are from *EDFacts* (2009–10, 2010–11, 2011–12).

IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

¹ In 2008, the Oregon State Board of Education determined that all students must demonstrate mastery of Essential Skills to earn a diploma. Beginning with the graduating class of 2012, students must demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend a variety of texts. By 2013, students also must demonstrate the ability to write clearly and accurately. By 2014, students must demonstrate the ability to apply math in a variety of settings. To demonstrate mastery of Essential Skills in reading, writing, and math (required to earn a high school diploma), Oregon students must meet or exceed the proficiency cut scores on state reading, writing, and math assessments; meet equivalent cut scores on an alternative assessment; or put together a work sample that meets the level of rigor required on the state assessment. Acceptable alternate assessments include the ACT or SAT.

² McKay uses the Lexile Framework for Reading (<https://www.lexile.com/>), developed by MetaMetrics, to determine students' reading levels and match books to their reading level. Students' Lexile reading scores are determined by their performance on the ELA portion of the state tests or through other reading assessments aligned with the Lexile Framework for Reading.

³ During SIG grant implementation, the Saturday Academy was open 10 Saturdays each semester. After SIG funding ended, as a result of budget constraints, McKay is open fewer Saturdays each semester and no longer offers the Language Academy.

⁴ Currently, the scaled-back Saturday Academy is staffed by three instructional assistants with the skills to assist students in reading, writing, and math.