

IT'S ABOUT TIME:

A Study of the Impact of Workload
on Teachers and Students



Recommendations

1. In Newfoundland and Labrador the average teacher invests 52.32 hours per week to school related activities – that is the equivalent of seven (7), 7.5 hour days for 39 weeks of the year.

Using the 35 hour work week as a benchmark, the average teacher has 7.5 hours per week for planning and preparation, evaluating student work, reporting and communicating with parents, attending required meetings and supervising students. Given the nature of the job of teaching and the turbulence associated with today's schools, it is impossible to imagine any teacher being able to accomplish these tasks in the allocated time.

The degree of consistency between the findings of this study and similar studies conducted in other jurisdictions is sufficient evidence to conclude that the invisible work of teachers is a very real phenomena and that teachers are over worked, stressed and frustrated with various facets of their jobs. There needs to be some public recognition that teachers work well beyond the mythical five-hour day and contribute much of their personal time to their professional life.

2. Given the research evidence that increasing preparation time to a mandatory 180 minutes per week has been shown to have a positive impact on the quality of a teacher's worklife, and the fact that for teachers in this study there was a very strong correlation between the amount of preparation time and satisfaction with their job, and that teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador have less assigned preparation time than teachers in the other Atlantic Provinces, there is a strong argument for providing all teachers in the province with a minimum of 180 minutes of preparation time per week.

3. Three or four times per year teachers are required to provide in-depth reports to parents and other authorities and they are required to do this outside the regular school day. There was significant evidence that some teachers find these periods very intense and stressful and they have a negative impact on how they are able to cope with the demands of their job. Therefore, it is important that schools be provided with discretionary leave days to be used during the school year and have flexibility to utilize these days during the reporting periods.

4. Given the turbulent nature of schools today where there are tremendous demands placed on teachers, ranging from the implementation of new curricula to managing a plethora of social issues, the expectation for teachers to do mandatory supervision is no longer reasonable – in fact it is an extremely poor use of professional time. The fact that teachers report altering their practice on days when they have assigned supervision duty (probably about 20% of the school year) is evidence enough to show that this activity should be assigned to others (e.g., para

professionals) or made a voluntary activity for which teachers are compensated (e.g., increase in assigned preparation time).

5. Class size and class composition are closely linked and directly related to teacher workload and have a tremendous impact on how teachers go about performing their job.

Based on research evidence that class size reductions (<20 students) are effective in both reducing teachers' workload and increasing student achievement (particularly at the primary levels), this is a sensible strategy for improving the education system for both teachers and students.

6. The implementation of new programs and the provision of appropriate resources are huge issues for teachers in this province. While there has been a great deal of effort invested in the development and initiation of new programs, that same commitment has not been made to the implementation of these programs. The training must not only precede the implementation, it must accompany it through the early, and into the middle of the implementation process – when it doesn't the result is not likely to be the one intended by the implementation team.

7. Given the structure of our local school system with its many small and dispersed schools, multiple grade configurations, multi-level classes, etc. it is unlikely that there is a quick fix for out-of-field teaching which emerged as a workload concern for many teachers who were working with such an assignment.

Out-of-field teaching is a characteristic of our school system that we need to know more about. We need more data on the extent to which it occurs and on the consequences (for teachers and students) and we need to know what takes place in the classrooms of teachers where there is not a good fit between their qualifications and training and their teaching assignment.

8. There is sufficient evidence to show that teachers' work has intensified over recent years. Teachers noted that the hectic pace of the school day, and for that matter, the school year leaves little time for relaxation and reflection on their practice. Teachers need time to reflect on their current teaching methodologies; that for teachers to increase the learning of their students and to grow professionally they must be afforded adequate opportunity during the regular school day for reflection, personal planning and collaboration with colleagues.

9. The job of teaching needs to be redesigned so that teachers can do an excellent job working a reasonable number of hours per week. By changing teacher workloads and the way that schools are organized and managed, teachers should have more time for encouraging excellence and personal growth.

It is common knowledge that we are living in times of fiscal restraint, but the fact that we cannot change everything does not mean that we can or should do nothing.

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